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## "Small though the spot is": Settlement in Devonshire Parish, Bermuda, 1622-1798

John David Metz  
*College of William & Mary - Arts & Sciences*

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"SMALL THOUGH THIS SPOT IS":  
SETTLEMENT IN DEVONSHIRE PARISH, BERMUDA,  
1622-1798

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Anthropology  
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

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by

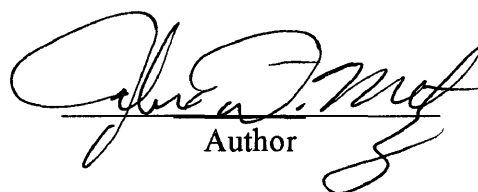
John David Metz

1996

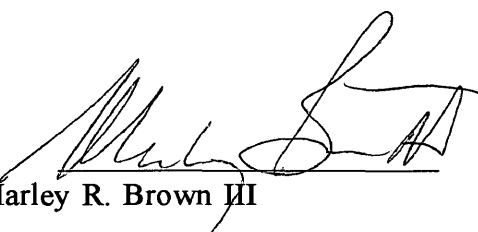
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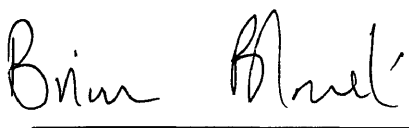
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements .....	iii
List of Figures .....	vi
Abstract .....	viii
Chapter I. Introduction .....	2
Settlement Patterns .....	4
Approaching Settlement in Bermuda .....	7
Chapter II. English Settlement in North America .....	15
The Chesapeake .....	16
New England .....	23
Chapter III. The Settlement of Bermuda .....	29
"A Hold and Habitation of Divels" .....	29
The Framework for Settlement .....	32
The Pattern of Growth .....	36
The Pattern of Landholding .....	43
Chapter IV. The Transmission of Property .....	50
Inheritance .....	50
Inheritance in Devonshire .....	53

Inheritance and the Land . . .	55
Women and Inheritance . . .	63
Chapter V. Conclusion . . . . .	68
Appendix I. Devonshire Parish Wills: 1640-1798 . . .	76
Appendix II. Parish Assessments and Census Data . .	79
References Cited . .	80
Vita . .	89

## LIST OF FIGURES

1. Bermuda's Position in the Atlantic	3
2. The Island of Bermuda	8
3. Devonshire Parish, Bermuda	9
4. Wills Represented by Decade	12
5. The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century	18
6. New England in the Seventeenth Century	25
7. The Norwood Map (1663)	33
8. Rate of Population Increase: 1622-1774	37
9. Population in Bermuda	38
10. Population Growth: 1622-1783	40
11. Devonshire Parish in 1622	41
12. Devonshire Parish in 1663	41
13. Acres of Land per Inhabitant: 1622-1788	45
14. Percent of Population Owning Land: 1622-1798	46
15. Land Ownership and the Population: 1622-1798	47
16. Pattern of Landholding: 1622-1663	47
17. Pattern of Landholding: 1663-1788	48

18. Frequency of Inheritance Type: 1640-1799 . . .	. 57
19. Wills Providing Property to Multiple Heirs . .	. . 59
20. Transmission of Property Through Wills . . .	. 60
21. Female Inheritance of Real Estate . . . . .	. 64
22. Inheritance of Land Among Widows . .	. 64
23. Norwood Map (1618) . . . . .	. . 73
24. Savage Map, 1902 . .	. 73



## ABSTRACT

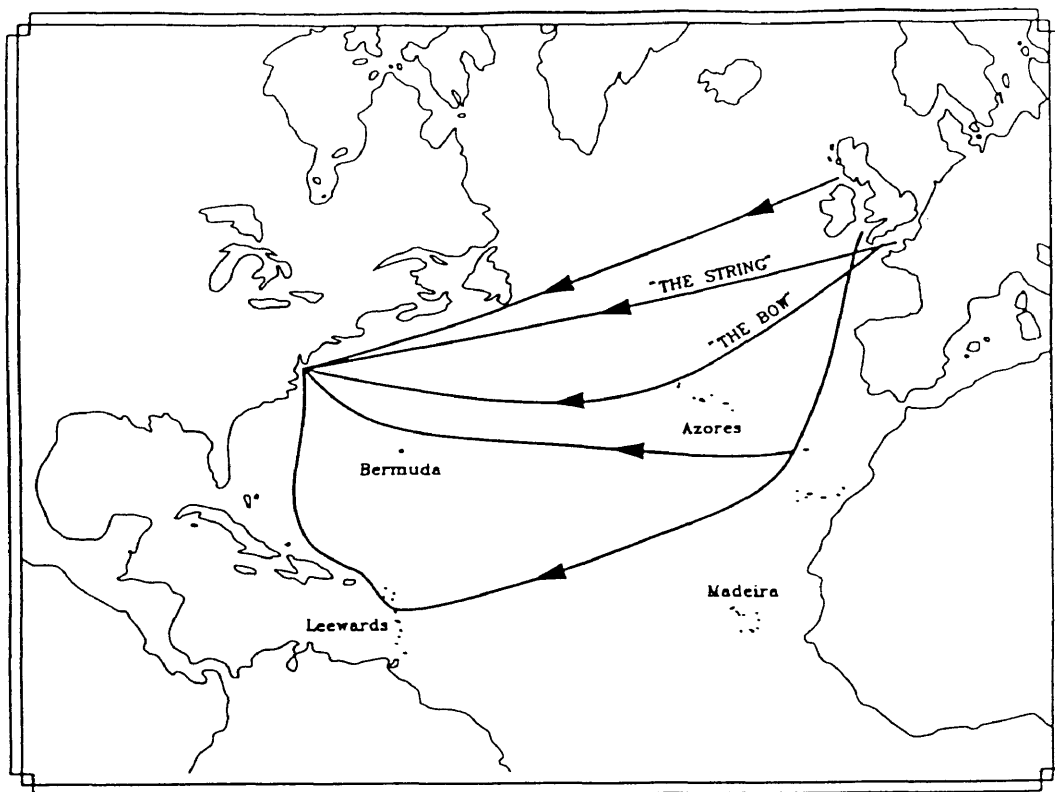
The development of settlement patterns in Bermuda poses an interesting dilemma due to a unique combination of limited space, few resources, and a growing population. Traditionally, scholars have categorized English settlements in the New World according to attributes observed in New England and the Chesapeake. Bermuda, however, is similar to yet distinct from both areas. For example, Bermuda resembled the Puritan pattern of settlement in that the parishes functioned as compact, tightly knit communities where the church was especially influential. On the other hand, the Bermuda colony was established under the same "*company*" system used in the settlement of Virginia. Moreover, Bermuda's economy, like that of the Chesapeake, was dominated by the cultivation of tobacco throughout the seventeenth century. These seemingly contradictory elements beg for a resolution. The analysis of over one hundred wills and nine parish assessments from Devonshire Parish provides for an in-depth treatment of settlement as it developed in Bermuda. Parish assessments dating from 1698 to 1798 were used to demonstrate parish-wide changes in land tenure over time while individual wills dating from 1640 to 1798 revealed information specific to the dynamics of these changes. Finally, Island-wide census data from 1622 to 1798 was used to establish the place of Devonshire Parish relative to changes throughout the colony during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

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## **CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION**

English immigrants to the New World were faced with an alien and often hostile environment. They arrived to find an indigenous population, strange new plants and animals, and a climate unlike what they had previously known. As William Norton observes, "Rarely were the particulars of these environments consistent with the colonists' perceptions of them, and even more rarely were they totally amenable to the resolution of colonist's aims" (Norton 1989:1). In the end, English immigrants adapted to their new environment. Adaptation led to the development of unique colonial societies linked to one another through economic ties and a shared allegiance to England. While the English colonial societies which developed in the New World reflected adaptations to specific regional conditions, they were also shaped by the social organization, values and beliefs of the immigrants themselves. Together, these factors combined to influence the development of settlement patterns.

While English settlement in the New World has attracted a great deal of academic interest over the years, scholars have focused on the Chesapeake and the Massachusetts Bay colonies for the most part. Both areas were among the earliest to be settled and offer a wealth of archaeological, architectural, and documentary sources to facilitate the study of English experience in the New World. Despite the growing understanding of English



**Figure 1.** Bermuda's position in the Atlantic Ocean showing trade routes (Steele 1986:63). settlement in North America, the colony of Bermuda has been virtually ignored. Bermuda was formally settled in 1612 as an adjunct of the Virginia Company. Like Virginia, the first years of settlement in Bermuda were difficult. However, Bermuda's period of starvation and social unrest lasted merely four years while the Virginia colony failed to achieve social stability until the end of the seventeenth century (Craven 1970; Billings 1975; Earle 1979; Laird 1991).

Daniel Tucker became governor of the colony in 1616 and quickly established strict rules enforced through harsh sanctions in an attempt to bring about order. The colony had become stable enough by 1620 that Tucker's successor, Benjamin Moore, was able to extend limited self-government and judicial rule to the islanders (Laird 1991:83). This new found stability prompted growth within the colony. Despite the island's small

size, the temperate climate and early success with tobacco cultivation made it an attractive destination for immigrants. By 1630, however, increasing population pressure and declining economic opportunities in Bermuda signalled the beginning of a trend that would plague the colony into the twentieth century. Considering the unique combination of limited space and too few resources to support a burgeoning population, the development of settlement patterns in Bermuda presents an interesting dilemma.

### *Settlement Patterns*

Settlement studies began in the late nineteenth century when geographers attempted to make sense of the patterns of town development across the landscape. Over time, anthropologists, historians, and geographers became concerned with settlement, prompting a shift from the description of specific patterns to a concern for the unseen elements of community and culture as they are reflected in a settlement system. Settlement patterns reflect the relationship between humans and the environment they inhabit. Unlike many cultural artifacts, settlement patterns often provide direct evidence for the settings in which activities were carried out. They also contain information about the social, religious, and economic institutions within society. As such, settlement patterns provide an excellent opportunity to address change within cultural systems.

Gordon Willey, one of the first anthropologists to explore the link between settlement and culture, defined settlement patterns as "the way in which man disposed himself over the landscape on which he lived" (Willey 1953:1). Willey used archaeological survey data gathered in the Virú Valley of Peru to delineate changes in

prehistoric site type and site location over a period of several thousand years. He related these changes to socio-economic trends and historical events, arguing that settlement patterns "reflect the natural environment, the level of technology on which the builders operated, and various institutions of social interaction and control which the culture maintained" (Willey 1953:1). Willey also recognized that the regional focus of settlement pattern analysis made it a "strategic starting point for the functional interpretation of archaeological cultures" (Willey 1953:1).

K.C. Chang, like Willey, believed that it is essential to establish the pattern of settlement within a region as the first step in the analysis of any society "since cultural traits are meaningless unless described in their social context" (Chang 1958:324). Chang, however, departed from a purely functional description of settlement patterns and focused instead on the social implications of the data. He argued that the spatial arrangement of sites reflects the social organization of the inhabitants. For example, Chang explored the shift from a hunting-gathering to an agriculturally based society in China from the neolithic period through three successive dynasties. He used archaeological data to frame this development in terms of the transition from unplanned, non-lineage villages to complex planned villages where several lineages were represented (Chang 1958).

In contrast to Chang's focus on the social data represented in settlement patterns, Bruce Trigger focused on the social attributes reflected in settlement and worked to define the determinants active in creating patterns. He observed three levels within settlement patterns consisting of individual structures, communities comprised of groups of structures, and regions defined by interrelated communities dispersed over large areas

(Trigger 1968). Trigger recognized that each of these levels were "shaped by factors that differ in kind or degree from those that influence other levels" (Trigger 1968; 1989:285). For example, structures contain information on family organization and craft specialization. Community patterns, on the other hand, reveal details of group organization and adaptation to the environment. Regions, the most general level, reflect social and political organization, trade, and the utilization of resources (Trigger 1968:74).

Wiley, Chang, and Trigger all demonstrate that the analysis of historic period settlement presents a particular challenge for scholars. Historic societies tend to be extremely complex as their determining factors are frequently global in scope and the sources available to facilitate analysis are often numerous and varied. Moreover, the analytical approaches to settlement and questions asked of the data have become increasingly sophisticated. Making sense of the intricate contexts surrounding change in the historic period requires the combined expertise of anthropologists, historians, and historical geographers. Historians and historical geographers, in many respects, pioneered the analysis of colonial settlement in the United States. Much of this early work focused in the two regions where the English established their first settlements: New England and the Chesapeake.

Sumner Chilton Powell (1964) and Kenneth Lockridge (1970) were among the first social historians to conduct detailed studies of English settlement in North America. Powell traced the development of Sudbury, Massachusetts, while Lockridge focused on Dedham, Massachusetts, yet both were concerned with the development and subsequent decline of the Puritan concept of the community as utopia. According to Lockridge,

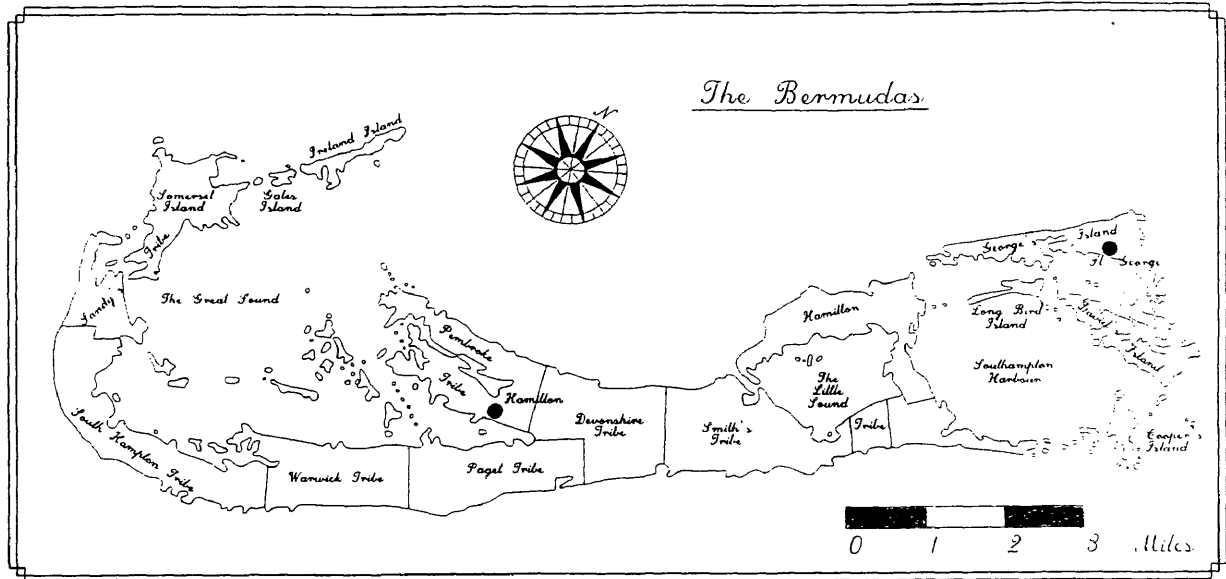
historical sources are critical to the analysis of Puritan settlement because they provide the religious and philosophical context of Puritan town building. He argued that anthropologists would neglect the role of the "intangible" elements such as the "waning of spiritual energy" to describe the decline of the "utopian impulse" (Lockridge 1970:89).

The Chesapeake has received similar attention. For example, Carville Earle (1975) and Kevin Kelly (1989) emphasized economic and ecological factors in the development of settlement patterns in the Chesapeake. Kelly, an historian, used land grants and property deeds to trace the spread of settlement in Surry County, Virginia, during the seventeenth century. He identified a pattern whereby landholdings spread along the James River which served as the main transportation route in the region. Kelly also argues that the dispersed, "non-nucleated dependent community" that developed was shaped by the market demands of tobacco monoculture (Kelly 1989:69). Likewise, Earle, an historical geographer, used a systemic approach to settlement in order to demonstrate the sensitivity and adaptability of colonial settlement patterns in response to a fluctuating staple economy. He determined that population growth, resource deterioration, governmental legislation, and erratic fluctuations in the economy were responsible for changes in the pattern of settlement in Maryland (Earle 1975:7).

### *Approaching Settlement in Bermuda*

Traditionally, scholars have categorized English settlements in North America according to "Puritan" and "Chesapeake" attributes. However, the pattern of development in Bermuda reflects similarities with Virginia and New England while certain aspects

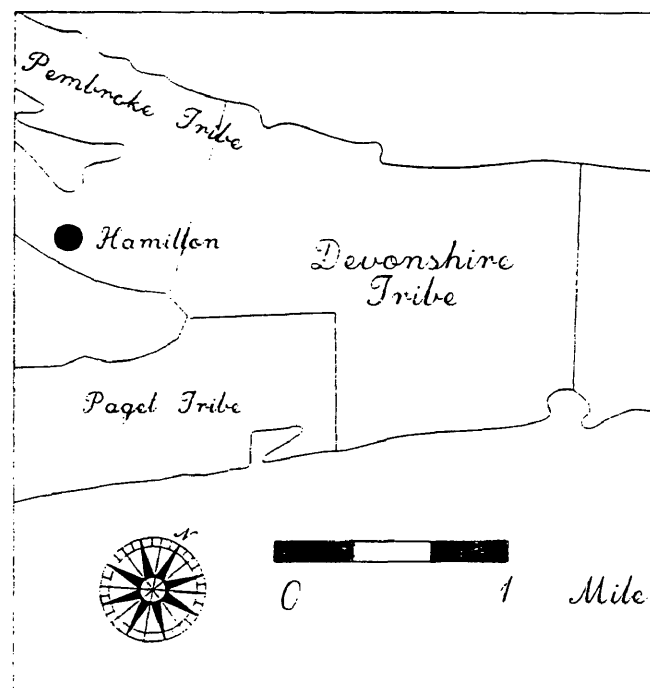




**Figure 2.** The Island of Bermuda.

distinguish it from both. Historian Jack Greene argues that of the colonies outside of New England, "Bermuda was perhaps the most Puritan" (Greene 1988:42). To be sure, the eight parishes in Bermuda resembled nucleated Puritan communities where the church exercised considerable influence. Puritans also used Bermuda as the starting point in their efforts to settle other colonies including Eleuthera and New Providence in the Bahamas. Yet, Greene also concludes that Bermuda "adhered far more closely to the Chesapeake than to the New England Puritan model of colonization" (Greene 1988:45). The confusion over Bermuda's place in the English colonial system prompted Richard Dunn to argue that this small colony "stood isolated from the general pattern of American development" making it atypical or aberrant (Dunn 1963:511).

Although Bermuda may not be considered "*typical*" in terms of the mainland American colonies, its importance within the greater English colonial system must not be underestimated. Virginia Bernhard argues that Bermuda is an "ideal model for comparative study" because of its isolation, small size, and large historical database (Bernhard 1985:57). The island is an especially fitting subject for a settlement study because the English have been the dominant cultural group since the island was initially settled almost four hundred years ago. Unlike the mainland colonies, settlers in Bermuda never had an indigenous population to contend with. Moreover, the colony is unique in that the entire island was surveyed and completely divided during the earliest stage of settlement. Each of the eight "*parishes*" were roughly the same size (1250 acres),



**Figure 3.** Devonshire Parish, Bermuda.

although property within the parish was awarded according to the size of the investment in the Bermuda Company.

Devonshire Parish, Bermuda, was chosen as the subject of this analysis because of its manageable size, the representative nature of its population, and the high integrity of the documentation. Devonshire Parish lies near the middle of the main island and contains approximately 1250 acres which were initially divided into fifty shares in 1616. The island's population shifted westward during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, yet Devonshire Parish consistently accounted for approximately 9% of the total inhabitants. The parish population began to decline late in the seventeenth century when Bermuda's economy shifted from agriculture to a maritime focus. Devonshire lacked large harbors, and people moved to other parishes where water and ships were more accessible. As a result, Devonshire remained a "*rural*" parish where farming was prevalent (Adams 1995:x). The wealth of documentation for this parish, beginning in the mid-seventeenth century and continuing throughout the eighteenth century, makes it one of the most thoroughly recorded in Bermuda.

Typically, maps and property deeds are used in settlement studies to graphically depict changes in settlement patterns. The spatial information contained in these sources also facilitates locational analysis. Detailed spatial analysis could not be conducted as part of this study because few maps containing the detail necessary to delineate specific changes in land tenure overtime could be located. Likewise, property deeds also had to be excluded from the investigation because fewer than twenty were found in the Bermuda Archives. Deeds and plat maps are rare in Bermuda because there was no compulsory

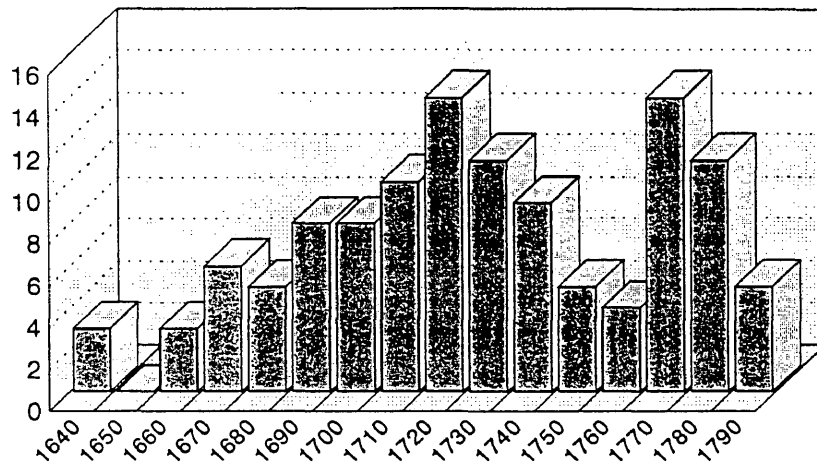
listing of land during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Adams 1989). Instead, the analysis of settlement in Devonshire Parish focused on the aspatial aspects of the settlement system as revealed through wills.

Wills proved to be an important source of information on landholding and settlement in Devonshire Parish. A will is a written statement that specifies the manner in which an estate is redistributed after death. Although wills reflect the desires of the individuals who write them, they also reveal the inheritance customs of a society at large. Inheritance practices represent the primary means by which the social system is reproduced between generations. Meyer Fortes observed that "a social system, by definition, has a life . . . only so long as its elements and components are maintained and adequately replaced" (Fortes 1962:1). Thus, the inheritance system allows one to specify how property will devolve to the next generation in a manner that best maintains the value of that property and the rights that go along with it. Inheritance practices are shaped in response to many variables including the economy, demography, family structure, and the system of land tenure. Patterns emerge within groups sharing similar social and economic circumstances.

Inheritance patterns provide a unique perspective on the settlement system in Bermuda since access to the land was regulated primarily through the inheritance system. Land often represented the most valuable commodity in a Bermudian estate because it "was one of the few investments that could not be stolen, burned, or sunk" (Ives 1984:36). However, the value of using inheritance patterns to study settlement dynamics lies in the highly responsive nature of this customary procedure. Scholars have determined that

# Wills Represented by Decade

## Devonshire Parish Bermuda 1640 - 1799



**Figure 4.**

groups will first adjust inheritance practices, then land tenure, and finally demographic patterns in response to overwhelming economic or population changes (Berkner and Mendels 1978:217; Smith 1970:416). As such, the systematic analysis of inheritance practices as revealed through wills promises to reveal changes in the pattern of land tenure. These changes can then be examined in light of the social, economic, and demographic history of Bermuda during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Wills, however, are inherently biased. First of all, they are not truly representative of society as a whole. It is estimated that between 20% and 50% of global-British society made wills (Horn 1994:224). The intestate probably relied on local custom or inheritance as it was codified under law. Gloria Main also points out that those who left wills "were likely to be male heads-of-households of middle- or upper-class status who were wealthier

and older than those who did not make wills" (Main 1975:91). Moreover, the information contained in wills varied according to wealth, social status, occupation, family composition, life cycle, age, the types of property within the estate. For example, wills often do not mention previous gifts, sales, or dowry portions. Finally, the degree of detail in wills also varied depending upon mental and bodily condition of the testator or testatrix (Main 1975:90). Despite these limitations, wills provide details that are valuable in assessing "the importance of land and the conception of a social hierarchy" (Horn 1994:226). The wide range of information contained in wills permits a contextual approach to historical societies where social, economic, and spatial interactions within the community can be explored in depth.

While scholars have tried to characterize settlement in Bermuda according to traits identified in the colonies of English North America, none has adequately explained how the system coped with extreme population pressure, a sluggish economy, and dwindling resources. The purpose of this thesis is to consider the previously misunderstood pattern of settlement as it developed in Bermuda. The examination of settlement dynamics in Devonshire Parish was conducted using wills, parish-wide tax assessments, and census records. Each body of documentation provided a different "*level*" of data ranging from individual to parish to island-wide. Such an approach helped to determine the representative nature of the data-set as well as to establish a relatively precise baseline from which to measure subsequent change. Census data from 1622, 1663, 1727, and 1798 was employed to demonstrate general demographic trends within Devonshire Parish as well as throughout Bermuda. While census data established the demographic context

for the colony, detailed tax assessments, beginning after the demise of the Bermuda Company in 1684 and representing nearly every decade of the eighteenth century, provided an excellent means of documenting changes in the pattern of land tenure within the parish. Finally, over one hundred wills dating between 1640 and 1798 were analyzed to provide data on inheritance practices, specifically those involving the transmission of real estate between generations. The shifting patterns of bequest identified through the Devonshire wills provides an indication of how Bermudian society developed a reasonably stable pattern of settlement in the midst of continued economic and demographic stress.

## **CHAPTER II: ENGLISH SETTLEMENT IN NORTH AMERICA**

Bermuda was discovered and settled early in the seventeenth century just as the British world system was beginning to develop. Of the approximately 500,000 people that emigrated from England during the seventeenth century, nearly 400,000 left for colonies in North America including Bermuda and the Caribbean (Horn 1994:24-25). In order to encourage development, agreements between the Crown and the colonizing agencies established an extremely permissive system of land tenure citing the East Greenwich pattern in the County of Kent where primogeniture failed to develop and land was freely partible in equal shares among the male heirs (Haskins 1969:204; Goody 1976:31; Sack 1986:137). The Kentish system of tenure was unique in that it retained Saxon laws after the Norman conquest and, thus, was never feudalized. However, it appears that royal charters did not use the Kentish pattern, often called gavelkind tenure, to establish laws governing inheritance in the New World. Instead, the reference to the "free and common socage" of the Manor of East Greenwich simply established that land would not be held *in capite* or directly under the king's authority (Morris 1969:140-141). Moreover, the Kentish form of tenure was not necessarily a means of supplanting the rule of primogeniture but an example commonly cited in Tudor grants "to make plain that the grantee was not to be burdened with military tenures" (Wolford 1969:176). This system



was well suited for speculative colonization because it was not encumbered by feudal constraints and because it allowed a mobile population to buy and sell unexplored land quickly (Harris 1953:137; Sack 1986:137).

Despite the uniformity in the legal underpinnings of landholding established by royal charter in English North America, colonies developed unique settlement systems with distinct patterns of tenure (Sack 1986; Bailyn 1986:49-50). The conditions of the New World were unlike any the colonists had known in England while a host of other variables influenced the development of settlement patterns. These factors included prior experience, individual characteristics, group membership, institutional characteristics, goals, environmental conditions, perceptions of the new environment, and contact with other groups (Norton 1989:80). Even after colonies had become established, the cultural landscape continued to change in response to fundamental social, political, and economic developments. The variation exhibited by the colonial societies comprising the British world system confirms Bruce Trigger's assertion that "cultures are separated not by lines but by clines" (Trigger 1967:151). It is necessary therefore, to explore colonization in the Chesapeake and New England in order to fully understand the process of settlement in Bermuda.

### *The Chesapeake*

The pattern of settlement in the Chesapeake during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was unusual to newcomers. Immigrants born in English villages and cities arrived in Virginia and Maryland to find acres of tobacco and isolated farms scattered

across the landscape. James Horn points out that "in terms of first impressions, it is worth stressing that to English eyes what was missing in Virginia's and Maryland's landscape was as significant as what was present" (Horn 1994:141). The tobacco culture that took hold of the economy beginning in the second quarter of the seventeenth century inspired colonists to amass land and focus all of their labor and capitol on the cultivation of tobacco for the export market. The mania surrounding tobacco is often cited as one of the primary reasons why urban service centers developed so slowly in the Chesapeake (Earl 1975; O'Mara 1983; Horn 1994). Indeed, Anthony Langston wrote in 1658 that "Townes and Corporations have likewise been much hindered by our manner of seating the Country" (Langston 1658:101). This "manner of seating the Country" originated with the large quantities of land held under permissive land policies established by the Virginia Company. While these lenient statutes were enacted by the charters of 1609, 1612, and 1618 to invigorate trade and industry for the benefit of investors in the company, they were not successful until after the dissolution of the company in 1624.

The Virginia colony was settled by the English in 1607 as a speculative venture under the auspices of the Virginia Company of London. The Crown issued the company a charter in 1609 making it a joint stock corporation. Stock was available from the company for investments of £12.10s, £25, and £50 (Middleton 1992:27). Investors who resided in England provided tenants for their shares in Virginia. Tenants were indentured to the company for a period of seven years in return for their passage and one hundred acres of land. A dividend on these shares was also promised after a term of seven years. Sluggish economic development, however, prompted a reorganization of the Virginia

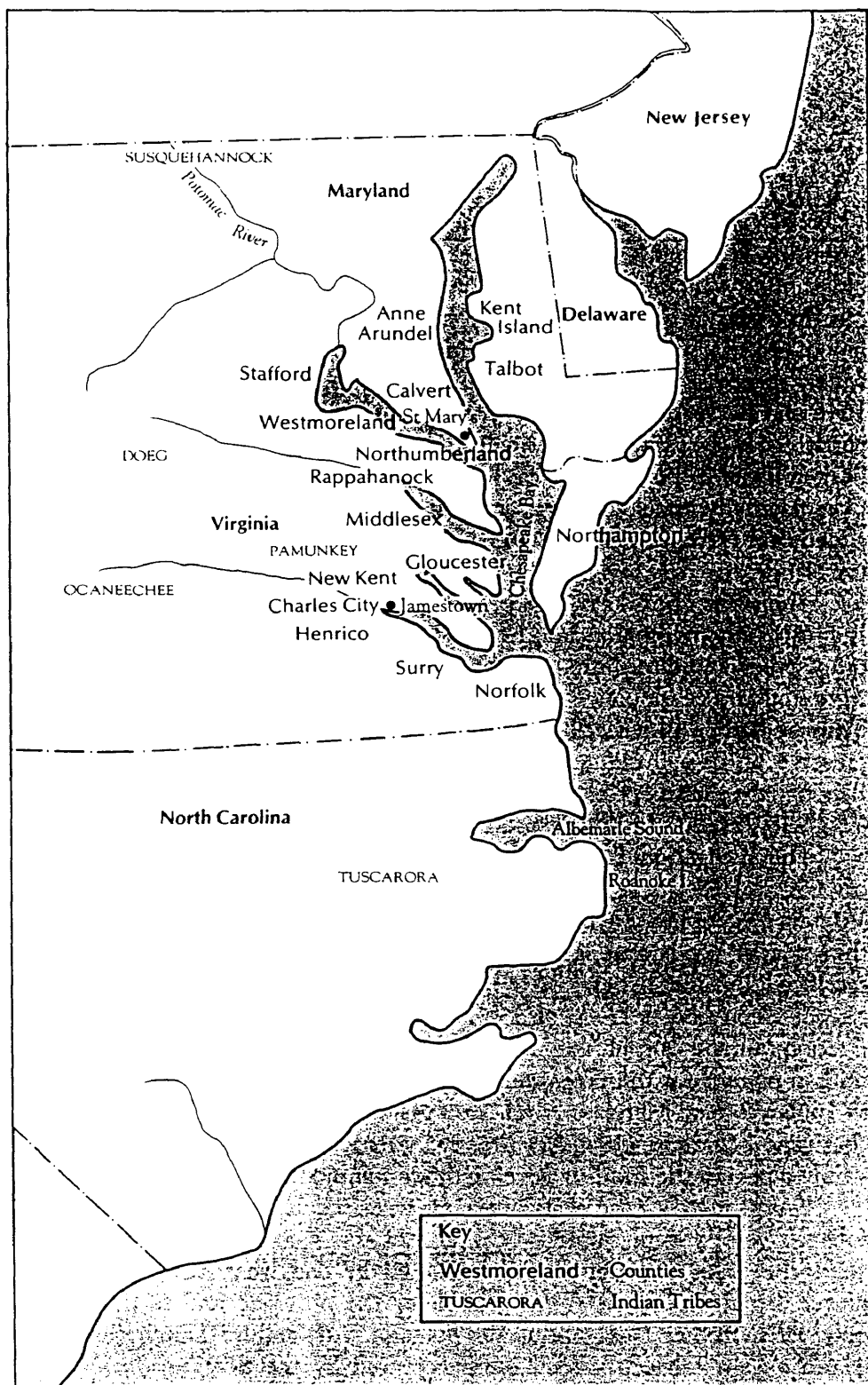


Figure 5. The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century (Middleton 1992:114).

Company under a new charter in 1612. The new charter failed to improve the situation, however.

By 1616, the Virginia Company of London was in such dire straits that it had to offer land as a dividend to investors in order to produce revenue and promote expansion (Harris 1953:192; Craven 1970:116). The company offered fifty acres of land for every £12.10s invested. The headright system was also established. This plan awarded fifty acres for each settler that an investor paid to bring to the colony. The money generated from these investments was used to alleviate debt and pay administrative costs for the colony. Investors hoped to "pool capital, labor, and the land long enough to establish planting and receive a return on the investment (Craven 1970:12).

The third Virginia Company charter issued in 1618 introduced land policies in the colony and advanced plans to encourage the development of shares (Craven 1970:127). The charter discontinued the practice of awarding indentured colonists one hundred acres upon completion of a seven year term of service. Instead, the charter formally recognized the head right system in order to alleviate growing debt within the company by underwriting the cost of immigration (Craven 1970:128). Investors were also offered one hundred acres when they paid off their subscription to the Virginia Company.

Four municipalities, or boroughs, were also established under the charter of 1618 to serve as "focal points" for the Virginia colony (Craven 1970:129). James City, Charles City, Henrico, and Kecoughtan (later Elizabeth City) were incorporated to promote trade and commerce and provide settlers protection from indian attack. The municipalities each consisted of 3000 acres worked by the company's tenants at half shares to pay salaries of

colonial officers. An extra 3000 acres were set aside in James City County for the Governor's salary (Craven 1970:130). Likewise, one hundred acres of glebe land was also set side to provide the salary for a minister. Finally, four acres at a rent of fourpence per year was offered to craftsmen as an inducement to immigrate (Craven 1970:130).

The failure of the Virginia Company sparked panic throughout Virginia. Colonists called upon the Crown to reinstate their rights to the land as they had been established in the charter of 1618 (Craven 1970:174). Although the government failed to act on the measure, colonial governors continued to issue land patents under the terms of the 1618 charter. The "*essential provisions*" of the "*great charter of 1618*" were finally re-confirmed in 1639.

The rules of tenure included in the charter of 1639 were essentially the same as those in the 1618 charter. There were several significant changes, however. First, the charter made Virginia landowners freehold tenants to the King, giving them virtually absolute rights over the land they owned. Second, it affirmed the award of fifty acres per headright and dictated that land had to be occupied in order to receive a patent. Land that was not improved within three years of the original patent could be re-patented. The charter also established four conditions governing land patents. Land patents were awarded in exchange for a contribution to the colony's founding, community service, promoting settlement, or paying passage for a laborer. Wesley Frank Craven argues that the last criterion was considered to be the most important because "it was this headright system that enabled the community to underwrite the immigration upon which Virginia's

fortunes were rebuilt" (Craven 1970:176). The rules of tenure set forth in this document set a pattern of tenure that would survive into the eighteenth century.

All three of the Virginia charters based land rights on the permissive Kentish manner of tenure (Harris 1953:37). This system allowed landowners to sell or give their lands away without legal sanction. Kentish men could even "sue for the same, even against their lords" (Harris 1953:37). The landowner also retained the rights over the property in case of a felony conviction.

Despite the similarities, the pattern of bequest established in Virginia differed greatly from the Kentish pattern. In Kent, land was freely partible, heirs reached the age of majority at fifteen, and widows received one-half of their husband's estate including land (Harris 1953:37-38). In Virginia, primogeniture as defined under English Common Law became the principal inheritance practice both in cases of intestacy as well as among those who wrote wills. In cases of intestacy, according to the Statute of Distributions codified in 1671, real estate descended intact to the eldest son and his heirs (Lee 1988:315; Horn 1994:223). In cases where the eldest male had no heirs, real estate devolved to the next youngest male in succession. In the absence of sons, the land was divided equally among the daughters. Moreover, a widow was provided for according to the custom of "*thirds*" whereby she was "entitled to a third of the annual revenue from her husband's lands for life as well as any land she might have in her own name" (Horn 1994:223).

Primogeniture also helped to perpetuate the dispersed pattern of settlement in the Chesapeake. The tobacco economy which developed in the second quarter of the

seventeenth century prompted planters to buy up large parcels of land. Formal urban centers failed to develop in large part because merchants preferred to trade directly with planters who exchanged their tobacco for finished goods (Earle 1975; Grim 1977; O'Mara 1983; Kelly 1989). Even though the communities that developed throughout the Chesapeake differed drastically from the traditional image of the English countryside, decentralized and dispersed settlement performed effectively. As Carville Earle notes, trade flourished, wealth accumulated, people and ideas circulated rapidly (1975:5).

Planters nearing the end of their lives faced the decision of how to best provide for children and other dependents. While equal division of an estate would have provided each heir with something, planters undoubtedly realized how much land was needed to cultivate tobacco in a world where real estate was becoming increasingly scarce. As a result, when a land-owning planter died in Chesapeake, he left the entire parcel to a single heir more often than not. For example, John Nash, a resident of Middlesex County, Virginia, divided his estate among three sons and a daughter in the 1690s (Rutman 1984:76). He gave his wife a "widow's third" as required by law and divided the slaves and livestock equally among his four children. However, he left all of the real estate to his eldest son with the provision that he allow his two brothers to earn a living from the property. Children who did not receive land often moved away to areas where land was available (Rutman 1984:78; Kelly 1989:61-65). Primogeniture was an effective means of perpetuating the dispersed pattern of settlement in the Chesapeake because parents knew they could leave the lion's share of the real estate to one heir while the remaining children could find more land beyond the area of initial settlement.

*New England*

Unlike the Chesapeake colonies, immigrants to New England established settlements with far more of a philosophical underpinning. The Pilgrims established the first permanent English settlement in New England with the Plymouth settlement in 1620. They sailed for North America with hopes of establishing a utopian community far from the evils of English society. The Pilgrims believed that the Anglican Church was beyond reform and that they should retreat from the world to ponder their faith and work towards salvation. Their separatist leanings, however, destined the Plymouth colony to remain a small and "uninfluential" colony isolated from the prosperous Puritan communities that spread throughout the Massachusetts Bay area in the 1630s (Middleton 1992:55).

The Puritans were also attracted to New England for religious freedom. They also believed that living a simple, godly life would secure them a place in heaven. However, their rebellion against the evil forces overtaking the world and their venomous attacks against the catholic trappings of the Church of England earned them repudiation in England. Puritans established control of the Massachusetts Bay Company in 1630 and immigrated to North America to "await either the reform of the Church of England or the second coming of Christ" (Middleton 1992:55). Upon their arrival in the New World, the Puritans hoped to establish ideal settlements where men were bound together by faith and a strong sense of community. John Winthrop, Governor of the Massachusetts Bay colony, described this dream as the "City Upon a Hill" (Lockridge 1981:17). Limited membership, restricted control over the land, and strict theological views resulted in the development of nucleated settlements surrounded by family farms.



The Massachusetts Bay Company was granted a charter in March of 1629, securing a patent to all of the land between the Merrimack River and the Massachusetts Bay. Like the Virginia Company, this enterprise was organized as a joint stock venture. By August of 1629, John Winthrop identified a loophole in the charter that allowed him to purchase the shares of the "non-Puritan elements" in the company and sail to New England with the charter (Middleton 1992:53). Removing the headquarters of the Massachusetts Bay Company from England to Massachusetts allowed the Puritans to maintain tight control over the colony and reduce interference from the government.

Like Virginia, land in the Massachusetts Bay colony was granted in free tenure under the King for a yearly quitrent. The Puritan colonies in New England took advantage of this leniency to develop a unique land disposal system. Land was acquired by the community as a group and was then sold to the settlers for family-sized farms while larger parcels were developed into plantations. Massive parcels were also sold to land dealers and speculators. The community then worked as a group to establish a town plot with arable fields ranging from eighty to 400 hundred acres, cleared meadows, and woodlands located nearby. The result resembled the English open field village system (Greven 1979:72; Middleton 1992:54-55).

Marshall Harris observes that the New England town system was an "outstanding example of looseness of control from the viewpoint of the colonizing agency and strictness of control by the local proprietors" (Harris 1953:285). Towns were cohesive social units where membership was extremely important and staunchly protected. Laws were strict and leaders were given great powers in order to maintain the integrity of the

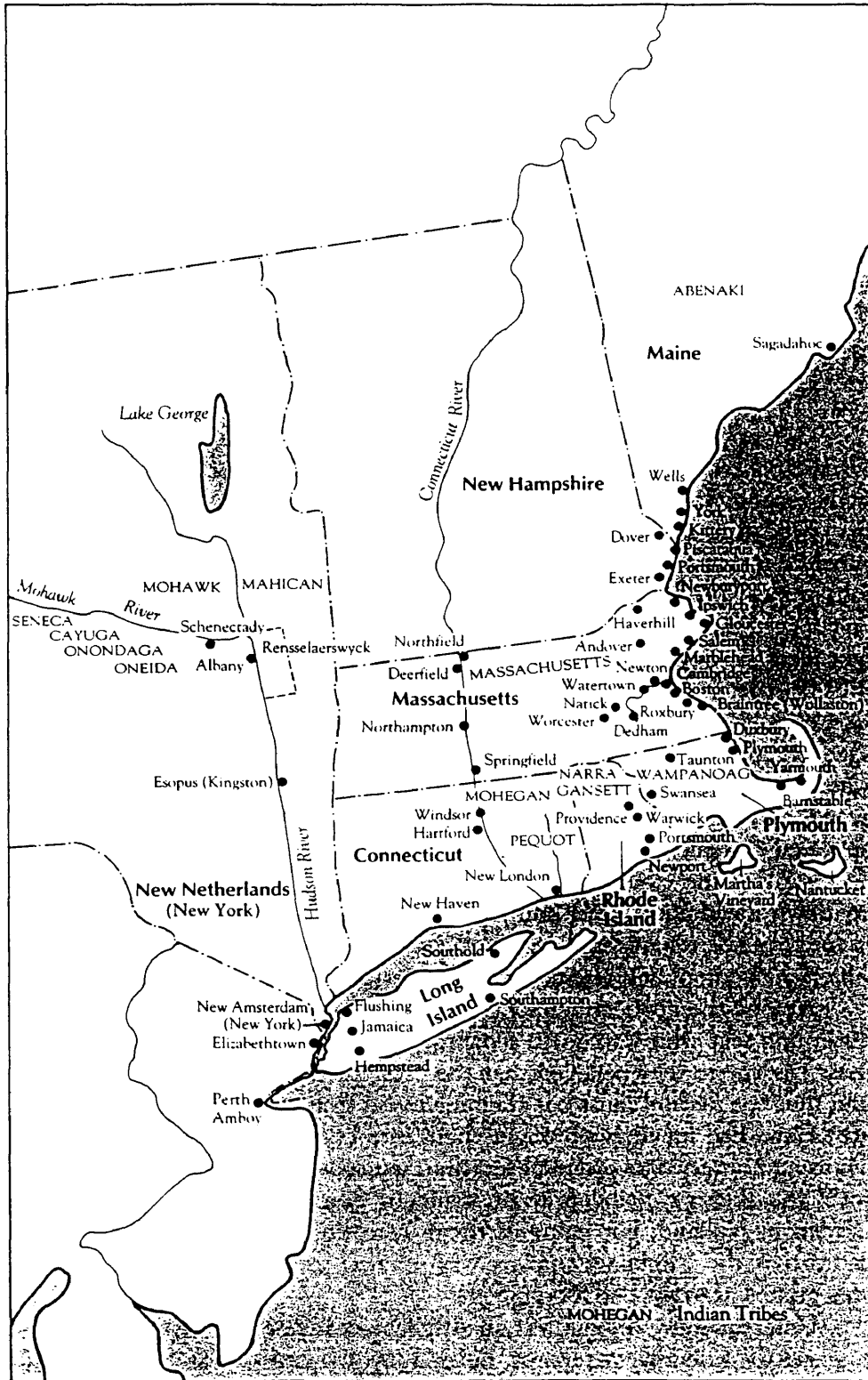


Figure 6. New England in the Seventeenth Century (Middleton 1992:46).

community. While town leaders had the authority to look into the private lives of citizens, they also had the responsibility care for the destitute in the community (Lockridge 1985:15)

Decisions concerning land also worked to reinforce the communal nature of the township. Typically, settlers were only allowed to purchase land within their particular township. While a man's social status or position in the church often influenced decisions, cases involving land were also weighed on a case-by-case basis. Land was granted to a family based on the number of family members while those who invested heavily in cattle were given extra pasturage because they were the "most apt to use that ground" (Lockridge 1981:19-20). Tax rebates were also offered to those who lived farthest from town to compensate them for their isolation. Despite this, differences in property size were generally small.

Colonists in New England developed a unique system of inheritance to transfer personal property and rights in the land. Like Virginia, the Puritan charter granted land in "free and common socage" after the Manor of East Greenwich, in the County of Kent. However, the Massachusetts Bay colony chose a Biblical precedent in establishing laws of descent (Morris 1969:140-141; Wolford 1969:176-177). The rules governing inheritance in cases of intestacy were included in the *Laws and Liberties* of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. This legislation, enacted in 1641 and published seven years later, provided the civil and criminal basis for the administration of the colony until the charter was revoked in 1684. The *Laws and Liberties* departed from the rule of primogeniture and based inheritance in cases of intestacy on Deuteronomy 21:15-17 which

says that a man "shall acknowledge the first born . . . by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the first issue of his strength" (The Bible, Revised Standard Version 1971). According to the Massachusetts code (Liberty 81), the eldest son received a double portion of real estate while the remaining property was equally divided among other children including daughters (Morris 1969:140). Finally, a widow had a right to one-third of her husband's real and personal estate. The widow's dower interest and the right of daughters to share equally in the division of an estate represented a significant departure from English Common Law. Bernard Bailyn argued that over time, this combination of elements made the pattern of settlement in New England "a distinctive category of human association" (Bailyn 1986:50).

The system of partible inheritance established in New England was designed to reinforce cohesiveness within the community. Puritan leaders hoped that the equal division of real estate among children would provide succeeding generations with land while maintaining family solidarity and stability (Lockridge 1985:71). The first generation held land for a long time and refused to transfer ownership until they died. Children remained loyal because their elders granted them the right to work property that they would eventually own. The system only worked until a growing population and the decreased availability of land threatened the ability of Puritan fathers to provide each of their children with real estate (Greven 1979:256). As a result, wills became increasingly complex as land grew scarce. Obligations became common and heirs were burdened with the care of their elders and siblings. Landowners eventually attempted to keep property within the bloodline by leaving the entire parcel to a single heir. In the end, the growing

population and the decrease in land eventually threatened the entire Puritan order (Powell 1962:96-97).

The communal system began to fragment by the third quarter of the seventeenth century. Many town's people reacted to overcrowding and increased scarcity of land by dividing the common land set aside on the outskirts of town. Philip Greven argues that this development altered "the character of the community through the establishment of independent family farms and scattered residences" (Greven 1979:235). The disintegration of tightly knit communities was virtually assured after the most remote property belonging to a township had been parcelled off and new economic opportunities abroad drew younger generations away. Soil depletion only exacerbated a bad situation causing a shift away from subsistence agriculture to more mercantile pursuits. Kenneth Lockridge observed that the lure of employment in nascent urban centers especially after 1736 "threw off the formula" whereby Puritan elders held younger generations captive with the promise of land ownership (Lockridge 1985:145). Those landless who remained became part of a rapidly forming underclass. While the pattern of partible inheritance established according to the scriptures was intended to perpetuate communalism, in reality it created a self-defeating system.

### **CHAPTER III: THE SETTLEMENT OF BERMUDA**

The colony of Bermuda figured prominently in the English world system. Bermuda was initially settled as an adjunct of the Virginia Company in 1612 and the two colonies remained closely linked even after the Bermuda Company was separately chartered later that same year. For a time, English officials and Spanish adversaries alike viewed Bermuda as a more successful venture than the Virginia colony. A Spanish official reported in 1613 that the "realm of Virginia is held in less account than Bermuda because in the former they have not found what they expected or any considerable profits. Of Bermuda they have great expectations" (Quinn 1988:23). The fortunes of Bermuda intricately tied to New England as well. Bermuda developed a strong and influential Puritan community in the 1630s and 1640s. Bermudian churches continued to recruit clergy from New England long after the Puritan movement reached its height on the island in the mid-seventeenth century (Hallett 1993).

#### *"A Hold and Habitation of Divels"*

Although isolated, Bermuda's location along the only approach to the Caribbean virtually guaranteed that it would attract the attention of European explorers as they began to venture into the western hemisphere. The Gulf Stream swept northward out of the Caribbean and skirted the eastern seaboard of North America often bringing ships within

sight of the island group. Early mariners quickly learned that fierce winds and swift currents off the coast of North Carolina and Virginia made this passage difficult to navigate. To compensate, they sailed toward Bermuda where they would turn into the more favorable westerly flowing currents when the islands came into view (Quinn 1988:3). Entering the westerlies near Bermuda was not an easy task, however, due to an extensive reef surrounding Bermuda. The treacherous reefs and tricky currents surrounding the islands claimed many passing ships, giving the islands a sinister reputation as "a hold and habitation of Divels" (Norwood 1945:lxviii).

The islands of Bermuda remained unsettled for a century after they were first sighted in 1505 by Juan Bermudez, a Spanish captain, who discovered the island group while sailing for the Caribbean. The islands first appeared on a map by Peter Marytr in 1511 where they were named for Bermudez. The Spanish quickly recognized the importance of Bermuda's location along the Gulf Stream and for a short time entertained the idea of establishing the settlement of Bermuda. Captain Bartolomé Carreño explored the possibilities in 1538 when he stayed twenty-five days and reported two good harbors, plentiful fish, but poor soil and scarce water (Quinn 1988:8). However, Carreño determined that colonization was possible but difficult given the inhospitable conditions. Throughout the remainder of the sixteenth century, the only visitors to the islands were the unlucky few who ran afoul of the reefs.

A shipwreck eventually prompted the colonization of the island group that many had long dismissed as dangerous and inhospitable. A squadron of ships sailed from England in 1609 bound on a mission to relieve the failing Jamestown colony. Nearing

their destination, the flotilla ran into a storm and the *Sea Venture* washed onto a reef just off Bermuda after becoming separated from the other vessels. The small ship carried an important group of passengers including Sir Thomas Gates, the newly appointed Governor of Virginia, Williams Strachey, the Secretary of the colony, Admiral Sir George Somers, and Christopher Newport, the ship's captain and a veteran of three voyages to Virginia. The crew and passengers of the *Sea Venture* were stranded on in Bermuda for ten months before they were able to build two pinnaces aptly christened the *Deliverance* and the *Patience*. Pleasant conditions and an abundance of food showed the stranded sailors that the island did not deserve its ominous reputation. Strachey later wrote that "These Islands of the *Bermudos*, have ever been accounted as an enchanted pile of rocks, and a desert inhabitation for Divils, but all the Fairies were but flockes of birdes, and all the Divils that haunted the woods, were but heards of swine" (Wright 1964:20). Eventually, Sir George Somers and his men sailed for Jamestown and arrived in time to provide the starving settlers with a cargo of hogs taken from Bermuda.

When news of the wreck of the *Sea Venture* reached England it created a sensation. It inspired Shakespeare to Write The Tempest and provided a badly needed boost for efforts to attract patrons willing to invest in the colonization of the New World. The Virginia Company acquired the rights to Bermuda in 1609. A letter published by the Company in June 1611 to attract investors reported that Bermuda's environment was so healthy and fertile that its prospects for settlement and success outshined those of the Virginia colony and the Ulster Plantation (Quinn 1966:140). Moreover, many realized the strategic importance of the island's location along the gulf stream almost due east of



the Virginia colony. Richard Norwood argued that establishing a settlement in Bermuda was "the Key, opening a passage, and making the way more safe to many parts of this new World, and especially to *Virginia*" (Norwood 1945:lxviii). The Company quickly raised funds and began to colonize the islands by 1612. The colony was separately chartered under the Bermuda Company in 1615. While the Virginia Company failed in 1624, the Bermuda Company survived until Glorious Revolution at the end of the seventeenth century when most joint stock ventures were disbanded and brought under royal control.

#### *The Framework for Settlement*

Bermuda is actually a group of over 300 islands that are volcanic in origin. The island group is located 568 miles east of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. While 181 of these are named, only twenty of the islands are inhabitable, providing merely twenty-one square miles of land in which to settle. Oddly enough, at the outset of colonization the English did not perceive Bermuda's small size to be a constraining factor in establishing a settlement. Wesley Frank Craven argues that the "Early colonizers demonstrated a preference for small island plantations, where compact settlement within a given area enjoying the advantages of natural boundaries was possible" (Craven 1990:13). The known confines of the territory and the absence of an indigenous population in Bermuda allowed the English to develop detailed plans of settlement and execute them efficiently. However, the benefits of settling a finite region were soon overshadowed by the drawbacks of limited space.

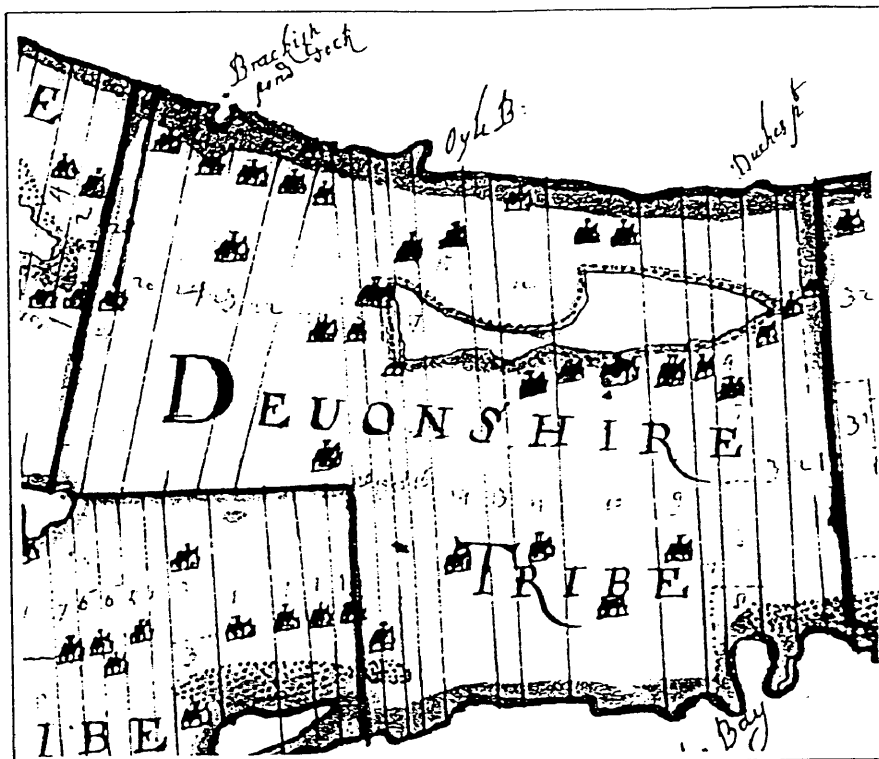


Figure 7. The Norwood Map of 1663 (Trimingham 1995:23).

A detailed survey conducted by Richard Norwood between 1616 and 1617 provided the basic framework from which the settlement of Bermuda developed. Norwood explained that "the Countrey was small, yet they [the settlers] could not have conveniently disposed and well settled, without a true description and sum made of it [the island] (Norwood 1945:lxxvii). Governor Daniel Tucker instructed Norwood to divide the island into nine tribes. Norwood began the survey at the eastern end of the island and moved west through Pembroke. He then broke off and went to the Western end of the island beginning with Ireland Island and moved east (Norwood 1945). This break in

methodology resulted in an overplus of nearly two hundred acres in Southampton parish. Apart from the overplus, each tribe consisted of 1250 acres which were subdivided into fifty "shares." Each of the shares, in turn, consisted of twenty-five acres. St. Georges Tribe, situated on a series of islands located east of the largest island served as the administrative center of the colony. Deep, navigable channels and a protected harbor made this an ideal location for Bermuda's only town. The remaining eight tribes were located on the largest island to the west.

"Tribe" refers to the corporate nature of the colony. It was defined in seventeenth-century parlance as "a division of territory allotted to a family or company" (Ives 1986:17). The tribes were designed to organize constituents in loose associations "Within and under" the general control of the Bermuda Company in order to "make decisions for the common good" (Craven 1990:76). A church was established in each tribe to provide a meeting house for local administration, as well as a place of worship. Land in each parish was also set aside for educational purposes (Lefroy 1981, I:299; Zuill 1946:108). "Tribe" continued to be used long after the Crown assumed control of the island in 1684 and changed the designation to "parish."

The company land located at the eastern end of the colony was held in common and operated under patent to pay for administrative costs (Bernhard 1985:53). The 400 shares located on the main island were distributed to individual investors in proportion to the number of shares held in the joint stock. Shares were offered for an investment of £12.10s and each investor was required to provide his shares with tenants and see that they were planted. Investors were allowed a maximum of ten shares (250 acres) while

the governor was allowed twelve. Investors who exceeded these limits either through marriage or inheritance was forced to sell the extra shares (Bernhard 1985:60). All land transactions required court approval.

Initially, the settlement of Bermuda was a corporate venture organized under the framework of the Virginia Company and designed to generate dividends for investors through the exploitation of the island's resources. Many economic ventures ranging from the cultivation of tropical fruits to silk production were tried unsuccessfully before tobacco was introduced in 1614. Tobacco flourished, producing a record yield of 30,000 pounds by 1616 (Bernhard 1985:61). The cultivation of Tobacco soon became the primary focus of the colony, bringing wealth and attracting hopeful immigrants. Early on, Bermuda's tobacco production even surpassed that of Virginia. Bermuda's primacy was short-lived, however, as conditions in the Virginia colony stabilized in the second quarter of the seventeenth century and immigrants sailed for the Chesapeake to take advantage of a seemingly endless supply of fertile land.

In response to a dwindling share in the tobacco market, Bermudians increased the production of fruits and vegetables for export to other nascent English colonies in the Caribbean and along the eastern seaboard. The need for provisioning decreased, however, as the English colonies in the western hemisphere became increasingly self sufficient. Bermuda was in decline by the time the Crown assumed control of the colony in 1684. Over-population, agricultural exhaustion, and the over-exploitation of local resources forced subsequent generations of Bermudians to leave the islands and look elsewhere for opportunity.

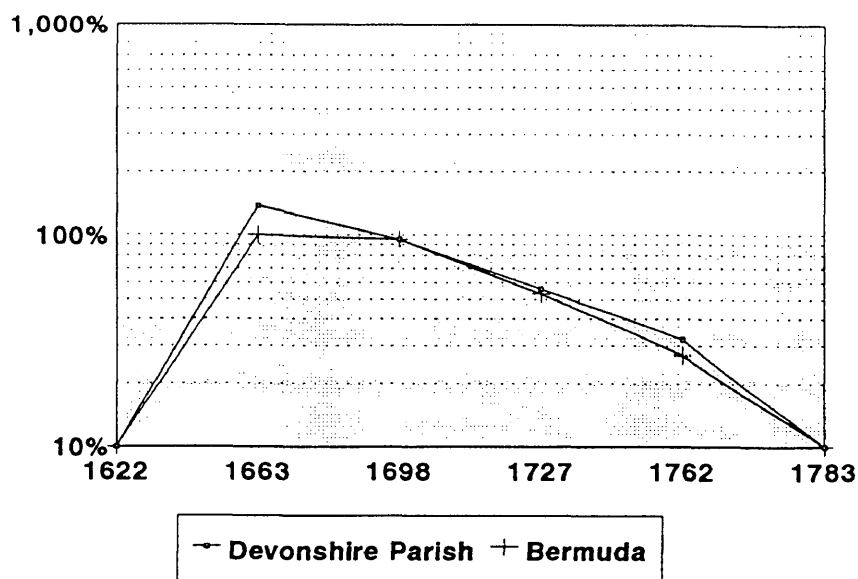
*The Pattern of Growth*

The Virginia Company acquired the rights to colonize Bermuda with a year of the *Sea Venture's* return. The Company moved quickly to secure control of the island by sending a contingent of fifty settlers under the direction of Richard Moore. Colonization continued under the newly formed Bermuda Company, and by 1622, the population had increased to 1500 inhabitants. Between 1622 and 1663, the population of Bermuda doubled to 3000. The growth rate for Devonshire Parish was 40% greater than for the island as a whole during this forty-one year period, expanding from 114 to 272 inhabitants. Considering the demographic shift westward over time, the 139% increase in Devonshire between 1622 and 1663 indicates that the focus of this shift had reached the middle of the Island by 1663. Although the population nearly doubled again during the second half of the seventeenth century, the growth rate had already begun to decrease by 1663. The population of Bermuda increased from 3000 people in 1663 to 5862 in 1698. Likewise, the decline continued through the eighteenth century, averaging a population increase of less than 1% annually (Wells 1975:174).

Prior to 1650 shareholders had prompted rapid growth by recruiting settlers in an effort to supply their shares with tenants as required under the Company bylaws. Like New England, healthy conditions promoted natural increase and helped to bolster the population (Wells 1975:174, Middleton 1992:67). In Virginia, on the other hand, disease, starvation, and warfare combined to limit a settler's life to an average of three years (O'Mara 1983:66). Population growth remained sluggish in the Chesapeake throughout the seventeenth century. Even after starvation and warfare ceased to be significant

## Rate of Population Increase: 1622-1783

Devonshire Parish & Island-Wide



**Figure 8.**

factors, high mortality rates, a considerable sexual imbalance, and late marriage age prevented the formation of families (Horn 1993:139).

Immigrants were the main contributor to population growth until the mid-seventeenth century. By that time, the lure of opportunity had passed and the number of newcomers dwindled. In 1679, island officials reported that "Noe English, Irish, or Forreigner, come in seaven years past to plant there, the Island being fully peopled" (Lefroy II, 1981:432). The report goes on to say, however, that fifty African slaves were brought into Bermuda between 1672 and 1679. Despite the absence of immigrants, the rate of natural increase was so robust that the colony's population continued to grow. Island officials reported that between 1672 and 1679 120 children were born annually representing approximately fifteen births per 1000 inhabitants annually (Lefroy II,

1981:432). Only New England could boast a healthier trend in the population. Kenneth Lockridge calculated the rate to be forty births per 1000 per year between 1648 and 1700 which he notes is equivalent to statistics for the Old World. Despite a lower birth rate, Bermuda could still claim a higher rate of natural increase than the New England colonies. The difference lies in the death rate. Here, Lockridge computes an annual mortality rate of twenty-seven deaths per 1000 between 1648 and 1700 in Dedham, Massachusetts, against rates of "thirty to forty and higher in Europe" (Lockridge 1985:66-67). Incredibly, Bermudian officials reported the death rate to be twenty people a year or two and a half deaths per 1000 inhabitants between 1672 and 1679 (Lefroy II, 1981:429-434).

Bermudians began to feel the effect of over-population by the mid-seventeenth century. In 1652, a Bermudian lamented that "we are encreased and multiplied to a great

Year	Devonshire	Bermuda	Reference
1622	114	1500	(Ives 1984:240-245; Lefroy I, 1981:141-143)
1663	272	3000	(Lefroy II, 1981:645-731)
1698	532	5862	(Hallett 1993:118; Wells 1975:173)
1727	830	8947	(Bermuda Census 1727)
1749	820	9270	(Hallett 1993:141; Wells 1975:173)
1762	937	11376	(Hallett 1993:141; Wells 1975:173)
1788	899	10381	(Hallett 1993:141; Wells 1975:173)

**Figure 9.** Population in Bermuda.

people insomuch that now here is no livings for us" (Lefroy II, 1981:30) As a result, dwellings encroached on agricultural fields, limiting tobacco production. Tobacco monoculture, in turn, resulted in soil exhaustion. A royal proclamation set forth in 1641 condoned emigration from Bermuda. In it, Charles I declared that,

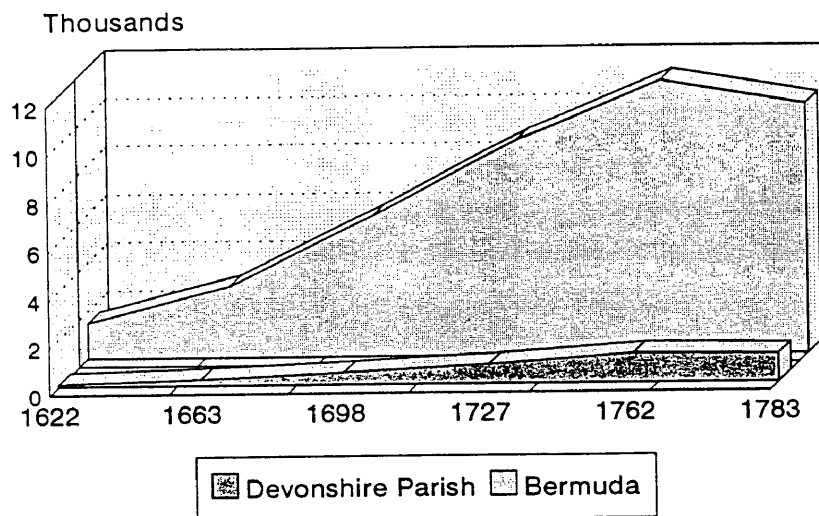
all and every Governours Presidents and Councilrs and other officers of all & everye the English colonyes and Plantations settled and beeing in the West Indies (upon notice thereof) to permitt & suffer any of our subjects not engaged as aforesd to remove with their families servants and goods from the severall places of their habitations and abode to any other English Plantation or other pt of our domynions w<sup>th</sup>out lett disturbance or interruption in any kinde (Lefroy 1981, I:566).

The decline in prosperity caused many Bermudians look towards seafaring to earn a living. Islander's quickly filled the need for ocean going transport between colonies. While Bermudian ships moved up and down the Atlantic seaboard, much of this activity focused on nascent colonies in the Caribbean. Bermudians settled plantations such as Eleuthria, New Providence, and the Turks Islands just of the Bahamas in the 1660s and 1670s.

By 1679, tobacco produced only £5000 a year while the provisioning of neighboring islands accounted for £6000 annually (Calendar of State Papers 1679:395). The British government also recognized the island's importance to trade. The Ministry of Trade reported that "Bermuda lies in the way of all trade to the West Indies" (Calendar of State Papers 1964, 11:439). Bermudians called for free trade in order to relieve worsening economic conditions, but the Bermuda Company refused. While free trade would have placed Bermuda at risk of violating the Navigation Acts, it would also have meant a loss of control over the island's affairs for the Bermuda Company.



## Population Growth Devonshire Parish & Island-Wide 1622 - 1783



**Figure 10.**

Dissatisfaction with the Bermuda Company was mounting toward the end of the seventeenth century. Bermudians were angered by the Company's tight control over the island while the Crown was unhappy with the inefficiency and mismanagement. Thus began what Richard Dunn calls "Bermuda's generation of anarchy, 1670 to 1700" (Dunn 1963: "511). In 1679, for example, the freeholders of Bermuda issued a list of grievances against the Company. The first complaint declared that "The owners and possessors of Land in bermuda are by orders and printed instructions form the Honble Company of Adventurers for Plantation of Somers Islands &c, their Governor and officers here, disseized and outed of their inheritance without any trial at law" (Lefroy 1981, II:467). While the Company denied these charges it began a tit-for-tat relationship where successive grievances were repeatedly followed by emphatic denial. In an almost

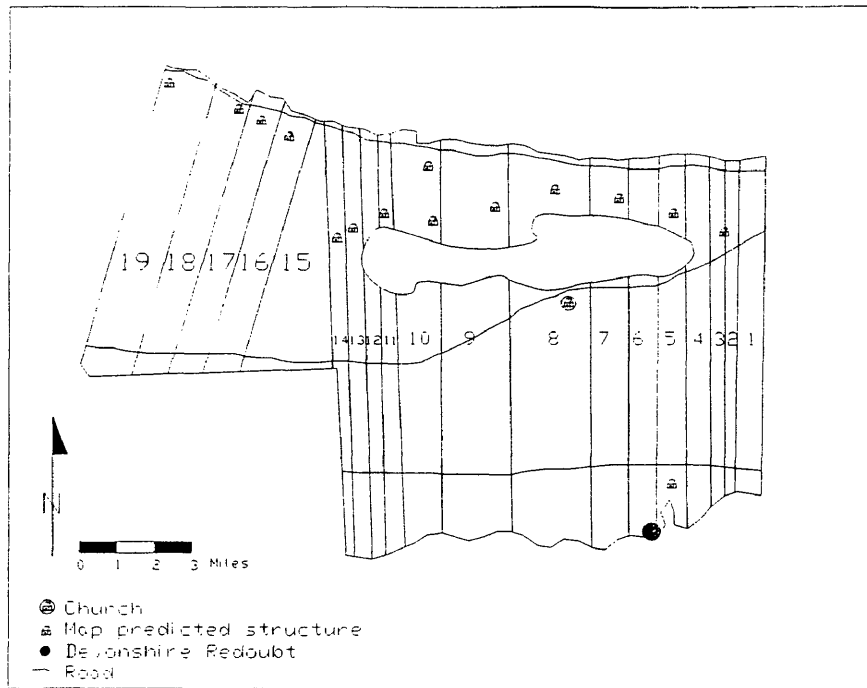


Figure 11. Devonshire Parish, ca.1622 (Note the map-predicted structures).

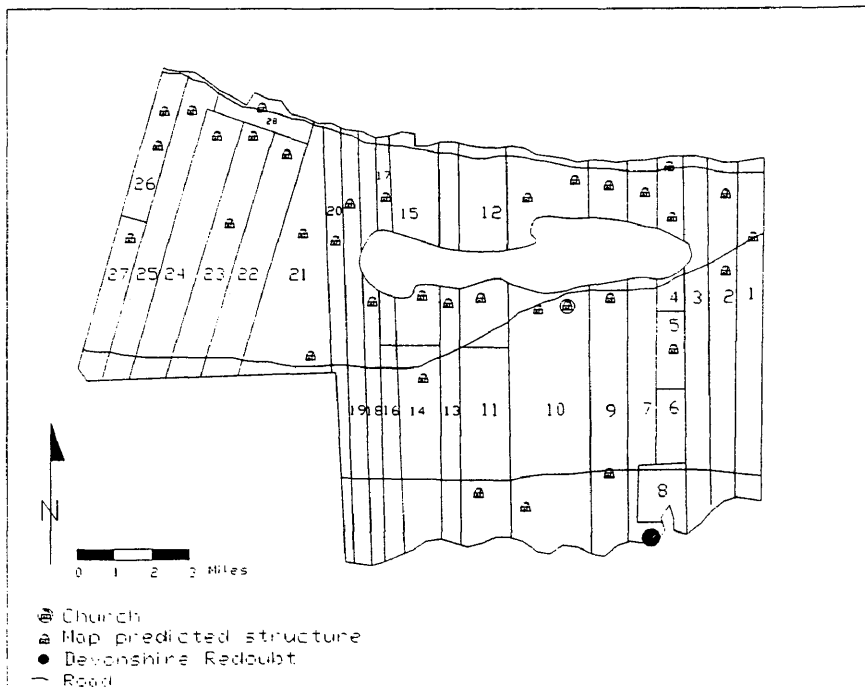


Figure 12. Devonshire Parish, ca.1663 (Note the map-predicted structures)..

unrelated series of events, the Bermuda Company's charter was finally in 1684 and established Bermuda as a royal colony during the Revolutionary crisis when the British government revoked the charters of many private colonies to gain tighter control over a rapidly expanding empire. Subsequently, Acts were passed to promote trade, the ban on ship building was repealed (1684) and the shift from an agricultural to a maritime economy was made complete.

The cultivation of tobacco declined after the demise of the Company and land was then used to grow produce on a small scale in order to provide for the subsistence of the local population while larger estates were maintained by wealthy families engaged in commerce (Meinig 1986:162). Bermuda experienced a sharp increase in the population following the dissolution of the Bermuda Company. This trend continued into the 1720s, increasing the number of inhabitants from 8000 in 1679 to over 10,000 in 1727 reflecting an increase of 50% over forty-eight years. The number of inhabitants in Devonshire Parish increased from 533 to 830 during the same period. Like the Chesapeake, growth in Bermuda acted as a "barometer for economic change" (O'Mara 1983:67). The dissolution of the Bermuda Company resulted in greater economic freedom and a shift from an agriculturally-based system to seafaring. Immigrants arrived to take advantage of the new found opportunities while the local inhabitants hoped to capitalize on the situation. The residents of St. George's, for example, developed ambitious plans to renovate their town by replacing the ramshackle huts with impressive stone buildings suitable for a colonial capital (Wilkinson 1950:324). Prosperity was short lived, however, causing the island to revert to the former pattern of economic decline.

The only other episode of significant growth for Bermuda during the eighteenth century occurred between 1749 and 1756. This short period rivaled the American colonies with an annual growth rate of 2.8% (Wells 1975:174). Bermuda's population grew from 8947 inhabitants in 1727 to 11376 people in 1762. Devonshire also increased, going from 830 to 1250. This wave of immigration into the western hemisphere was reflected in population increases recorded for other colonies, including Georgia, the Bahamas and Jamaica (Wells 1974:183 & 196). D.W. Meinig points out that the "population of many tropical islands under British control] fluctuated often directly with developments elsewhere in the western Atlantic rim" (Meinig 1986:161). Following this brief surge, the Bermudian population resumed the pattern of slow economic and demographic decline. The island's population declined from 11376 in 1762 to 10381 in 1783. Devonshire recorded a less drastic loss for this twenty-one year period, dropping from 1250 inhabitants to 1199.

### *The Pattern of Landholding*

The growing population in Bermuda prompted an increased demand for land. While the British colonies in New England and the Chesapeake responded to this pressure by expanding outward from the area of initial settlement, Bermuda was limited by the short supply of land from the very start and outmigration was seen as the only solution to this problem (O'Mara 1983:77). William Becher reported to the "Commissioners for Forraigne Plantacons" in 1639 that "more [people] must of necessity yearely depart, by reason of the increase of the people and the straitness of the place" (Lefroy 1981, I:557).

The situation became worse over time. In a letter to Lord Ashely dated 1670, two island administrators complained that "our island of Bermudas is over peopled and the natives much for want of land, so that a hundred inhabitants can yearly be spared for New Plantations" (Calendar of State Papers, Vol.12:56). In Devonshire Parish, the average landholding size diminished from twelve acres to two acres per landowner between 1622 and 1698, reflecting a 16% increase in the population density. Land was further reduced to one acre per person by the end of the eighteenth century. Patterns of land tenure in Devonshire had to be highly adaptable in order to withstand such incredible stress.

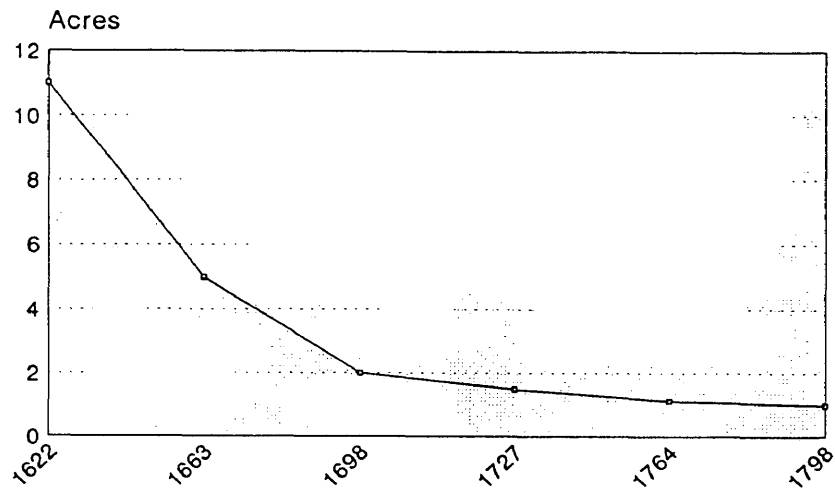
Despite a thriving population and the increasing demand for land in a colony with finite resources, the pattern of landholding in Devonshire Parish remained relatively stable. Landowners consistently accounted for approximately 10% of the population throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Restricted access to landownership helped maintain this stability. Prior to its dissolution in 1684, the Bermuda Company relied upon legislation to control the number of landowners as well as the size of individual parcels. By law, all patents had to be "read and approved in a Quarter Court" after having been "first examined and allowed under the hands of a select committee" (Lefroy 1981, I:205). In so doing, Company administrators closely regulated the use and division of land, resulting in a static pattern of land holding.

The number of land owners relative to the total population of Devonshire Parish demonstrates the exclusive nature of this group. The nineteen shares Norwood established in Devonshire in 1616 were distributed among fourteen investors. The number of owners dropped to eleven by 1622 when 10% of the parish population (n=114)

## Acres of Land per Inhabitant

### Devonshire Parish, Bermuda

#### 1622 - 1798



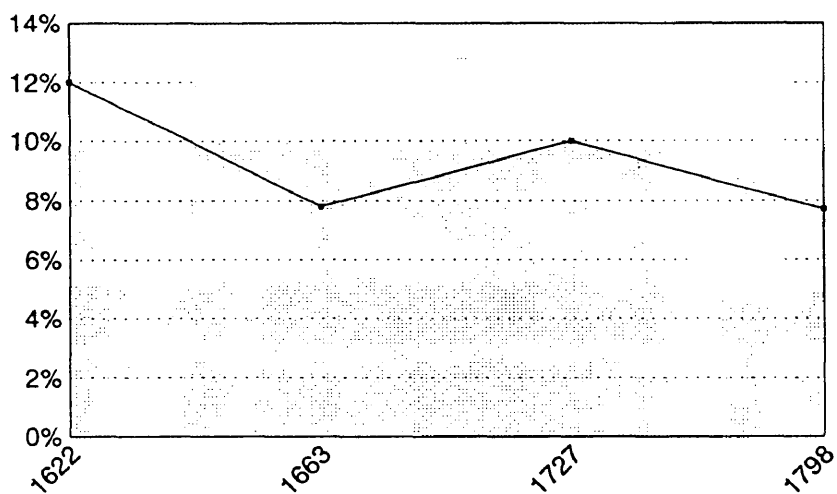
**Figure 13.**

owned land. The number of land owners relative to the parish population remained steady between 1622 and 1663. After the second Norwood survey of 1663, twenty-eight shares were divided among twenty-eight landowners representing 10% of a population of 272.

The same static pattern was repeated beginning in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. The number of landowners decreased by 2% between 1727 and 1798. There were eighty-three landowners among a parish numbering 830 (10%) in 1727. The number of landowners dropped to 7% by the fourth quarter of the eighteenth century eighty-six out of 1199 owned real estate. Given the increasing population density, the decreasing number of landowners relative to the parish population may indicate that

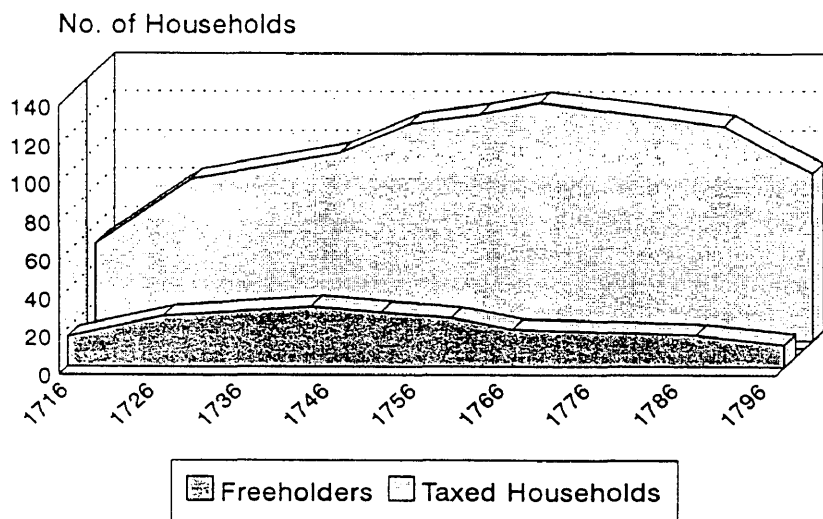
parcel size was being maintained. The only period of increase occurred between 1663 and 1727 when the number of landowners in Devonshire Parish increased by nearly 300%. The number of landowners increased from twenty-eight in 1663 to eighty-three in 1727. While this increase seems drastic, the parish population experienced the same incredible growth spurt and by 1727, freeholders still account for 10% of the population. This period of growth may have resulted from Bermuda's transition to a royal colony at the end of the seventeenth century. Following the dissolution of the Bermuda Company in 1684, more land came on to the market as the economy shifted from an agricultural to a maritime based system. As the emphasis on seafaring increased, the large tracts of land needed for the cultivation of tobacco became less important and, as a result, the amount of land a needed by a family decreased. Much of this property was sold during

### Percent of the Population Owning Land Devonshire Parish, Bermuda 1622-1798



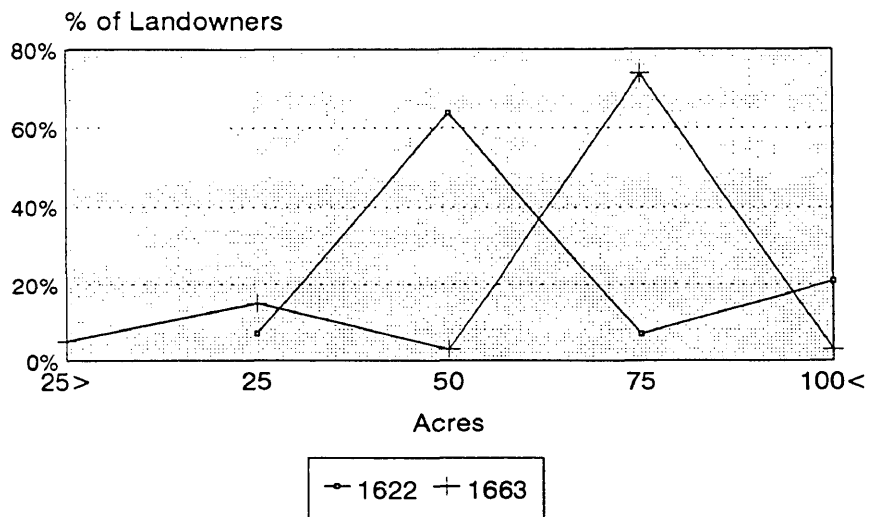
**Figure 14.**

## Land Ownership and the Population Devonshire Parish, Bermuda 1716 - 1798



**Figure 15.**

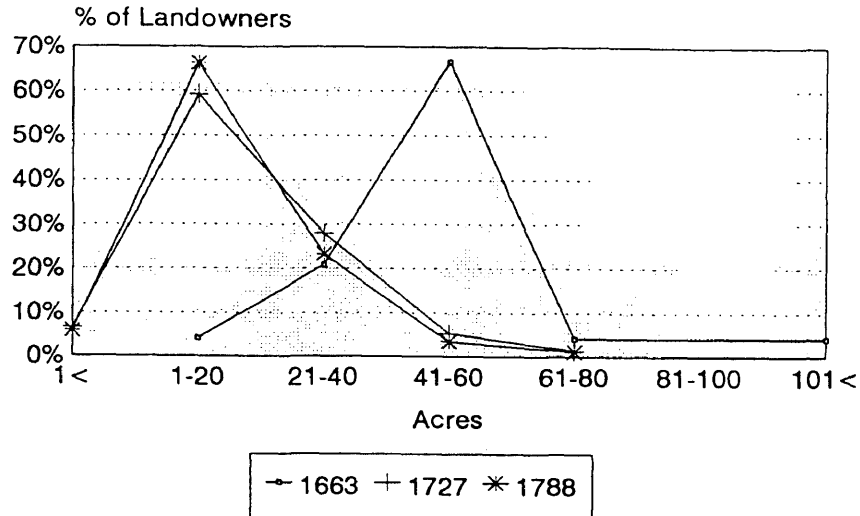
## Pattern of Landholding Devonshire Parish, Bermuda 1622 - 1663



**Figure 16.**



## Pattern of Landholding Devonshire Parish, Bermuda 1663 - 1788



**Figure 17.**

the first years of the eighteenth century, resulting in the increase in landowners.

This period of growth was short-lived, however. By the 1720s, landownership once again became static and remained so for the duration of the eighteenth century. Tax assessments listing land owners and tenants in Devonshire parish during the eighteenth century illustrate this point particularly well. There is an increasing disparity between landowners and the rest of the population between 1727 and 1796. Landowners account for 10% of the population in 1727 while they comprise only 7% of the population by the end of the century. A similar pattern of landownership has been identified by Carville Earle in Maryland for the eighteenth century. Earle argues that "One reason for the static

land structure was that the body of landowners grew very slowly; by contrast, the parish population grew rapidly" (Earle 1975:203).

The size-distribution of landholdings in Devonshire Parish also reflects a stable landholding pattern. Despite the decrease in parcel size over time, the distribution of parcel size remained the same. Over 70% of the landowners listed in 1622 controlled fifty-acre parcels (n=7), while 20% (n=2) owned shares consisting of 100 or more acres. By 1663, land was distributed more evenly among the twenty-eight freeholders. By this time, twenty-one (74%) owned tracts consisting of seventy-five acres while only one (n=3%) landowner held more than 100 acres.

The average parcel size had been significantly reduced by the eighteenth century. Approximately 60% (n=49) of the landowners in Devonshire Parish owned between one and twenty acres in 1727, while 28% (n=23) owned up to forty. By 1798, 66% (n=57) of the freeholders owned one to twenty acre parcels, while 23% (n=20) owned up to forty. The discrepancy between the size-distribution of parcels between 1727 and 1798 reflects a gradual decrease in parcel size over time, perhaps reflecting the effects of increased population pressure.

## **CHAPTER IV: THE TRANSMISSION OF PROPERTY**

The pattern of landholding in Devonshire Parish remained extraordinarily stable during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries despite the finite nature of the resource and the extreme pressure of an ever-increasing population. The pattern of settlement remained static from the time Richard Norwood surveyed parish in 1616 until the end of the seventeenth century when it shifted in response to the change in the economic basis of the colony. Shortly after the turn of the eighteenth century, the pattern became static once again. So little changed in Devonshire in nearly three hundred years that the property boundaries Norwood established in 1619 were still visible when Lieutenant Savage completed the Ordnance Survey map of the parish in 1899. The enduring quality of these patterns is due, in large part, to how Bermudians transferred property from one generation to the next. While real estate was undoubtedly bought and sold in Bermuda, access to the land was regulated primarily through inheritance.

### *Inheritance*

Taken at face value, wills reflect personal choices made at the end of one's life to see that personal effects and valuable property are distributed among family and friends. Wills, however, reflect far more than emotional decisions. The devolution of property is a complicated process centering on a conflict between equity among heirs and

the unity of the estate. James Horn points out that this conflict is resolved by evaluating "a complex substratum of assumptions about the relationship of parents to children (or the older generation to the younger), the role of wives within the family polity and economy, distinctions between sons and daughters, the preservation of the family holding within the bloodline, and a host of mundane practical considerations governed by the particular circumstances in which property was passed on" (Horn 1994:223). Inheritance practices represent a mediation between equity and unity. This "tension . . . gave a characteristic shape to inheritance strategies within broad social classes" (Ditz 1986:26).

Inheritance is also the primary means by which a social system is reproduced between generations. Inheritance systems develop in response to many variables including the structure of the family unit, the mode of land tenure, economy, and a wide range of demographic variables (Ditz 1986:25; Horn 1993:226). For example, partibility develops in areas where land is abundant and population density is low. Equal division is possible because the economic viability of the property remains uncompromised. In contrast, a pattern of impartible inheritance results when population pressure is high and land is hard to obtain. Likewise, impartible inheritance persists in areas where land is the principal form of wealth while more economically diverse regions foster greater equity in the devolution of real estate (Lee 1988:338-339). Moreover, inheritance practices are extremely susceptible to changes in the cultural or natural domain. In their analysis of inheritance practices in Western Europe between 1700 and 1900, Lutz Berkner and Franklin Mendels determined that "peasant strategy will aim to adjust the inheritance

practices or the demographic patterns" when population or economic pressures become overwhelming (Berkner and Mendels 1978:217)

Primogeniture had become the prevalent inheritance strategy in England by the seventeenth century when the North American colonies were beginning to develop. That English Common Law specified this strategy to govern the transmission of property in cases of intestacy indicates its widespread acceptance. In fact, given the estimate that one-half to four-fifths of the global-British society did not make a will, most estates were subject to primogeniture by default. James Horn cogently argues that "some may have considered their estates too insubstantial to merit a will while others were no doubt satisfied with the law of primogeniture favored in the law of intestates" (Horn 1994:224). Toby Ditz, for example, argues that most small to middling land owners in the English colonies chose the favored-heir-plus-burdens pattern (Ditz 1986:26-27). This extended cognate pattern conveyed property to a single heir but created obligations which bound the heir to siblings, parents, and children. For example, John Smith of Devonshire Tribe stipulated in his will dated 1711 that his son, Samuel, would receive the house and land in after paying his brother a sum of £10 (Book of Wills 5, n.d.:85). Ditz also observed, however, that the pattern of inheritance in English colonies remained "quite permissive" to allow for a range of variables active within society (Ditz 1986:25). Differing conditions throughout the colonies prompted the development of inheritance patterns specifically adapted to regional economic and demographic variables.

*Inheritance in Devonshire Parish*

Joseph Wiseman of Devonshire Parish, Bermuda, realized that his time on earth was nearing its end when he recorded his last will and testament in 1671. "Beeing in perfect memory but very weake in body," he gave detailed instructions of how his two shares (fifty acres) of land in Devonshire Parish should descend through the family (Book of Wills 1, n.d.:195). He bequeathed the entire parcel to his grandson Joseph Darrell and further stipulated that Joseph's brother, "Jeames," would inherit the property if Joseph died without heirs. Nothing was left to chance, however. Should these two heirs "die without issue," the land would continue on to the next of Wiseman's grandsons, thus ensuring that the property remained intact within the bloodline (Book of Wills 1, n.d.:195). Wiseman's property, listed as Share 24 on Richard Norwood's 1663 survey, remained within the family until 1864 when the British War Department acquired the property as part of a compulsory purchase.

Four generations of Darrells had occupied this land by the time Wiseman's great grandson, Joseph Darrell, wrote his own will in 1774. Darrell's will differed from that of his forebear in that he opted for a more equitable distribution of his property among several heirs. He left a parcel of land in Pembroke Parish to his son and gave his wife tenure of the property in Devonshire Parish for the remainder of her widowhood or life. The will also directed that the land in Devonshire be divided equally among Darrell's four daughters upon the remarriage or death of his wife (Book of Wills 9, n.d.:274). Joseph Darrell's decision to provide each of his children with real estate deviated from the pattern of monogeniture that was common in seventeenth-century Bermuda. Moreover, Darrell's

will also departed from a pattern of bequest that maintained the integrity of Wiseman's original two shares for four generations. Although Darrell left most of his property scattered throughout Bermuda to his son, he divided the Devonshire property among his four daughters. In so doing, he broke the family property into four parcels that would leave the named bloodline when the daughters married. While landholding patterns appear to change very little in Devonshire Parish, data compiled from wills indicates that inheritance strategies continually adapted to changing conditions.

English Common Law provided the legal basis for inheritance in Bermuda. The Statute of Distributions codified in 1671 provided the precedent for the Bermuda Intestacy Law of 1690-1691. According to this law, the property of an intestate devolved according the rules of primogeniture whereby the eldest son received the real estate intact (Crane 1990:241). If the eldest died without "*issue*" or heirs, the property descended to the next oldest successively until this criteria was met. Daughters were eligible to receive land only in the absence of sons. The intestate's widow was provided for under the law of "*thirds*" giving the widow the right to one-third of her husband's personal and real estate, including any investments he might have had, for life or as long as she remained his widow. The remaining two-thirds of the personal estate was divided equally among the children. It is difficult to say what percentage of the Bermudian population died intestate although, as elsewhere in the English Empire, it was probably the majority of the population.

*Inheritance and the Land*

A total of one hundred and fourteen wills were identified from Devonshire Parish, beginning in 1640 and continuing until 1798. Although two of the wills were written in 1640, representation is sparse until 1665 when they begin to appear in significant numbers. In all, twenty-five seventeenth-century wills were located. The remaining eighty-nine wills date to the eighteenth century, averaging nine wills per decade.

Like all historical sources, wills are inherently biased sources. James Horn points out that "interpreting patterns of bequests in wills is complicated not only because practices varied according to wealth, social status, occupation and age of the testator or testatrix but also because of differences conditioned by family life cycle and composition" (Horn 1993:225; Main 1988:90-91). For example, those who did not own real estate in Bermuda usually divided their estate equally among heirs while freeholders were often very particular to see that their real estate remained within the bloodline. For example, the will of Richard Appowen, Sr. written in 1687 directed that his son John receive "26 acres with Mansion House" and, if John should die without heirs, "it is to go to my grandson Richard Appowen," eldest son of Richard Appowen Jr. (Book of Wills 3, n.d:16-19; Mercer 1982:4). Likewise, the estate of a wealthy man who dies in the prime of his life would look very different from an old man who had already distributed his property among his children prior to writing a will. It also is very difficult to determine what settlements involving real estate were made prior to a will. Referring to the will of Richard Appowen once again, he writes "I do confirm, allow & well approve of all writings, covenants & agreements heretofore made by and between me and my eldest son

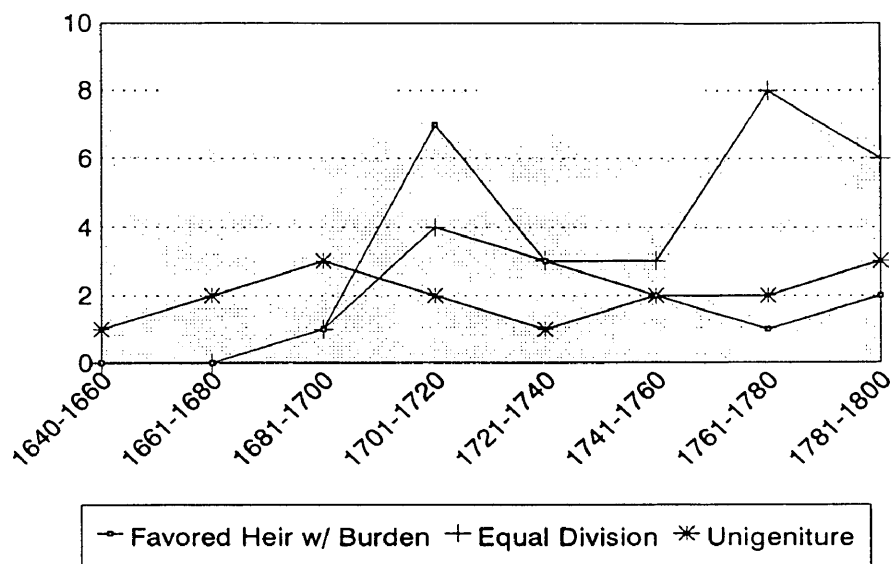


Richard or any of his children (Book of Wills 3, n.d.:16-19). Deeds of gift, marriage dowries, and transfers by sale or donation (*inter vivos*) were all very common in England in the seventeenth century (Goody 1976:5-7). Despite these limitations, wills represent the most democratic source available on inheritance and land transfer in Bermuda.

The paucity of wills prior to 1665 may be a function of low survival due to extreme age or it may reflect the predominance of absentee landowners prior to 1663. None of the fourteen original grantees in Devonshire moved to the colony (Lefroy I, 1981:99-100; Lefroy II, 1981:671-677; Ives 1984:350). The remaining landowners supplied their shares with tenants according to the by-laws of the Bermuda Company. By 1650, most of the landowners lived in Bermuda. Richard Norwood's second survey indicates that as many as nine of the fourteen original grantees had sold their shares by 1663 suggesting that a second generation is in control of the land in Bermuda (Lefroy II, 1981:671-677). Moreover, fifteen out of twenty-two (68%) of the surnames listed among the owners in 1663 survive into the eighteenth century, indicating that resident owners replaced most absentee landlords by the mid seventeenth century.

The analysis of Devonshire Parish wills demonstrates a shift in the favored pattern of inheritance between 1640 and 1798. Prior to 1700, most testators left their property to one heir rather than divide it. Between 1640 and 1680, none of the twelve wills opted for equal division of the estate. Likewise, only four of the fourteen wills dating between 1681 and 1700 provided land to more than one heir. Instead, those who wrote wills prior to 1700 were more likely to leave their property to a single person. Testators chose a single heir in twenty-two of twenty-six of the cases dating between 1640 and 1700. The

## Frequency of Inheritance Type Wills Naming Multiple Heirs: 1640-1800



**Figure 18.**

pattern favoring one heir in the transmission of property between generations suggests that parents tried to keep their parcels of land intact within the bloodline.

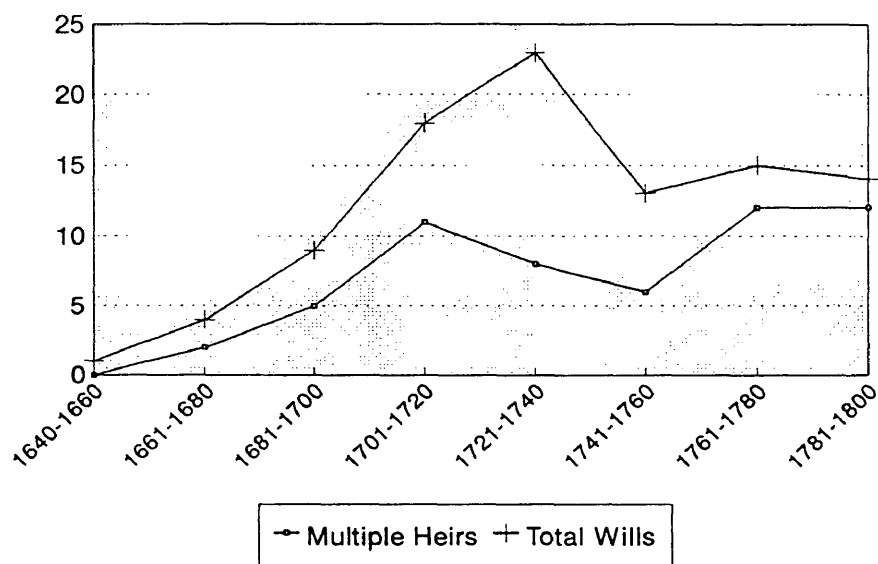
While most seventeenth-century wills identified from Devonshire Parish passed real estate to a single heir, most created a series of obligations binding the heir to siblings or dependents. John Stowe's will of August, 1684 specified that his son Joseph would receive one-third "of my land in Devon Tribe provided he pay son Benjamin, now a captive in Algiers, £200" (Mercer 1982:190). "Such practices," according to Ditz, "preserved family property by limiting the number of children who inherited the working land and by rigorously subordinating the claims of wives to those of children" (1986:26). Maintaining parcel-size would have been an important concern in Bermuda considering that the agriculture remained the economic focus of the colony throughout the seventeenth century. In Europe, for example, impartible inheritance practices such as primogeniture

and favored-heir-plus-burdens corresponded to areas where land was primary to the economy (Howell 1976:117).

Thirteen wills (50%) fit the favored-heir-plus-burdens pattern of inheritance, indicating that parents in Devonshire tried to provide for the needs of all their dependents while keeping the property intact. Five of the twelve wills (42%) dating between 1640 and 1680 named a favored heir while eight of sixteen (50%) wills exhibited this pattern between 1681 and 1700. The favored-heir strategy declined steadily after 1700, coinciding with the shift from agriculture to maritime pursuits. While the favored-heir-plus-burdens pattern represented the most common inheritance strategy in Devonshire Parish in 1700, the pattern appeared in only three of thirteen wills (23%) between 1781 and 1798. Thus, the correlation between the decline of this strategy following a shift in the island's economy seems to suggest that it was directly linked to the agriculturally-based economy of the seventeenth century when land was the primary unit of production.

The pattern of unigeniture displays a similar trajectory as the favored-heir-plus-burdens pattern. Unigeniture simply means that one heir is favored over others in the settlement of an estate. For example, William Hutchings wrote in his will dated 1692 that his son Steeven (sic) would inherit both the house and land after the boy's mother died or re-married (Book of Wills 2(1), n.d.:89). As such, primogeniture (favoring the eldest) and ultimogeniture (favoring the youngest) are both forms of unigeniture. It is often difficult to determine the age-order of the individuals named in wills. For example, in tracing the chain of title to Palmetto House in Devonshire, Andrew Trimmingham wrote that, "A great deal has been written about this house but, because the Williams family had

## Wills Providing Property to Multiple Heirs Devonshire Parish, Bermuda: 1640-1800



**Figure 19.**

one or more William Williams in every generation, it had all got rather confused" (Trimingham 1995:78). Like the favored-heir strategy, unigeniture tends to predominate in areas where land is at a premium due to its importance to the economy (Goody 1976:26-27).

Over half (n=7) of the twelve wills dating between 1640 and 1680 exhibited unigeniture. The pattern then drops to two out of fourteen wills between 1680 and 1700. Once again, the drastic shift away from unigeniture appears to correspond with the shift away from commercial agriculture in Bermuda. After 1700, unigeniture begins to increase once again and reaches a high point between 1721 and 1740 when nine out of twenty-four wills (38%) employ this strategy. The reasons for the spurt in the occurrence of unigeniture are unclear although they may reflect a greater availability of land in

Devonshire Parish following the dissolution of the Bermuda Company in 1684. Following the peak in 1640, the frequency of this strategy declines to a low point between 1781 and 1799 when it appears in only one out of thirteen wills. The consistent decline in unigeniture after 1750 certainly corresponds to a period when most Bermudians are not engaging in agriculture on any scale beyond subsistence (Wilkinson 1973:7-14).

While unigeniture and the favored-heir-plus-burdens strategies exhibit patterns of decline during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, partibility increases over the same period. The number of wills providing property to multiple heirs increases throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Three out of twelve wills (25%) provided real

### Transmission of Property Through Wills Devonshire Parish, Bermuda: 1640-1800

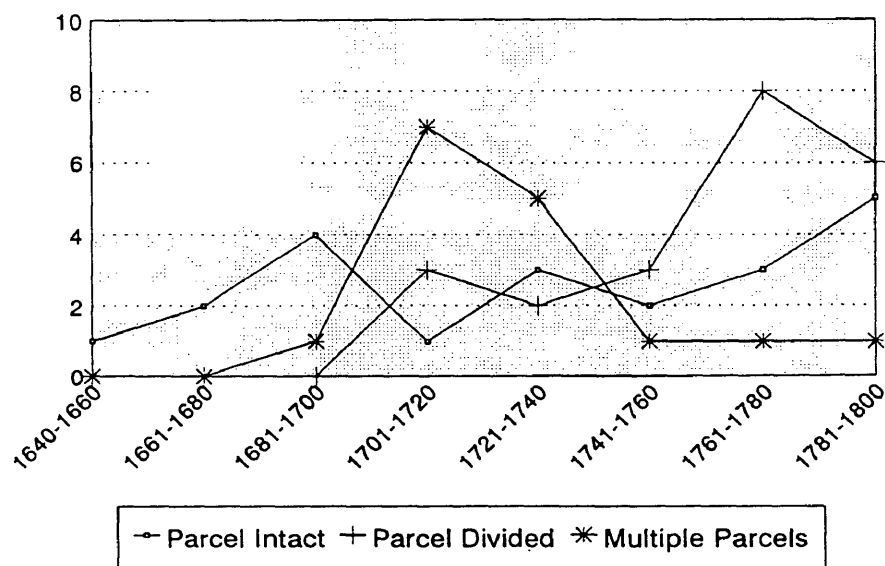


Figure 20.

estate to more than one heir between 1640 and 1680. The trend peaked 1701 and 1720 when sixteen of eighteenth wills (89%) name multiple heirs. This may reflect a response to the shift from agriculture to a maritime economy that began during the second half of the seventeenth century and continued into the first decade of the eighteenth century. The pattern levels out after 1720 such that 62% of the wills (n=8 of 13) identified for the period 1781-1790 provide land to more than one heir. The pattern displayed in Devonshire suggests that land is more likely to be divided equally among heirs in times of plenty or in situations where land is not the primary focus of economic pursuits.

There is also evidence to suggest that a trend toward greater equity in the distribution of estates developed over the course of the eighteenth century. Wills providing exhibiting partible inheritance appear in significant numbers after 1681 in Devonshire Parish. Four out of fourteen wills (29%) dating between 1681 and 1700 divide real estate among two or more heirs. The incidence of partibility increases steadily during the eighteenth century, dipping once to six out of twenty-four wills in the period 1721-1740. Between 1741 and 1760, 53% (n=8 of 15) of the wills written in Devonshire parish favor some form of division over impartibility. The pattern peaks at the end of the century when nine out of thirteen wills (69%) demonstrate partibility over the favored-heir-plus-burdens strategy (n=3 or 23%) and unigeniture (n=1 or 8%). Once again, the increase in equitable settlements after 1700 coincides with the shift from agriculture to seafaring. Following the economic transition in Bermuda, the economic importance of land was diminished. While real estate remained one of the principle types of wealth, no longer needed large parcels to earn an income. Cicely Howell observed that while

partible inheritance typically develops in areas where population pressure is light, it also occurs in "areas of dense population supported by fishing, small industries or exceptionally rich pasture land" (Howell 1976:117). The rising trend in the equitable settlement of estates may have also been a response to preserve family unity at a time when people were leaving the island in ever increasing numbers to find opportunity elsewhere.

Early on, there was also an effort to provide each legatee with a separate parcel of land while the core of the family holding was transferred to a favored heir. In 1721, for example, John Harriott bequeathed a half-share of land in "Devon Tribe" to his grandson John Harriott, eight acres of "Northside Land" to his grandson John Dill, and another parcel of the "Northside Land" to his grandson Daniel Harriott (Book of Wills 7, n.d.:63). This practice is often widespread in areas where land is abundant (Lee 1988:338-339). Due to the finite amount of land in Bermuda, however, amassing land was a short-lived practice restricted to a wealthy few. Landowners in Devonshire Parish were able to were able to leave separate pieces of real estate to more than one heir in five of the fourteen of the cases (36%) dating between 1640 and 1700. The frequency of this strategy increased to include 44% of forty-one wills (n=18) between 1700 and 1735 while the pattern diminishes to only seven out of twenty-eight wills (25%) between 1736 and 1770. Only four out of eighteen (22%) landowners provided separate parcels to more than one heir over the next decade. None of the wills post-dating 1780 contained evidence suggesting that any of the testators provided heirs with more than one parcel.

*Women and Inheritance in Devonshire*

The increase in a pattern of partible inheritance as well as the trend towards greater equity in the settlement of an estate also had an affect on Bermudian women. In general, they fared slightly better than their counterparts in the English colonies in North America. Elaine Forman Crane notes that, "Though property law in Bermuda was no less patriarchal than in other colonies, by the American Revolution, white Bermudian women held more real property than their sisters on the mainland" (Crane 1990:239). Most Bermudian landowners left their property to their wives at least for the term of life or duration of widowhood. A total of forty-eight wills dating between 1665 and 1798 list wives. Husbands left their real estate to their wives for some length of time in 81% (n=39) of the wills. Most often, women received family land for the term of life so that it could be passed to a male heir upon her death or remarriage, thus keeping the property in the bloodline. Richard Appowen, Jr. left his entire estate to his "well beloved" wife Elizabeth "So Long as She my Said Wife continues to be my Widdo & no longer," and then bequeathed the house and land to his eldest son John (Book of Wills 4, n.d.:7-8). On the other hand, Samuel Sherlock gave to his wife Susannah, "and to her heirs and Assigns for Ever, all these two half or reputed half shares of Land . . . and all houses thereon, and Appurtances thereunto belonging, Situate Lying and being in Pembroke Tribe (Book of Wills 6, n.d.:237). Women did in fact inherit complete ownership of land in nine out of forty-eight wills (19%) listing wives. Studies suggest that widows received life rights in their husband's real estate to increase the generational control over property in areas where resources were finite (Goody 1976:20; Lee 1988:319).



## Female Inheritance of Real Estate Wills Naming Both Males and Females: 1640-1800

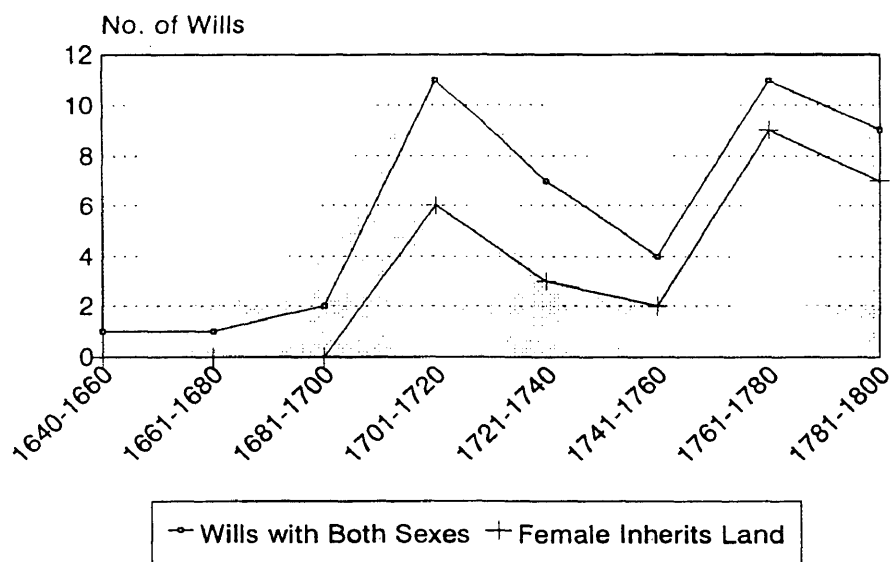


Figure 21.

## Inheritance of Land Among Widows For Term of Widowhood or Life

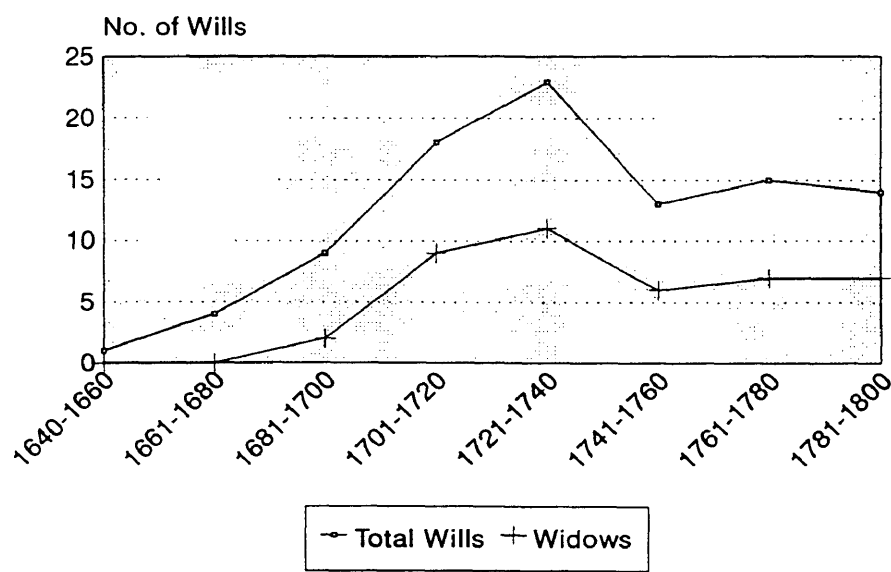


Figure 22.

Men in Devonshire often appointed their wives to administer their estates. Thirty-five out of forty-eight (73%) men appointed a wife to serve as an "Executrix" for their will. Apart from emotional attachment, Bermudian men clearly trusted their wives to make the proper decisions to ensure that their children were cared for out of the husband's estate. Indeed, James Horn argues that "widows were the crucial link in the transmission of property from one generation to another and played a vital role in safeguarding the children's estate after the husband's death" (Horn 1994:230).

Daughters in Bermuda often fared much better than their mothers when it came to the devolution of real property. In 1710, Jonathon Turner gave his "Loving daughter Anne Reding the Wife of Joseph Reding and to her Female heirs forever, Lawfully begotten, The Southernmost half of my Westermost Share of Land, which I purchased of Captain Lea with all houses thereon" (Book of Wills 4, n.d.:74). Beginning in the late seventeenth century, the number of women (usually daughters) inheriting real estate gradually increased. Although twelve wills naming both male and female heirs were identified for the period between 1640 and 1680, none of the testators left land to female heirs. However, in the last two decades of the seventeenth century, females inherited land in four out of fourteen (29%) cases. The number of females inheriting real estate continued to increase throughout the eighteenth century. Testators awarded land to daughters 42% of the time (n=8 of 18) between 1701 and 1720. By the end of the century female heirs received land over 80% of the time. Women received property in sixteen out of twenty wills between 1761 and 1780 naming male and female heirs. Elaine Forman Crane suggests that more women inherited real property as the eighteenth century

wore on because "as the sex ratio became increasingly skewed, in part because sons were more,likely to die at sea, even a reluctant father might be forced to leave his real property to his daughters" (Crane 1990:240).

There is little to suggest what became of a woman's land in Bermuda after she married. In New England, a woman could typically claim a dower right in only a share of her husband's real estate after his death. As such, "she had no power to influence the sale or mortgage of her husband's realty" (Salmon 1986:6). Colonists in the Chesapeake adhered more closely to English Common Law whereby women received dower in the lands her husband owned during their marriage. In most cases, women in the Chesapeake were restricted to life rights in their husband's property to ensure that it would remain within the bloodline.

Women's rights over real estate were protected for at least part of the seventeenth century in Bermuda. A law passed in 1615 permitted married women (*Femme covert*) to buy and sell land in Bermuda. However, the Assembly minutes for 1773 suggest that it was in force "in the earlier part of the settlement of these islands" (Crane 1990:240). There is some evidence that women in Bermuda did in fact retain rights over the land they brought into a marriage. In 1782, Josiah Cox gave his wife Jane, "all and every part Share of Interest of whatever Denomination, that she was possest with before or at the time of my Marriage with her" (Book of Wills 10, n.d.:1-2). Likewise, in 1710, Anne Redding inherited the southern half of Share 16 which her father Jonathon Turner purchased from Captain Philip Lea in 1664. Redding was able to retain control over this property even after she married. In 1721, she exercised her prerogative and left this

property to her daughter, Sarah Smith. Despite this seemingly liberated bequest, the property Sarah inherited from mother appears to have re-entered the patriarchal pattern of descent for it remains in the Smith family to this day (Book of Wills 4, n.d.:74-75; Book of Wills 6, n.d.:58; Trimingham 1995:60).

The increased inheritance of real estate among women in Devonshire underscores the developing trend towards greater equity in the settlement of estates in Bermuda during the eighteenth century. This development, however, was the result of several factors that had been acting on the pattern of settlement in the colony from the outset of settlement. Population pressure, a finite supply of land, and a lagging economy forced a transition from agriculture to seafaring. Despite this, conditions remained difficult and promising young often emigrated to the North American colonies or England to pursue a education or find a career. Those who did not emigrate went to sea; a dangerous pursuit that claimed many lives. The sexual imbalance that resulted opened the way for women to inherit land. This development is but part of a larger transition from patriarchal inheritance strategies in the seventeenth century to a more equitable pattern of devolution by the end of the eighteenth century. Perhaps most importantly, inheritance practices in Bermuda reflect an incredible degree of adaptability to rapidly changing conditions.

## **CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION**

The analysis of inheritance and landholding patterns in Devonshire Parish, Bermuda, demonstrates the dynamic nature of the island's settlement system. Stable landholding patterns developed despite a burgeoning population, limited resources, and a limited amount of land on which to live. These conditions created a unique settlement situation unlike that of other English colonies in the New World where land tended to be plentiful.

Although a small contingent of fifty settlers occupied Bermuda as early as 1612, the colony did not really begin to grow until after tobacco was successfully planted in 1616. Like Virginia, Bermuda attracted immigrants hoping to take advantage of this success. Shareholders worked hard to recruit tenants to "supply their shares" and the population doubled between 1622 and 1663. Bermudians began to feel the effect of overpopulation by the mid-seventeenth century. Immigration dwindled during the second half of the seventeenth century as diminished economic opportunities stopped attracting newcomers. Bermudian tobacco production succumbed to mainland competition and planters scrambled to find alternatives. The colony began to earn a reputation as a seafaring nation during this period as Bermudians started to provision other settlements in the Caribbean and along the Atlantic seaboard. Despite negligible immigration, the colony continued to grow at a rapid rate. Healthful conditions in the colony promoted

long life and a robust rate of natural increase such that the population nearly doubled again between 1650 and 1700.

The eighteenth century opened with a brief period of prosperity in Bermuda. The Crown revoked the Company's charter in 1684 during the Revolutionary Crisis established Bermuda as a royal colony. The islanders were finally able to abandon the tobacco fields and earn a living from the sea. The newly created opportunities prompted a surge in immigration and Bermuda experienced a sharp increase in the population. The population increased from 8000 in 1679 to over 10,000 in 1727. This prosperity was short lived, however, as European traders began to by-pass Bermuda to focus their efforts on the mercantile centers rapidly developing along the coast of North America. Slowly, economic opportunities dwindled and islanders entered a period of decline. Bermuda experienced one other brief surge in the population between 1749 and 1756. As the eighteenth century drew to an end, Bermuda was fast becoming a back-water of the British empire.

Patterns of land tenure in Bermuda developed under the strain of extreme population pressure. Land tenure in Devonshire had to be highly adaptable in order to withstand such incredible stress. As the population increased in Bermuda, the average size of a parcel of land decreased from twelve acres to two acres per landowner during the seventeenth century. The median size of a parcel was further reduced to one acre by the end of the eighteenth century. Despite this decrease, pattern of landholding in Devonshire Parish remained relatively stable, if not static because the number of landowners grew far more slowly than the rest of the population. Landowners for

approximately 10% of the population throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Prior to 1684, the Bermuda Company used legislation to regulate the use and division of land, resulting in a static pattern of land holding.

The only period of growth occurred between 1663 and 1727 when the number of landowners in Devonshire Parish increased slightly, while the average parcel size decreased. This period of growth appears to coincide with the demise of the Bermuda Company and the subsequent transition to a maritime economy. As the maritime economy developed, the large tracts of land needed for the cultivation of tobacco became less important and, as a result, the amount of land a needed by a family decreased. Despite the increase in the number of landowners prior to 1720, growth was negligible for the remainder of the eighteenth century.

The seemingly static nature of the system of land tenure in Bermuda is inextricably linked to the changing pattern of inheritance. Inheritance is one of the primary means of transferring property between people. Moreover, studies have shown that societies adjust inheritance practices or demographic patterns when faced with population or economic pressure (Berkner and Mendels 1978:217). As such, the evolution of the inheritance system as revealed through patterns of bequest taken from wills provides an indication of how Bermudian society responded to the stress of a growing population and too little space.

Prior to 1700, most testators left their property to one heir rather than divide it. The pattern favoring a single legatee in the transmission of property between generations suggests that there was an effort to keep family property intact within the bloodline. This

was accomplished one of two ways in Devonshire. Unigeniture simply meant that a testator left real estate to a single heir. While primogeniture and ultimogeniture both fall into this category, age-order was unclear in many of the Devonshire Parish wills making these distinctions hard to determine. This strategy appears to have been popular prior to 1680, although the fragmentary nature of the database for this period makes inference difficult.

The most common inheritance strategy prior to 1700 was the favored-heir-plus-burdens pattern which passed property to a single heir, yet bound the beneficiary to siblings through a series of obligations. This strategy preserved the family property while ensuring that certain family needs were met. While this strategy was employed in half of the seventeenth century wills, its popularity waned in the eighteenth century such that it was found in only three of thirteen wills dating 1780 and 1798.

The favored-heir-plus-burdens strategy and unigeniture developed in agricultural regions where land was primary to the economy. Both patterns are most prevalent at a time when the Bermudian economy centered around agriculture. These strategies maintained the size of parcels as they were transferred between generations. This would have been an important concern with a land-intensive crop like tobacco. Unigeniture and the favored-heir strategies declined as maritime pursuits replace the agricultural focus of the economy.

Evidence for partible inheritance increased steadily after 1681 in Devonshire, indicating a trend towards greater equity in the settling of estates. Although the incidence of this strategy dipped slightly during the second quarter of the eighteenth century, it



peaked in the last twenty years of the century when 69% of the wills exhibit partibility. A steady increase in the number of women inheriting real estate during the eighteenth century also speaks to a greater evenness in the distribution of assets. By the end of the century female heirs received land over 80% of the time. Partible inheritance typically develops in areas where population pressure is light. But, it can also occur in areas of dense population where the economy is focused on seafaring. The increase in equitable settlements after 1700 coincides with the shift from agriculture to seafaring. Policies surrounding land became less restrictive because it was no longer the primary component in the economy. The pattern of increased equity in the distribution of real estate to women may have been a response to an unequal sex ratio where women outnumber men.

The evidence from Devonshire Parish suggests that while Bermuda may have shared similarities with other regions such as the Chesapeake and New England, the island's society adapted to a unique combination of factors. While these are numerous and varied, the major variables include population pressure, economic pressure, the lack of land, and an increasing sexual imbalance. These factors influenced regional patterns of settlement throughout English North America. Like the Chesapeake, Bermuda's economy centered around tobacco throughout most of the seventeenth century. Tobacco monoculture was primarily responsible for the dispersed pattern of settlement that developed in the Chesapeake and primogeniture became the predominate inheritance custom throughout this region in response to the need for large, intact parcels of productive land. Bermuda also had a strong Puritan element during the seventeenth century. Puritan philosophy influenced the communal parish pattern of settlement in New

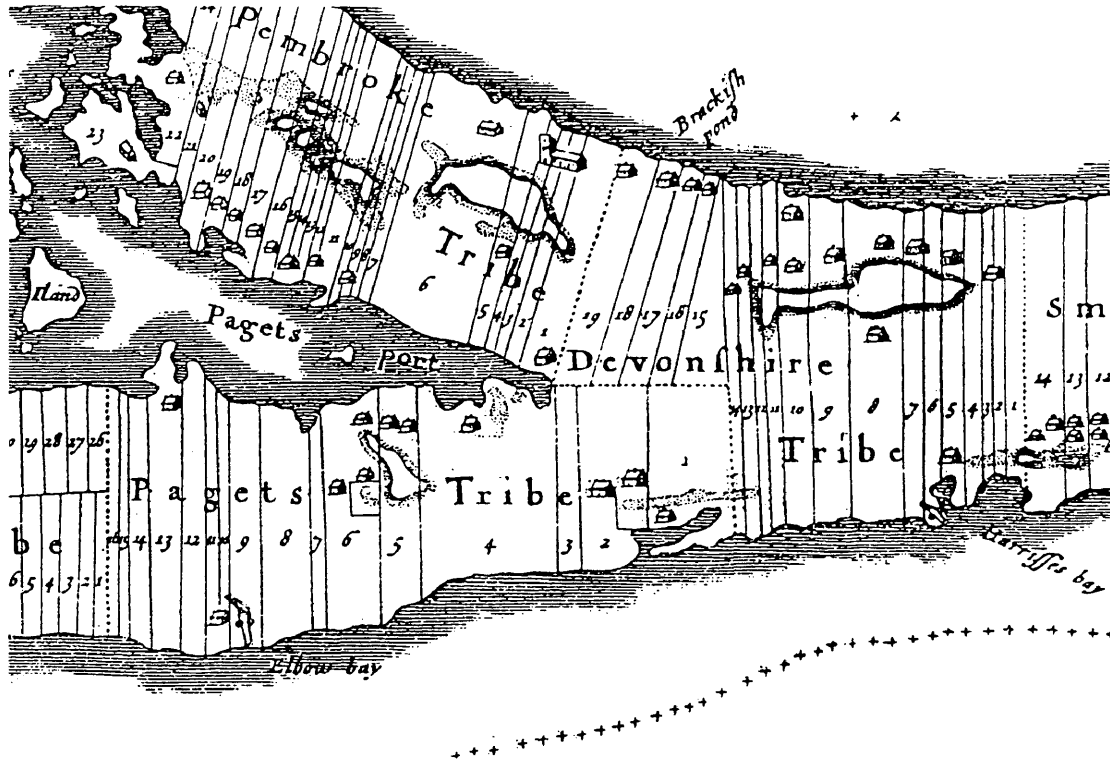


Figure 23. Map of Richard Norwood's First Survey (Lefroy I, 1881).

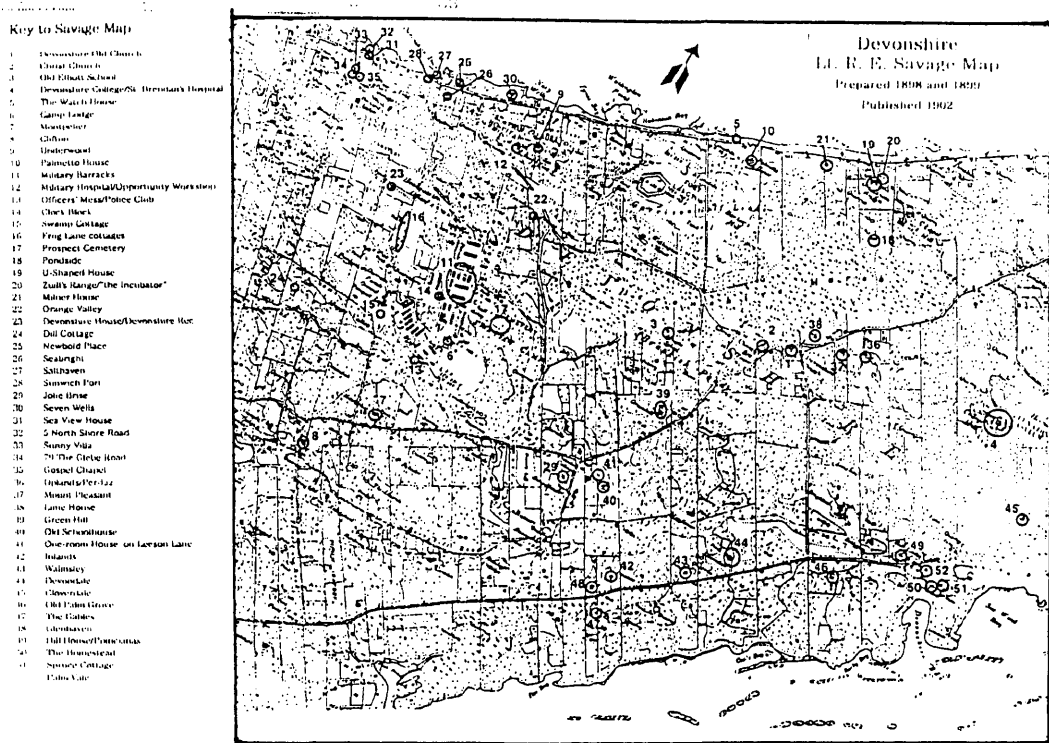


Figure 24. The Savage Map of 1902 (In Trimmingham 1995:iv-v).

England. All aspects of Puritan society were organized to protect and perpetuate a strong sense of God and community. As a result, New England inheritance patterns stressed greater equity by providing each child with a portion of the estate, both personal and real, according to biblical precedent. This pattern began to break down early in the eighteenth century when land became scarce and nascent mercantile in New England attracted people away from their places of birth. While economic and demographic variables were major elements in the development of settlement patterns in the Chesapeake, New England, and Bermuda, each differed according to unique combinations of these variables. Moreover, the patterns of inheritance identified in these areas acted as a adaptive mechanism to maintain the settlement system in the face of changing conditions.

Population pressure and land use were particularly influential in the development of inheritance practices and land tenure in Devonshire. Indeed, Philip Smith argues that land tenure is extremely "susceptible to changes in population pressures" (Smith 1970:416). The analysis of wills from this parish suggest that inheritance practices mitigated the effects of population stress and the lack of land while maintaining a pattern of land tenure suited to agricultural production. Despite a shift in economic focus and a slight increase in the number of landowners, the pattern of land tenure established during the seventeenth century in Devonshire Parish was slow to change and persisted throughout the eighteenth century. Although the average parcel size diminished between 1622 and 1798. The number of landowners grew in proportion to the that of the parish population, representing approximately 9% of the population throughout both centuries. The slow persistence of this pattern is reflected in a comparison of the 1618 Norwood

map with the 1902 Savage map where the original property boundaries established in the early seventeenth century were still visible in the early twentieth century. The analysis wills from Devonshire demonstrates that inheritance practices shifted in response to population and economic stress to maintain this stable pattern of landholding. Moreover, the relationship between inheritance and the pattern of tenure simply underscores the adaptive nature of these two inter-related systems.

Scholars continue to characterize British colonial settlements according to Puritan and Chesapeake attributes. This is due in large part to the fact that these areas have been the focus of sustained analysis for years. The analysis of settlement dynamics in Bermuda, is critical for understanding the greater British colonial system. While the development of landholding patterns in Devonshire exhibits similarities to other English colonies, the pattern is distinct. The analysis of inheritance and landholding in Devonshire Parish provides an idea of how people adapt to their surroundings. The settlement system in Bermuda is but one aspect of a society which was affected by unique conditions and constraints. Over time, a "*Bermudian*" society developed in response to these conditions. This transformation underscores the relevance of the Bermudian experience to the larger, global perspective of English colonization. Just as Reverend Alexander Ewing noted in 1784, "Small though this spot [Bermuda] is, a great deal of the world can be seen in it" (Alexander Ewing, 1784, quoted in Hallett 1993:ii). Future studies will undoubtedly verify this observation.

**APPENDIX I:  
DEVONSHIRE PARISH WILLS, 1640-1798**

	<b>NAME</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>REFERENCE</b>
1	John Moore	1640	BDA Wills,1:12-13
2	John Welch	1640	Mercer 1982:238
3	John Golding	1648	Mercer 1982:74
4	Jonathon Burr	1665	BDA Wills,1:102-103
5	Thomas Hopkins	1665	BDA Wills,1:101
6	John Bayley	1667	Mercer 1982:7
7	William Langston	1670	BDA Wills,1:147
8	Joseph Wiseman	1674	BDA Wills,1:195
9	John Harriott	1674	Mercer 1982:85
10	John Cox	1677	Mercer 1982:34
11	John Darrell	1677	Mercer 1982:38
12	John Vaughn	1678	Mercer 1982:228
13	John Darrell, Sr.	1683	Mercer 1982:40
14	John Stow	1684	Mercer 1982:190
15	John Inglebee	1685	BDA Wills,3:10
16	George Hubbard	1688	BDA Wills,3:29-31
17	Richard Appowen	1688	BDA Wills,3:16-19
18	Laurence Dill	1691	BDA Wills,3:146-148
19	Joseph Milbourne	1692	Mercer 1982:126
20	John Milborne	1692	BDA Wills,5:171
21	Samuel Wise, Sr.	1692	BDA Wills,2, pt.1:49
22	Thomas Plumer	1692	BDA Wills,3:211-212
23	Samuel Wise	1693	BDA Wills,2, pt.1:164
24	Samuel Wise	1693	BDA Wills,2, pt.1:27
25	William Hutchings	1693	BDA Wills,2, pt.2:8-9
26	Thomas Parker	1700	BDA Wills,2, pt.1:126
27	Thomas Peniston	1702	BDA Wills,2, pt.2:240
28	Patrick Downing	1705	BDA Wills,4:9-11
29	John Morris	1707	BDA Wills,4:2-3
30	Richard Appowen	1707	BDA Wills,4:7-8
31	John Gilbert	1708	BDA Wills,4:18-19
32	Daniel Smith	1709	BDA Wills,4:55-58
33	John Morris	1709	BDA Wills,4:137
34	Jonathon Turner	1710	BDA Wills,4:74-75
35	John Cox	1711	BDA Wills,4:128
36	John Smith	1711	BDA Wills,5:85
37	Joseph Young	1711	BDA Wills,4:135-136
38	John Watlington	1712	BDA Wills,4:152

	NAME	DATE	REFERENCE
39	Samuel Wise	1712	BDA Wills,5:7-8
40	William Cumber	1712	BDA Wills,4:154
41	Benjamin Stowe	1713	BDA Wills,5:15-17
42	William Moprris	1714	BDA Wills,5:36
43	Elizabeth Sherlock	1716	BDA Wills,5:217
44	Thomas Bostock	1720	BDA Wills,6:307
45	Florentius Cox	1721	BDA Wills,7:51-52
46	John Cox	1721	BDA Wills,6:98
47	John Harriot	1721	BDA Wills,7:63
48	John Outerbridge	1724	BDA Wills,6:93
49	John Outerbridge	1724	BDA Wills,6:94-95
50	John Tucker	1726	BDA Wills,6:114
51	Richard Gilbert	1727	BDA Wills,6:134
52	John Tucker	1728	BDA Wills,6:153
53	Meriam Turner	1728	BDA Wills,6:153
54	Samuel Wingood	1728	BDA Wills,6:144
55	Stephen Tynes	1728	BDA Wills,6:174-175
56	Thomas Minots	1728	BDA Wills,6:151
57	Joseph Packwood	1729	BDA Wills,7:29
58	George Stovel	1730	BDA Wills,6:215
59	John Outerbridge	1731	BDA Wills,6:261
60	Jospeh Young	1731	BDA Wills,6:252
61	Patience Dill	1731	BDA Wills,6:243
62	Samuel Sherlock	1731	BDA Wills,6:237
63	John Jones	1732	BDA Wills,7:11
64	William Savage	1733	BDA Wills,12, pt.2:183
65	William Savage	1733	BDA Wills,6:348-349
66	Richard Gilbert	1734	BDA Wills,6:134
67	Thomas Potter	1734	BDA Wills,6:339-340
68	Samuel Nelmes	1738	BDA Wills,12, pt.2:104-105
69	Susanna Sherlock	1741	BDA Wills,12, pt.2:188-189
70	John Tucker	1742	BDA Wills,7:135
71	Mary Williams	1744	BDA Wills,12, pt.2:379-380
72	William Watlington	1745	BDA Wills,12, pt.2:342-344
73	Robert Dill	1747	BDA Wills,12, pt.1:486-487
74	Thomas Peniston	1747	BDA Wills,12, pt.2:130-131
75	Sarah Jones	1748	BDA Wills,12, pt.2:13-14
76	Sarah Peniston	1748	BDA Wills,12, pt.2:133-134
77	William Watlington	1748	BDA Wills,8:263
78	John Darrell	1750	BDA Wills,9:190
79	John Tucker	1751	BDA Wills,12, pt.2:283
80	James Canton	1752	BDA Wills,12, pt.1:215-216
81	Jane Watlington	1759	BDA Wills,8:263
82	Thomas Cox	1759	BDA Wills,12, pt.1:229-230
83	John Cox	1760	BDA Wills,8:264
84	Miriam Albouy	1761	BDA Wills,12, pt.1:17-19

	NAME	DATE	REFERENCE
85	Thomas Hall	1761	BDA Wills,12, pt.1:514-515
86	Benjamin Amory	1762	BDA Wills,8:268
87	Joseph Darrell	1774	BDA Wills,9:279
88	Samuel Smith	1774	BDA Wills,9:107
89	Samuel Sherlock, Sr.	1775	BDA Wills,12, pt.2:246-247
90	Joseph Dill	1776	BDA Wills,9:184
91	Samuel Sherlock	1776	BDA Wills,10:262
92	Benjamin Wilkinson	1777	BDA Wills,10:120
93	J. Milner Cox	1777	BDA Wills,9:351
94	James Harvey	1778	BDA Wills,12, pt.1:539-540
95	James Harvey	1778	BDA Wills,9:293
96	Samuel Skinner	1778	BDA Wills,9:304
97	John Davis	1779	BDA Wills,12, pt.1:358-359
98	John Davis	1779	BDA Wills,9:346
99	John Vaughn	1779	BDA Wills,9:315
100	Mary Edy	1779	BDA Wills,12, pt.1:379-381
101	Benjamin Wilkinson	1780	BDA Wills,10:219
102	Joseph Hill	1780	BDA Wills,10:125
103	William Heessom	1780	BDA Wills,10:316-318
104	John Cowen	1782	BDA Wills,10:11
105	John Cowen	1782	BDA Wills,10:19
106	Josiah Cox	1782	BDA Wills,10:1
107	John Peniston	1784	BDA Wills,10:204
108	Nathaniel Tynes	1786	BDA Wills,10:241
109	Richard Appowen	1787	BDA Wills,10:302
110	Richard Appowen	1787	BDA Wills,12, pt.1:45-46
111	Catherine Hill	1788	BDA Wills,10:257
112	Frances Cox	1790	BDA Wills,11:3-4
113	William Robinson	1792	BDA Wills,11:207
114	John Tynes	1793	BDA Wills,11:115
115	William Place	1793	BDA Wills,11:173
116	Elias Tynes	1798	BDA Wills,11:220

**APPENDIX II:  
PARISH ASSESSMENTS AND CENSUS DATA**

<b>CENSUS/ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>REFERENCE</b>
<i>The Assignment of Shares</i>	1618	Lefroy I, 1981:141-143
<i>Shares Occupied When Gov. J. Bernard Arrived</i>	1622	Ives 1984:240-245
<i>Sir Nathaniel's List of Adventurers and Shares</i>	1622	Ives 1984:361-366
<i>Norwood's Book of Survey of 1662-3</i>	1663	Lefroy II, 1981:645-731
Devonshire Parish Assessment	1712	Dev. Parish Record Book
Devonshire Parish Assessment	1716	Dev. Parish Record Book
<i>A List of Inhabit:ants of the Bermudas</i>	1727	Bermuda Census, 1727
Devonshire Parish Assessment	1744	Dev. Parish Record Book, 7/27/1744
Devonshire Parish Assessment	1752	Dev. Parish Record Book, 11/29/1752
Devonshire Parish Assessment	1760	Dev. Parish Record Book, 8/14/1760
Devonshire Parish Assessment	1761	Dev. Parish Record Book, 5/29/1761
Devonshire Parish Assessment	1763	Dev. Parish Record Book
Devonshire Parish Assessment	1767	Dev. Parish Record Book, 4/28/1767
Devonshire Parish Assessment	1768	Dev. Parish Record Book
<i>Survey of Bermuda</i>	1788	Bermuda Cenus, 1788
Devonshire Parish Assessment	1790	Dev. Parish Record Book, 5/11/1790
Devonshire Parish Assessment	1798	Dev. Parish Record Book, 4/27/1798



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## **VITA**

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