

The Globalisation and Localisation of Culture

By Richard Kurin

FORMER SPEAKER OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES Tip O'Neill said that "all politics is local." The joke illustrates a parallel point – all culture is local. Though all sorts of traditions, innovations, discoveries, and events may originate in distant places, their impact, if they have any, must be felt "close to home" to make a difference in people's everyday lives. Conversely, as in the example, local culture is often projected into a larger regional, national, even global context. From foods to sounds, technology to fashion, language to celebrity, the products we associate with global culture originate with particular people in a localised situation.

Globalising and Localising Process

Globalisation and localisation are dynamic, inter-related processes of cultural interchange. We sometimes equate globalisation with the spread of Western and particularly U.S. commercial cultural products around the world – McDonald's burgers and fries, Levi's jeans, reruns of "I Love Lucy," CNN "Headline News," Hollywood action films, and Disney characters. The seeming ubiquity of these products and their attendant economic consequences are sometimes seen as threatening or wiping out local culture and draining local economies for the benefit of distant multinational corporations. Folklorist Alan Lomax saw this trend early on



– the ever-extending spread of a commercial mass culture that would lead to the increasing homogeneity of culture everywhere. “Cultural grey-out” was the term he used.



There are other cultural products that also go global or at least close to it, and yet have little association with either American origins or Western corporations. Indian films from Mumbai – “Bollywood” in the vernacular – move easily across the Subcontinent into East Africa and the Gulf, and to groceries and eateries in Chicago, picking up Swahili, Arabic, and English subtitles, and racking up more viewers than anything Hollywood puts out. Chinese food is found across the globe, carried not by chain stores but by families who’ve settled in just about every nation. Sometimes the globalisation is aesthetically driven – while Americans danced the Brazilian Macarena and hummed the tunes of South Africa’s Ladysmith Black Mambazo, bluegrass became more popular in Japan than in the United States. Other times, it may have socio-political ends. Amazonian Native people, for example, work with Ben and Jerry’s and Cultural Survival on creating tropical nut ice cream to sell to American consumers to help save rainforest culture. In these cases, a localised cultural product has been universalised. And it’s not only commercial products that traverse the planet, but ideas as well. Americans, French, and Brazilians chant Tibetan Buddhist mantras. Ideas of democracy and human rights reach Tienanmen Square, as students sing “We Shall Overcome.” Indian writers dominate contemporary English-language literature, and South African heroes inspire the world.

At the same time culture goes global, it also becomes localised. McDonald’s, to accommodate Hindu and Muslim sensibilities in India, serves mutton burgers – no beef, no pork. Universalised English is transformed into Spanglish at the Mexican border. Computer keyboards are remanufactured with Chinese rather than Latin characters to serve a nation with over a billion people. American television shows are recast with local characters, accents, and plots the world over. Studio synthesisers are retooled for use as instruments in African pop music clubs. Western rock music acquires Russian lyrics and themes in Moscow.

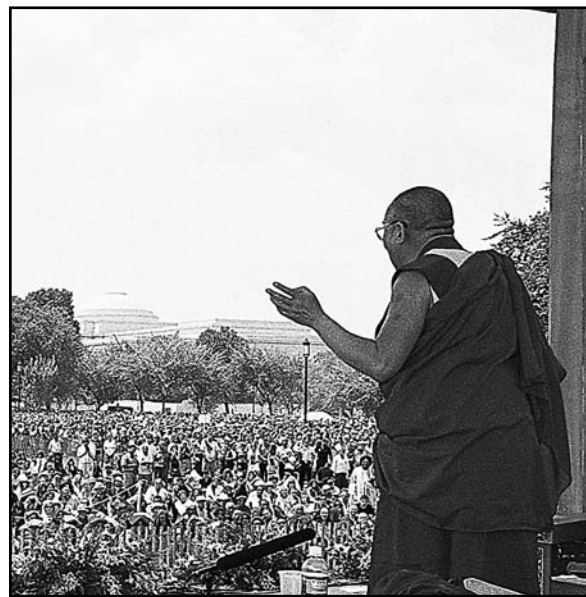


Photo by Jeff Tinsley, © Smithsonian Institution.

The Dalai Lama participated in a ritual enactment at the 2000 Smithsonian Folklife Festival for an audience of 50,000 on the Mall. For the Smithsonian and the participating Tibetan organizations, presenting the culture beyond the Tibetan community was a means of preserving the culture within it.

“ We now have “streaming culture,” as sounds and images from around the world flow into home computers. ”

Localisation tends to make culture more heterogeneous. Widespread cultural forms are actively adapted by local people and particularised to local sensibilities, taking on local nuances, local character, and terminology. New products and ideas are absorbed into local practice.

The processes of globalisation and localisation are not new. From ancient times, trade along the Silk Road was a globalising force, bringing luxury goods and ideas across continents. The ancient civilisations of India, of Meso and South America were globalising in their own right, developing dialectical relationships with local and regional subcultures as they spread over the landscape. While some globalisations are commercially based, like the Silk Road, others are religious; one thinks, for example, of the spread of Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. Yet even with formal doctrine and belief, we see a tremendous variety of local forms of “universal” religion, e.g., Afro-Caribbean syntheses with Christianity; Indonesian, Moroccan, and even British styles of Muslim practice; Japanese, Sri Lankan, and American styles of Buddhism. Some globalizations occur over centuries, spreading cultural products, customs, beliefs, and values, such as Hispanisation in the New World; and some forms of localisation occur almost immediately, as for example the adaptation by Trobriand Islanders in World War II of cricket as a clan contest invoking magic and ritual exchange. Some forms of globalisation may be more humane than others, more respectful of the cultural diversity they subsume. They may actually encourage local cultural practice and the production of traditional and innovative arts, goods, and ideas. In other cases, the agents of globalisation – whether they be conquerors, merchants, or missionaries – may be quite imperial and oppressive. Rather than encouraging a local engagement of the global culture, they may persecute practitioners of the local culture and seek to outlaw or delegitimize the identity and institutions of local folk. In such cases, local culture may become a refuge from or vehicle of resistance to globalising forces.

Contemporary Cultural Exchange

What is new about the current processes of globalisation and localisation is the speed at which they take place, the number of cultural products involved, and the breadth of distribution. Paleo-archaeologists suggest it took a few hundred thousand years for the knowledge of fire-making to spread among all humans. Now, goods can spread around the world in days, information in minutes, and digital transactions in milliseconds. This is fine for many things, but it



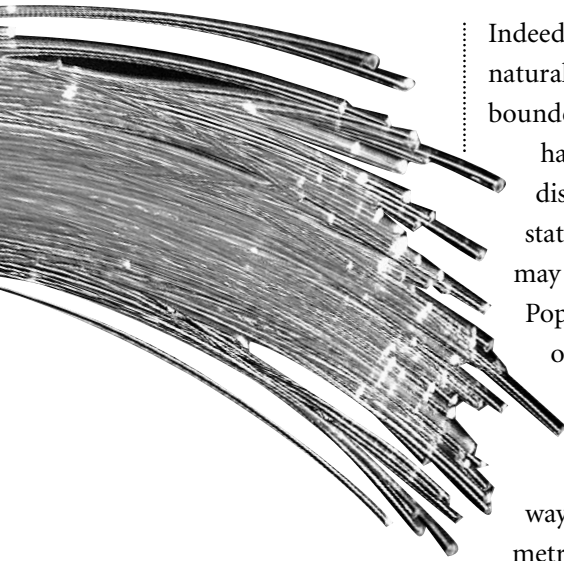
is not uniformly good. Viruses biological and virtual now spread much more quickly than our ability to control them. Secondly, in prior forms of globalisation relatively few products, materials, or ideas were moved from place to place, travelling by foot, horseback, or boat. Today, uncountable ideas flow over the World Wide Web across the planet. Innumerable goods and materials fill shipments, suitcases, and express mail packages. Again,

while this is beneficial for distributing medicine to needy children, it is problematic in reference to the flow of pollutants, illegal drugs, and weapons. Finally, while prior globalising forms depended upon face-to-face contact and reached only a relatively few people at a time through adventurers, brokers, and middlemen, today's globalisation reaches great numbers of people through mass migration, travel, communication, and the pervasive electronic media. When the content is humane, democratic, uplifting, this may be fine. But when it conveys lies, inflames hatred, and provokes violence, a broad global reach might not be such a good thing.

The pace and scope of the flow or movement of cultural products have implications for the way we think about cultures. Most of our social sciences are based upon the idea of culture as a natural phenomenon. Early theorists classified cultures as they would species. Natural processes of evolution were thought to model cultural ones.



“ **The survival skills honed on rock isles have encouraged adaptability, flexibility, and self-reliance.** ”



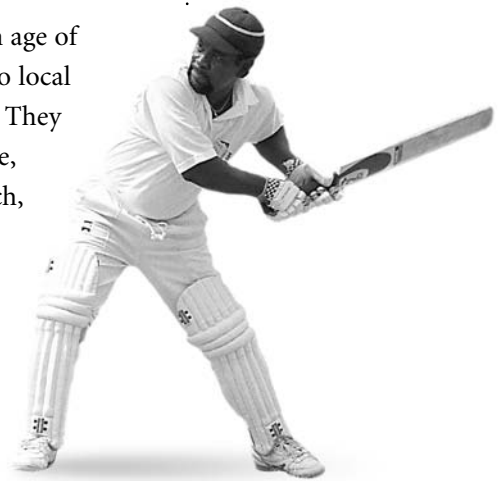
Indeed, we still find anthropology departments in natural history museums. This naturalistic view of culture has also been a rather static one – cultures are named, bounded, clearly associated with a particular people, time, and geography. Society has structure, is arranged in strata, has a morphology, and culture has a set of discrete traits and characteristics. Globalisation and localisation challenge this static view and suggest an alternative, hydraulic metaphor. Culture and society may be more fluid, as beliefs and practices flow globally and are channelled locally. Populations flow across borders in waves. Speech and images flow through fibre-optic cable. The free flow of ideas, information, and fiscal transactions is the basis of the global economy. We now have “streaming culture,” as sounds and images from around the world flow into home computers. Thinking about the ebb and flow of culture may be a more appropriate 21st century way to conceptualise exchange than to see it in terms of centre and periphery, metropole and hinterland, as characterised 19th and 21st century views. But even more, globalisation and localisation challenge the naturalistic framework of cultural processes. Culture doesn’t just happen. Globalisation and localisation depend upon the active decision-making of particular people and groups of people, deliberating agents who recognise various beliefs and practices in a constellation of local and global spheres, weigh alternatives, craft strategies, and pursue activities to achieve desired ends. Many political, fiscal, cultural, and artistic leaders are quite conscious of their choices, to, for example, adapt global practices, support local institutions, invite benevolent and fend off malevolent influences, etc., as they see them.



The Bermuda Connections Programme

Globalisation is not new to Bermuda, itself discovered during an age of global exploration. From the beginning, settlers had to adapt to local conditions to survive. They honed seafaring and trading skills. They carved furniture out of local cedar and ingeniously quarried limestone, cut it into slabs, and made roofs for their homes with conduits to catch, funnel, and store precious rain – their only source of fresh water. Despite its small size and lonely mid-Atlantic location, the world came to Bermuda, with its settlers originating in England, and subsequent population coming from the Caribbean, the United States, the Azores, and increasingly now from around the world. Tourists and international companies followed. Bermuda gave the world its onions, its shorts, its sailing prowess. Now, Bermuda builds on its experience as historical values and connections have evolved into contemporary ones. Its strategic position on mercantile sea trade routes has been transformed into a similarly strategic position in the flow of international capital through the finance, banking, and reinsurance industries. Ingenuity on the high seas has turned into skill in navigating contemporary markets. The survival skills honed on rock isles have encouraged adaptability, flexibility, and self-reliance. Bermudians know how to take things from elsewhere and make them their own, giving them local significance.

Kite-flying, benign child's play in most places, had serious educational value here, teaching children to adapt materials, designs, and techniques to wind currents, a particularly useful talent on the high seas. Cricket, a colonial game imported by Anglo-Bermudians, is the centrepiece of Cup Match, an annual island ritual celebrating the 1834 liberation from slavery. In music, Caribbean calypso, Jamaican reggae, club music, and even jazz acquire Bermudian lyrics and tones.



All photos on this spread courtesy of Department of Communication and Information.

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Cultural Democracy

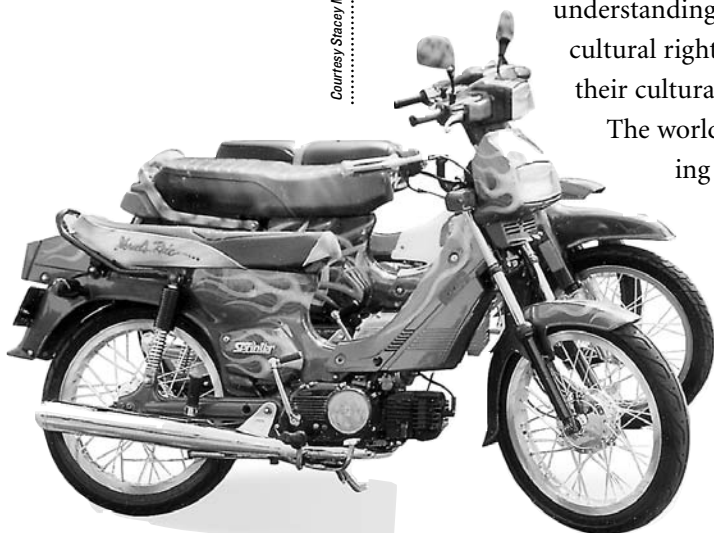
Humans have generally benefited by cultural exchange. But a balance needs to be maintained between globalisation and localisation. Extreme globalisation would eliminate cultural diversity on the planet. Imagine all ideas expressed in only one language. How about one culture, one cuisine, one way of dressing, one way of praying, one way of thinking, one way of playing music or making art? This would not only be boring, it would probably doom humankind, for in an evolutionary sense, cultural diversity gives us options for future survival.

On the other hand, extreme localisation would preclude the adaptation of good new ideas, good innovations from “somewhere else” that could bring benefits to local people everywhere. Local cultures would likely atrophy without a source of new energies, ideas, and goods from other societies. How then to assure a balance between processes of globalisation and localisation? At the global level, there has to be a respect for cultural democracy, the idea that diverse cultural communities have something to say and contribute to the wisdom, knowledge, skill, and artistry that define our humanity. There need be concomitant understandings, ethical and legal, in place that can assure human cultural rights, including those which allow people to benefit from their cultural creativity and property, tangible and intangible. The world has made great strides, at the global level, in defining those rights through international accords.



Courtesy of Department of Communication and Information.

Courtesy Stacey Madeiros Cooke.



All people need the freedom to realise their own identity and to practise their own traditions, be they religious, linguistic, culinary, musical, or artistic. Cultural democracy relies upon the knowledge of cultural practitioners and their access to their own heritage – significant sites, land, and texts. Cultural democracy flourishes when people reap the benefits of their cultural achievements and have the continued opportunity to build on those achievements through creative change. Localisation depends upon the ability of local people to continue their means of cultural production. In an era of intense globalisation, local people need to be seen – and see themselves – not just as consumers or recipients of goods and ideas produced elsewhere, but as cultural creators.

Encouraging local cultural creativity in a global context has long been central to the purpose of the Smithsonian Folklife Festival. Ralph Rinzler, its first director, saw the Festival as a means of highlighting the diversity of local cultures for the beauty, wisdom, and knowledge they embodied and of sharing that appreciation broadly. S. Dillon Ripley, the former Smithsonian Secretary who passed away earlier last year and whose memory we honour, provided the leadership for instituting the Festival, and was always a strong supporter. He saw the Festival as a way in which the Smithsonian, as a globalising force, could nonetheless help preserve local cultures by drawing attention to their historical and ongoing value to humanity. Margaret Mead, the world-renowned anthropologist whose centennial we also honour this year, was a strong supporter of the Festival. She noted that at the Festival, “everyone is a participant,” local tradition-bearers and Smithsonian officials and casual visitors. The idea behind this was profoundly culturally democratic. It is in each person’s long-term interest that a diversity of strong cultures be encouraged to preserve and extend their traditions, even create new ones, so that all people might have that much more to learn from each other.

RICHARD KURIN is Director of the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage at the Smithsonian Institution and author of: *Reflections of a Culture Broker: A View from the Smithsonian* and *Smithsonian Folklife Festival: Culture Of, By, and For the People*.

An *Introduction* to *Bermuda*

By William Zuill, Sr

BERMUDA IS A REMARKABLY LOVELY ARCHIPELAGO with a temperate, subtropical climate where crops can be grown the year through. Its far-flung reefs were monstrous toothy traps for unwary masters and navigators of homebound carracks and galleons – and later frigates, sloops and schooners, clippers, side-wheelers and ocean liners – but those who could work their way through the reefs found safe and commodious harbours among the five main islands and the 300-odd rocks and islets.

Bermuda was, and is, one of the most isolated island groups in the world, more than 600 miles from the nearest land, which is Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. At the same time it happens to be located on various trade routes, for the wind-ship passage from the Straits of Florida to Europe runs north along the Gulf Stream to the latitude of Bermuda, where the favourable westerlies begin to blow – and so the island was both a helpful navigation point as well as a considerable danger to shipping. In the steamship age, the island lay on the most direct route from the Mediterranean to the Straits of Florida and the Gulf of Mexico, and today, in the age of flight, its airspace is traversed by several airliners a day. Thus, throughout its history, Bermuda's strategic significance has allayed its isolation and shaped Bermudian life, thought, and custom.



Photo courtesy of Department of Communication and Information.

An island is similar in many ways to a ship, and this is particularly true for Bermuda. During World War II we were called “an unsinkable aircraft carrier,” providing the Allies an antisubmarine base way out in the Atlantic. It was a role which continued during the Cold War, when we were an important part of the U.S. Navy’s tracking network that kept tabs on Russian missile submarines.

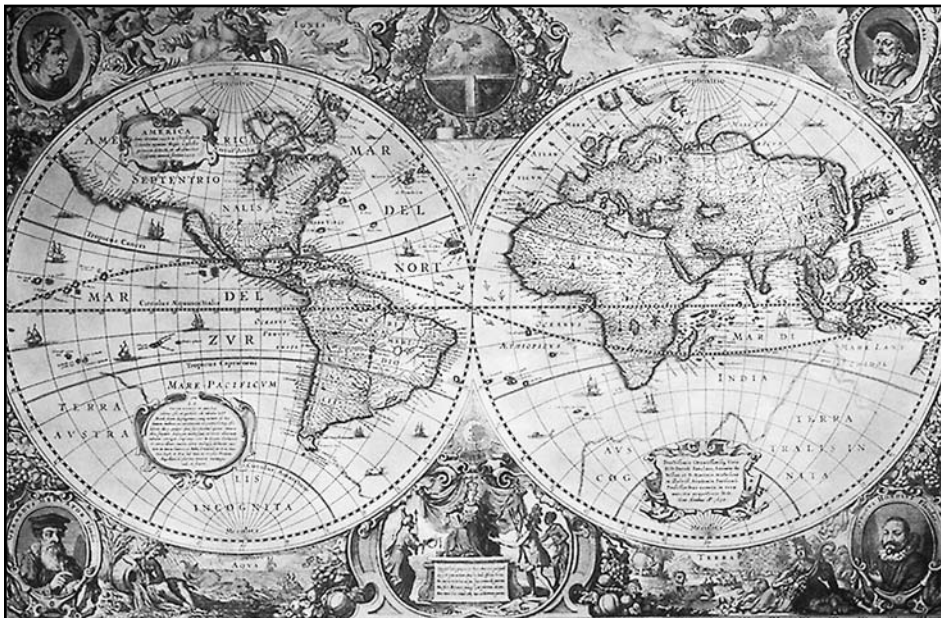
“Bermuda’s strategic significance has allayed its isolation and shaped Bermudian life, thought, and custom.”



Islanders, like ships' crews, have to be self-reliant, struggling to use and reuse, conserve, and make do when the proper tool or spare part is not available. Water is a precious commodity in Bermuda, for our island has no creeks, brooks, or rivers, and we learned as children to conserve the water channelled off the roof and carefully stored in underground tanks or cisterns. Like seafarers, we tend to be both fatalists and pragmatists.

Our folkways stretch back to our beginnings as a community some hundred years after Captain Juan Bermudez in *La Garza* happened upon an uninhabited Bermuda in around 1505. In 1609 the *Sea Venture*, flagship of a relief fleet bound for the new Virginia colony at Jamestown, was wrecked on Bermuda. All 150

men and women came safely ashore, including the admiral of the fleet, Sir George Somers, and the governor-designate of Virginia, Sir Thomas Gates. The survivors built two vessels and sailed for succor to Jamestown – but found, instead, that they were the rescuers. Only 60 persons were left alive out of the colony of some 500 the autumn before, and they were dying of starvation. The ship's stores from Bermuda



Bottom photo courtesy of Department of Communication and Information. Top photo courtesy of Bermuda Archives; Montgomery Moore Collection.

saved them. Somers and Gates and the leaders of the colony decided to return to England, but before they could reach the open ocean another relief fleet arrived, and all turned back to Jamestown. Somers volunteered to return to Bermuda to collect supplies, for he seems to have fallen in love with the place and had even picked out an island for himself, which is still called Somerset – Somers' Seat.

But worn out by his exertions, he died, and his nephew Matthew Somers decided to sail back to England. They and other survivors told about Bermuda's beauty and the readily available wild hogs and fish, about the occasional sharp storms, about the sea-birds mewing as the crew came ashore. The story of the shipwreck clothed the island in glamour and inspired (so we believe) William Shakespeare to write *The Tempest*. The Virginia Company decided to colonise Bermuda, and in 1612 sent out a ship called the *Plough* with the first colonists. The Virginia Company spawned a second company, the Bermuda Company, who took over the island for £2,000. Christopher Carter, a survivor of the *Sea Venture* wreck who had been on Bermuda ever since, is properly Bermuda's first inhabitant, as he was the only one of the survivors to make his home on the island. Governor Daniel Tucker sent the ship *Edwin* to the West Indies in 1616 to bring back tropical plants to try out in Bermuda. The ship also brought the first persons of African and Native American descent to come to the island. Thus the African, European, and Native American strands of population that make up Bermuda today were present from very early times.

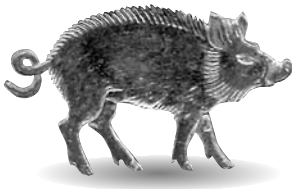


Photo courtesy of Bermuda Archives, News Bureau Collection.

Mrs. Young making cassava pie.

It seems likely that cassava (or manioc) was among the tropical plants the *Edwin* brought, and our traditional Christmas cassava pie – made with cassava paste in both crust and filling – probably stems from this very early period. One writer declared, “it took some ingenious housewife” to turn cassava into an edible pie, and today, after nearly four centuries, it remains our principal and unique Christmas dish.

On 1 August, 1620, Bermuda organised its first meeting of the House of Assembly, one year after the House of Burgesses was instituted in Virginia. The State House was the first major building of Bermuda coral limestone. Until recent times Bermuda architecture has developed from the use of stone blocks and stone roof tiles, cut with a saw from the Aeolian limestone, and Bermuda cedars, which rarely gave more than 16 feet of useable timber. This limited the size of the largest rooms and determined the dimensions of buildings. Stone roof tiles made a heavy load for the roof timbers but enabled island homes to defy hurricanes.



The State House was an early archetype for Bermuda limestone architecture.

When Governor Tucker arrived in 1616, he initiated the growing of tobacco, which was a successful export crop until the small fields became exhausted. The Bermuda Company, controlling Bermuda's economy under a royal charter, had insisted on tobacco culture and tried to limit trade with England to one Company ship a year. Once free of the Company in 1684, Bermudians turned their attention to the sea to make a living – an economic base which continued for more than a century. They took over the isolated Turks Islands and made salt there, which they traded for food up and down the Eastern Seaboard. Of course, not all men were sailors; some built ships. Bermuda cedar was ideal for this, pliable and resistant to sea worms and barnacles. The vessels proved to be unusually swift and are credited with being the inspiration for the famed Baltimore schooners. Today Bermuda dinghies race on weekends and are reminders of our seafaring past.



The crew of *Contest*, a Bermuda fitted dinghy, continue a long tradition of Bermuda sailing arts.

Photo by Kristen Feneke © Smithsonian Institution.

Photo courtesy of Department of Communication and Information.

By 1775 Bermuda was a small cog in Britain's vast American empire. In culture, the island was closest to the mid-Atlantic colonies, governed in much the same way. The British efforts to confine trade within its own empire tended to benefit Bermuda's seafarers and salt rakers, and the British defeat in 1783 was a blow to Bermudians' way of life. The British then began to use Bermuda as a replacement for their lost Eastern Seaboard harbours. Thus Bermuda became a garrison island, and the British soldiers and sailors stationed there had an important effect on our culture. Colonel William Reid, governor from 1839 to 1846, realising that in time of war the island fortress could be starved out by an enemy blockade, imported ploughs (there were only three on the island when he arrived) and brought in two English farmers to show what might be done. The result was that the colony rapidly developed an export trade to the Eastern Seaboard in garden vegetables, particularly Bermuda onions, from which the people gained the nickname "Onions." With a year-long growing season, there was time to grow crops for home consumption as well.

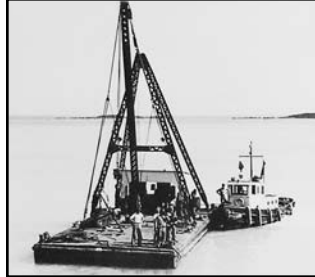
In 1849, the barque *Golden Rule* brought 58 Madeiran immigrants as agricultural labourers, starting the 150-year connection between the two isolated Atlantic archipelagos, and giving Bermuda a new cultural element. High U.S. import tariffs and refrigerated train transport from the warmer states to northern U.S. cities after World War I destroyed Bermuda's vegetable export business, but the farm culture

lingers on. Bermudians turn out in large numbers for the annual three-day Agricultural Exhibition, where amateurs and professionals vie with one another in showing their livestock, produce, home cooking, and flowers.

Photo courtesy of Department of Communication and Information.



Veterans of both world wars gather at the Cenotaph of Front Street to honour those that lost their lives in battle.



Dredger at Castle Harbour — part of constructing the U.S. military airfield during World War II.

From the British garrison Bermudian men learned new trades and construction methods, working under the army and navy engineers. In addition, the Royal Navy Dockyard ran an apprenticeship scheme that produced well-trained artisans, thus creating an important addition to Bermuda's education facilities. By the end of the 19th century, two segregated local army units developed — the white-officered Black Royal Garrison Artillery (later the Bermuda Militia Artillery) who manned the massive guns in the coastal forts, and the all-white Bermuda Volunteer Rifle

Corps, an infantry unit. Many Bermudians are descended from army and navy families, and 11 November, the day marking the end of World War I, is observed annually with great decorum at a parade of the Bermuda Regiment (the integrated descendant of the BMA and the BVRC) on Hamilton's Front Street at the Cenotaph — the war memorial.

As the 20th century drew near, war broke out between Britain and two Boer Republics in South Africa. As there was a large garrison in Bermuda, the British decided to send Boer prisoners to the island, and to reinforce the garrison with the West Indian Regiment. The influx of West Indians, coupled with a further influx of workers to expand the Dockyard, strengthened Bermuda's ties with the Caribbean and influenced our culture. The dawn of the 20th century brought increasing tourist trade. People had visited Bermuda for their health from at least the mid-18th century, but the island gained recognition as a resort in the late 1800s with the visit of Princess Louise, the artistic and rebellious daughter of Queen Victoria, and steamships made frost-free, subtropical Bermuda easily accessible to New York. Distinguished visitors such as Mark Twain and Woodrow Wilson gave important publicity to Bermuda's qualities, and the winter season became an important part of Bermuda life. After World War I tourism became the mainstay of the economy, doing so well that the island was not seriously influenced by the Great Depression of the 1930s.

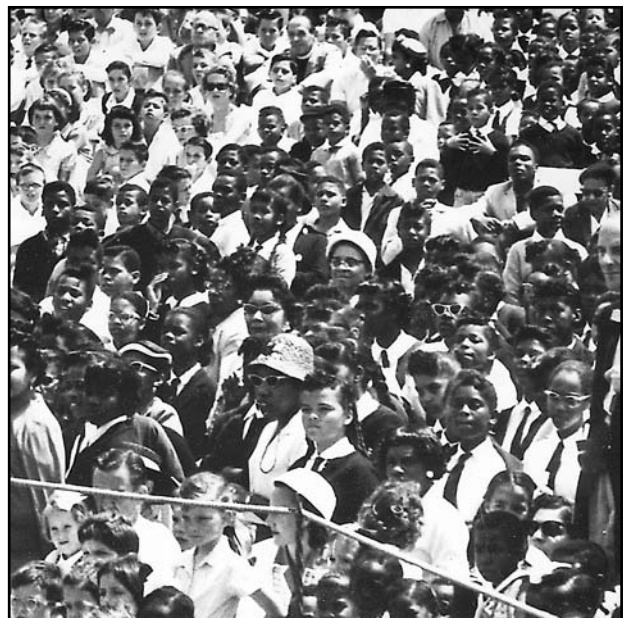


Front Street, c. 1912. Fashionable visitors in the 1900s — the early days of tourism in Bermuda.

World War II wrought many changes, swiftly modernising the quiet holiday back-water still drowsing in the 19th century. Bermuda automatically went to war in 1939 when Britain did, and this rapidly killed the all-important tourist trade. For a time the government became the principal employer, hiring men on meagre pay for public works projects. Construction of U.S. military bases and an airfield started in 1941; Bermuda became acquainted with the latest modes of rapid construction as well as tough American construction workers. Bermuda workers were unhappy as prices went up and they were paid at the same low rate as on the Bermudian government projects. The Bermuda Workers Association was formed, and this quasi-union succeeded in improving pay.

The continued interest in agriculture was important during World War II, particularly when in 1942 German U-boats sank a Bermuda-bound supply ship and put the island on very short rations – including oats for the island’s horses, the main means of transport. This situation, along with defence requirements that motor vehicles traverse every part of the island, reversed the ban on automobiles that had been imposed in the early 1900s.

It was a changed island that greeted the peace in 1945. The face of the land had been altered with the building of U.S. bases, which took up one-eighth of the island. Bermudians awakened to ideas of a greater democracy, which two decades later were to change the voter’s franchise from one qualified by land ownership to one of universal adult suffrage. Under the charismatic leadership of Dr Edgar Fitzgerald Gordon (whose daughter would be Bermuda’s first woman premier) the trade union movement gained in strength until it became a potent force in industrial relations, ensuring the workers a share in a burgeoning economy.



1959 Royal Visit.

Photo courtesy of Bermuda Archives: Richard Saunders Collection.

For burgeon it did! Bermuda's new airfield facilitated connections with the Eastern Seaboard and Europe. The fact that Bermuda was in the sterling area but enjoyed an American-style way of life attracted wealthy Britons, and go-ahead banks and law firms found that a company in Bermuda could help shelter their capital from tax collectors. In 1959, during the celebrations of the 350th anniversary of Somers' shipwreck, a group of young black professionals decided to try and get rid of segregation in the principal movie theatre. They organised a boycott, which succeeded so well that soon major restaurants and hotels dropped all segregation. Businesses changed their employment practices as well. It was the breaking of a dam that led to universal adult suffrage, a new constitution, and greater internal self-government for the colony.

A community of 60,000 people is a small town by North American standards, yet, because of our isolation and our constitution, we are also a small nation. Our politicians debate garbage collection one day and relations with the United States the next. Although we are still a British colony, we have more independence than any of the 50 U.S. states or Puerto Rico.

Our vibrant island has the curious motto "Quo Fata Ferunt," "Whither the Fates Lead Us." It seems a bit bizarre for a remarkably successful community, but an island is always in the hands of the fates, whether they bring a hurricane or a shipwreck. We were drawn into a world war, which first destroyed our economy and then built it up so that the island is more prosperous than before. Our livelihood depends on bending and turning the winds of fortune to our advantage. Thus we have succeeded in the past, and thus we must go into the uncertain future.

WILLIAM SEARS ZUILL, SR is a prominent Bermudian historian. He was educated at the Whitney Institute in Bermuda, St Andrew's School, Delaware, and Harvard University. Now retired, he worked for many years for *The Royal Gazette*, as a reporter and then editor, and then became Director of the Bermuda National Trust. He was awarded the M.B.E.

Bermuda Connections

By Diana Baird N'Diaye

APPROACHING BERMUDA BY AIR OR SEA, one notices first that the isles are opulently landscaped and impeccably adorned with lush gardens and pastel architecture. For its 300,000 yearly visitors and residents alike it is a land that is small in area but rich in culture. Bermuda is at once a geographic place and cultural space a creation of human enterprise, artistry, and effort.

Bermuda's local culture grew out of the island's strategic location. From its very early settlement this tiny archipelago was a central navigational landmark between Britain, mainland America, the Caribbean, and later the Azores. Patterns of travel and exchange have continued to rejuvenate the cultural fabric of the island colony. These patterns have been a source of material goods, population and culture. People, ideas, and goods along with music, foods, and other forms of culture flow out and back from Bermuda with the regularity of the ocean tides. Bermudian folklife is the creative, pragmatic, and unique fusion of these cosmopolitan trends.



Photo courtesy of Department of Communication and Information.

The need to survive in a very isolated and limited space, with limited resources, built Bermuda's economy and culture. Finding ways to reconfigure resources both material and cultural has been an enduring fact of Bermudian life and consciousness. Even today, Bermudians look out upon the world with a mariner's sensibility – ever interdependent with their fellow islanders and watchful of Atlantic Ocean storms as well as those blown in by the changing winds of fortune.

Bermuda was unoccupied until the time of its settlement by the British. The settlers found themselves in need of help in working to build a viable colony out of the craggy, windswept islands. They soon transported enslaved, indentured, and free individuals of African and Native American origin to the colony from captured

Spanish ships and Caribbean islands. These labourers whom they engaged as divers, sailors, fishermen, carpenters, cooks, housekeepers, nursemaids, farmers and as builders of houses and ships brought expressive traditions and skills to the islands as well.

Even in a place as small as Bermuda, the people of St David's Island retain distinctiveness as a regional fishing community of mixed Pequot, African, and English ancestry and cultures.

In 1847, as Bermuda turned to farming as the basis of its economy, Portuguese from Madeira and in the 1920s from the Azores were recruited to bring their farming know-how to the island. Azoreans have been coming to Bermuda ever since. Recruited as farm workers, though rarely given full status as Bermudians, they brought the culture and foods of their homeland including the onion that would become known as the Bermuda onion. They also brought the *Festa Espirito Santo*, the annual commemoration of a miracle that saved the people of Portugal from starving in the 14th century. According to Robert Pires, a Bermudian whose grandfather arrived in Bermuda in the early 1900s, some Portuguese have chosen to downplay their ethnicity, language, and traditions and have not passed these on to their children because of experiences of discrimination. However, today with renewed pride, other Bermudians of Portuguese descent join recently arrived Azoreans in decorating their homes, attending the *Festa* procession, and enjoying the special sweet breads and soups prepared to mark the occasion.

The Bermudian gombey tradition of masked and costumed dancers accompanied by musicians, first seen in the streets of Bermuda in the 1800s, is a contribution from the Caribbean. In the early 1900s migrant workers from St Kitts and Nevis joined earlier Caribbean populations from Barbados and St Thomas. Caribbean immigrants from Guyana,



The annual *Festa Espirito Santo* procession in Hamilton.

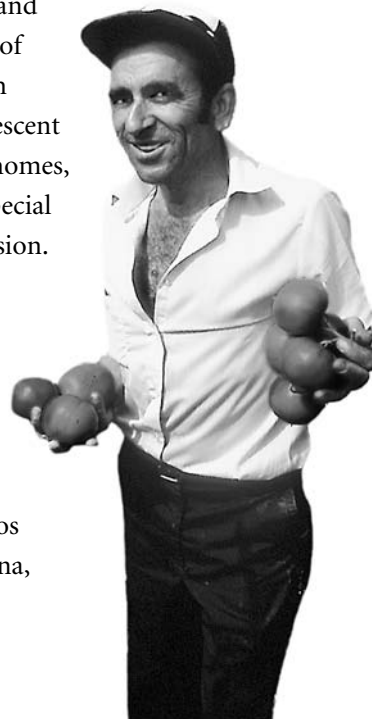


Photo courtesy of Department of Communication and Information.

Photo courtesy of Department of Communication and Information.



Photo courtesy of Department of Communication and Information.

Barbados, and Jamaica came to fill the demand for educators and also for service workers in hotels, guesthouses, and in construction for the tourism industry, bringing foodways, music and traditions of political and economic activism as well.

Though in past times Bermudians of British, Portuguese, and African-Caribbean descent received separate and unequal treatment and benefits for their labour according to the circumstances under which they came to the islands, Bermudians as a community today benefit from their culturally diverse origins and overseas connections as sources for their shared traditions.

Notes on Bermudian Language

FROM A REPORT BY RUTH E. THOMAS

The English language that Bermuda's first settlers brought with them has evolved into two main forms — a standard English and a local vernacular. Many Bermudians switch back and forth between them at will, depending on the situation. For example, Standard English is used in professional settings and in writing, while vernacular Bermudian English is spoken on more casual occasions. Some people who always use the vernacular orally write in perfect Standard English.

“Vere is Villiam’s
Wiolin?”

As much as any other aspect of culture, Bermudian speech reflects the islanders' connections with neighbours around the Atlantic. Early settlers to Bermuda came from various places in England and brought their various local accents and vocabularies with them. Bermudian speech also echoes influences from the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean.

Portuguese speakers immigrated to Bermuda in the mid-1800s, mainly from the Azores. Most came without knowledge of English.

Eventually, they added a different accent, rhythm, cadence, and even vocabulary to the English spoken on the islands. Some young Bermudians try to emulate the English of the Rastafarian community in Jamaica, reggae dub poets, or American rap artists.

In spite of evolutionary change in Bermudian English and the effects of frequent contact with other English-speaking countries, some elements from the past still linger. An example is the way Bermudian English sometimes inter-

changes the sounds /v/ and /w/: for example. "Vere is Villiam's violin?" for "Where is William's violin?"

Other characteristically Bermudian words and expressions include nicknames. Many people in Bermuda, particularly men, have nicknames. For example, the name "Bus Stop" was given to the owner of an old taxi who picked up his clients at bus stops rather than at the usual taxi stands. A boy who could not afford his own shoes once wore his mother's shoes to a party; the nickname "Mama's Shoes"

followed him through his adult life. Sometimes all the male members of a family will share the same name. The eyes of members of one such family, all called "Cat," were thought to have a feline appearance. Nicknames are so frequently used that a person's given name is often forgotten. Nicknames appear in the telephone directory and also in death notices.

RUTH E. THOMAS, M.B.E., BA, MSC, worked in education for many years before joining the Department of Community Services, where she founded the Department of Cultural Affairs. She is founder of the spoken-word group Mosaic.

A sampling of more general Bermudian terms referring to people includes:

SPARROW:

Local woman.

This bird never leaves the Island, hence the comparison with Bermudian women.

LONGTAIL:

Female tourist.

The longtail is a seasonal bird that comes to Bermuda in the spring. That is when the tourists usually begin to visit.

DIDDLY BOPS:

Teenagers on motorised bikes.

ONION:

Bermudian.

The island was known for growing onions.

“ I tell people that there’s no other place like Bermuda geographically or culturally. Bermuda is still a British colony yet a neighbour of the United States, and it is heavily influenced by West Indian people who come here to live. We pick and choose whatever we like. You will see Bermudians at a cricket match wearing sweatshirts from American universities that they’ve brought because the colours match those of their favourite cricket team here in Bermuda. ”

**BRUCE BARRITT,
*Not the Um-Um Players***

Bermudian performance traditions include not only gombey dancers and musicians, but also a regimental band, community marching bands, a pipe band that plays calypso, an a cappella sacred song quartet, as well as reggae, calypso, traditional jazz, and other music traditions that Bermudians have made their own. Bermudians’ experience has taught them a healthy respect for the natural environment, an acute consciousness of the delicacy of the ecological balance and of the limits of human abilities in the face of the power of the sea. Since its accidental discovery by shipwreck and its subsequent settlement, the country has survived frequent life-threatening storms, a cedar blight that virtually wiped out a primary building material, and an ever-present dependence on rainwater. As Keith Battersbee, a boat pilot for over 30 years, remarked, “You’ve got to respect Mother Nature. Anybody who doesn’t respect the ocean gets in trouble.” The occupational skills of boat pilots like Mr Battersbee, boat builders, fishermen, sail makers, undersea divers, and others who work and play in the emerald Atlantic waters around Bermuda are all an indelible part of Bermuda’s cultural wealth.

Occupational folklife in Bermuda also extends to the use of the resources of the land itself. The artistry of Bermuda’s farmers and gardeners, along with builders, carpenters, and other artisans, has been in their creative conservation and tradition-based use of the island’s limited natural resources and space.

Bermuda is a well-known tourist destination, and Bermudians receive guests in gargantuan proportion relative to the island’s resident population. Bermuda’s Department of Tourism estimates that an average of 300,000 people visit each year – five visitors per resident. But the arts and values of hospitality are both home-based and occupational. According to second-generation guesthouse owner/manager DeLaey Robinson, “When you go to people’s houses, you get that warmth. People have a generosity towards you . . . It is helpful to have that as a building block for

the hospitality industry.” Bermudians teach their children to say hello and be helpful to guests at home or on the street. Guests in Bermudian homes are treated to local dishes such as cassava or farine pie, regaled with stories, and often sent home with freshly baked gifts like bread made from Bermuda bananas. Bermudian arts of hospitality also include preparation and presentation of food and drink by cooks, chefs, waiters, bakers, candy makers, and the performance arts of guesthouse owners, entertainers, other restaurant staff, and others.

Bermudians’ knowledge and seasoned judgement have enabled them to build a prosperous livelihood over several centuries of change. Their occupational traditions embody this understanding of the island’s possibilities. The same can be said for leisure-time traditions like kite flying. Kite maker and flyer Vincent Tuzo is praised as “the Kite King” for his expertise. For weeks before the beginning of the Easter holiday, his workshop is a flurry of activity; under a kaleidoscopic canopy of tissue-paper kites, parents and children place orders in anticipation of the traditional Good Friday kiteflying picnics. Wading waist deep in Warwick Marsh, he collects pond sticks for making kites that fly when the wind offers only the faintest of breaths. Up on his roof, Tuzo, kite, and wind perform a dance that is both a flirtation and a contest to keep the kite floating above the trees.

VINCENT TUZO



IN MAKING KITES AND FLYING THEM, MR. TUZO DISPLAYS AN IMPRESSIVE KNOWLEDGE OF THE ISLAND’S MATERIALS AND THE WIND’S MOODS.

RANDY FURBERT



BEEKEEPER RANDY FURBERT NOTES THAT “DURING [WORLD WAR II] SUGAR WAS RATIONED. SO FOLKS GOT TOGETHER AND STARTED A BEE-KEEPING CLUB TO SHARE THEIR INFORMATION AND WORK TOGETHER”.

FRED PHILLIPS



FURNITURE MAKER FRED PHILLIPS MAKES FURNITURE OUT OF THE RECYCLED BERMUDA CEDAR THAT SEVERAL OF HIS CUSTOMERS STORE IN THEIR HOMES.

RONNIE CHAMEAU



RONNIE CHAMEAU MAKES ORNAMENTAL DOLLS USING DRIED FOLIAGE FROM TREES ON THE ISLAND.

Bermudian recreational traditions such as fitted dinghy races and Seagull races arose from pragmatic origins. In the past, Bermudians of African, English, or Portuguese-Azorean descent all were involved in maritime trades. Ships were built at Dockyard for the Royal Navy. Fishing was a local occupation. Today, boats powered by Seagull engines and manned by skilled crews are used for racing. Bermuda's boat builders developed some of the smallest and fastest, most efficient seagoing vessels, the fitted

My Girl Verna

Bermudian Vernacular Architecture in the 21st Century

BY JAMES TUCKER

There are two contradictory currents within Bermudian vernacular architecture today. One is the original building tradition of the 17th century, and the other is "21st century Bermudian Vernacular."



The Old Rectory, St. George's. Archetypal Bermudian vernacular consists of simple, quiet, understandable, and timeless forms from a previous idealised life.

Courtesy Bermuda Archives; News Bureau Collection.

Vernacular architecture is defined as the building tradition of a local people. It is a pattern language or dialect of construction that is particular to a group of people.

The earlier form of Bermudian construction can be described as simple, quiet, and understandable. Consisting of timeless forms, it is clearly defined and beautiful in its "fit for purpose".

The 21st century vernacular, however, seems to present a dynamic, unpredictable landscape. Today's buildings appear as a chaotic clash of form, colour, and style. Architectural elements are interpreted and executed by the builder in a naïve style. The decoration is often based on memory and individual caprice, not on scaled architectural

plans. This is the paradox: How can both of these worlds have been drawn into the gravitational orbit of Bermudian vernacular architecture? Part of the answer is really quite simple:

The practitioners have changed. The earlier architecture was built by English colonists adapting their building knowledge to the climate and materials of their new home. The 21st century vernacular is a building style born out of a multicultural hodge-podge. As a people we combine many cultural influences, which still somehow make us uniquely Bermudian. As one people we need to accept each other's stylistic ways of "celebrating" shelter, both when we share values in particular architectural forms and when we don't. We need to be able to accept –

dinghy and the Bermuda sloop, but now they have dwindled to an alarming few. It has been fashionable in recent years to import boats from New England and even from Britain. Some organisations have vowed to change this, for example the Bermuda Sloop Foundation, which has commissioned the construction of a Bermuda sloop.



Photo by Bruce Stuart.

These bottles, while not strictly architecture, nonetheless represent the Bermudian's need to celebrate the everyday.

if not entirely understand – each other's styles to come together as one society. We can start by being less critical of our built environment: such criticism is only divisive. We can stop trying to “interpret” all of what we see and try to be less “educated” in our judgments. We should recognise that putting up a building is art – only keeping it from falling down is science.

JAMES TUCKER is a Bermudian architect and building arts researcher.

Belonging to the island – being born and bred in Bermuda – is a valued status. Bermudians meeting for the first time ask immediately, “What’s your “title” (Your surname?) followed by “Who’s your momma?” Further inquiry may be needed to place individuals in their larger families; so the next question may be something like, “Are you from the Pembroke Dills (or Pearmans or Outerbridges) or from the Warwick (or Devonshire or Flatts) Dills?” Finally, “What school (or church) did you attend as a child?” With a mariner’s precision, Bermudians calculate social longitudes and latitudes to orient the conversation.

All Bermudians see family as the foundation of society. Genealogy and family history structure many social relations. Bermudians extend kin and kinlike affiliations into the formation of clubs, lodges, government, schools, businesses, and institutions of worship. Most Bermudian businesses are family businesses, from the smallest shop to the largest Bermuda-owned law firm. As in communities around the world, family and community bonds in Bermuda are reaffirmed and strengthened through play such as cricket, celebrations such as Cup Match and the Easter holiday, and collective work such as house-building.

Cricket has special significance for Bermudians. Generations of cricketers in the same family tend to belong to the same clubs. Bermudians living or travelling abroad tend to come home in late July for the annual celebration of Cup Match, a cricket tournament that commemorates and celebrates the emancipation from slavery of Bermudians of African descent in 1834.



The Cup Match holiday is a time of family reunion and an annual celebration of the end of slavery in Bermuda.

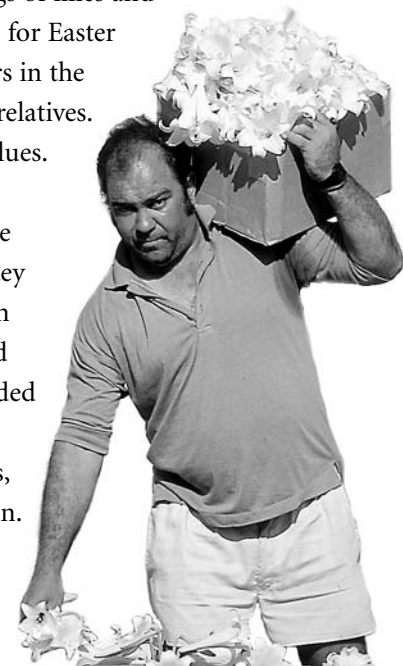
by Bermudians of African descent created and sponsored the Somerset and St George's cricket teams. The teams eventually generated their own social clubs that remain active today, when Cup Match brings all Bermudians together. Cup Match regalia and dress are art forms in their own right, and the verbal art of Cup Match commentary is a relished performance. Today, Cup Match is still much more than a sporting event – it is an occasion for Bermudian artistry and performance.

Easter is another occasion for family and community celebration all over the island. On Good Friday, Bermudians fly kites, play marbles, and eat traditional foods such as hot cross buns with codfish cakes. Gombeys appear in the streets and at the doorsteps of friendly families. Members of church congregations across the islands dress their churches with devotional offerings of lilies and other fresh flowers from their home gardens for Easter Sunday, and island families place new flowers in the pots and urns at the gravesites of cherished relatives. Such Bermudian traditions reflect shared values.

Nowadays most building in Bermuda is done entirely by hired contractors; however, DeLaey Robinson recalls that in his childhood “when building went on . . . you might hire a skilled person, be it carpenter or mason, if you needed those additional skills. But by and large, the labour was home-grown neighbours, friends, and family. It was very much a swap situation.

Bermudian Cup Match also illuminates the complexity of the island's history and society. Cricket was a segregated sport, like many other public activities in Bermuda before the 1970s civil rights protests and popular uprisings in Bermuda.

Because “black” Bermudians could not play cricket in the games sponsored by the British clubs, friendly societies and lodges run



Nobody had houses built by contractors, so you always had [help], and of course you reciprocated and helped people who helped you . . . I remember at Sandy Hill, weekends were devoted to building. It was a long process to build a house. It took months and months.” Ruth Thomas describes the celebration at the end of the process: wetting the roof with black rum demonstrates closure and expresses good wishes for the house’s inhabitants. Although many fewer homes are built collectively, Robinson, a member of Parliament, has suggested that revitalising this tradition may help to make homes affordable to more people on the island, reinforce family and community bonds, and pass on valuable cultural skills and knowledge.

Bermudians are often at a loss to describe what is unique about their culture because of all the influences from various surrounding lands. They sometimes mistakenly conclude that Bermudians have no culture, that all Bermudian culture is imported from England, the United States, the Caribbean, and Portugal. But push them a little harder, and Bermudians will remember their love of the sea, travel, and enterprise; the values of civility and hospitality; and their artful way with words.

Bermudians value the resourcefulness with which they turn circumstances to their own use. In keeping with their perception of constant risk yet relative good fortune, they are realists, opportunists, and yet careful to acknowledge divine providence (there are more local religious establishments per person than most places in the world). They endeavour to use every resource; to watch what and who enters and leaves the island; to foster, nurture, and manage connections between family and community. They maintain clear borders between insiders and outsiders. These values permeate Bermudian experience. Bermudian culture shapes the island, and the island shapes Bermudian culture.

I am proud of my own Bermuda connections; Bermuda was my home for much of my early childhood, and it was a pleasure to return. The island remains for me a place of entrancing beauty, nurturing family, friends, and enriching cultural experiences. I hope that the Festival programme and research that has supported it contribute to the conversations through which Bermudians are inclusively defining and affirming their culture.

DIANA BAIRD N’DIAYE, PH.D., curator of the *Bermuda Connections* programme, is a Folklore Specialist at the Smithsonian. Researchers James Ziral, John Zuill, and Ruth Thomas contributed invaluable to ideas in this article in a series of meetings prior to its composition.

SUGGESTED READING

The Bermudian.

A monthly magazine on Bermudian history and culture, first published in 1930, is an excellent source for more information about the island’s traditions and heritage. Here are a few other publications that may be helpful in understanding the history and scope of Bermuda’s occupational and cultural traditions and the everyday life of Bermudians.

Emery, Llewellyn. 1996.
Nothin’ but a Pond Dog.
Hamilton: Bermuda Publishing Company.

----- . 1999.
The Fires of Pembroke.
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Bermuda Recollections.
Hamilton: Ministry of Community, Culture & Information.

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Another World: Bermuda and the Rise of Modern Tourism.
London: MacMillan Education Limited.

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Hamilton: Bermuda National Gallery.

Wadson, Judith. 1997.
Bermuda: Traditions & Tastes.
Portsmouth, R.I.: Onion Skin Press.

Ziral, James, and Elizabeth Jones. 1999.
Insiders Guide to Bermuda.
2d ed. Hamilton: The Royal Gazette.

Zuill, William S. 1999.
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Bermuda Cedar and its Artisans

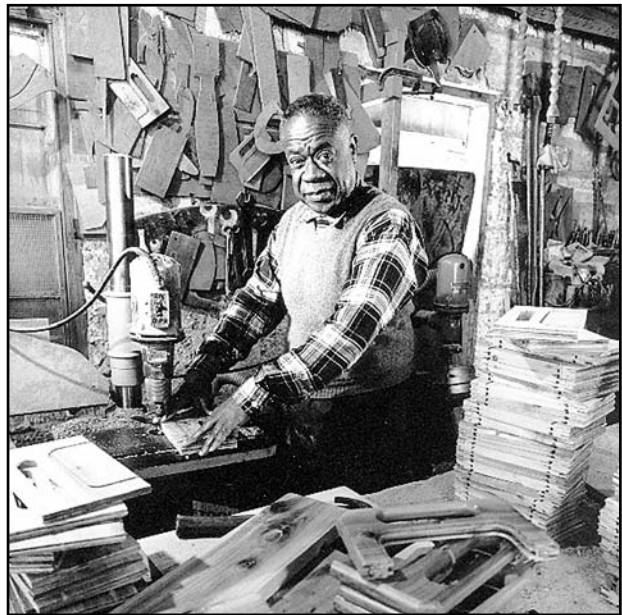
By Llewellyn Emery

EVER SINCE THE DAYS OF THE FIRST SETTLERS in 1609, Bermuda cedar has been prized for its strength, durability, beauty, and fragrance. During the 17th and 18th centuries, hundreds of tons of cedar timbers were exported, whether legitimately or illegally, for decorating the interior rooms of the wealthy.

In 1658, so fashionable was it to have this exotic wood in one's décor that the English Privy Council ordered the purchase of Bermuda cedar to grace the ceilings of the famed Hampton Court.

Back then, Bermuda's landscape was overrun with healthy cedar trees – some reportedly so immense, they yielded planks measuring some 32 inches wide and 12 feet in length. For centuries thereafter, local builders and craftsmen used the wood to make everything from cradles to coffins. Whether for rafters or roof trusses, boats or beams, furniture or floorboards, cedar was the wood of choice.

Then came the blight of the 1940s. Our precious cedars were decimated. Nevertheless, the myriad dead cedars proved to be a boon for resourceful Bermudians who promptly began to fashion cedar souvenirs for the developing tourist market. At its peak in the 1950s and 1960s, cedar craftsmen kept the shelves of all of the island's gift shops and department stores well stocked. The master craftsmen purchased



Legendary cedar craftsman, the late Mr. George Trott.

Photo courtesy of Bermuda Archives: News Bureau Collection.



Chesley Trott, cedar sculptor.

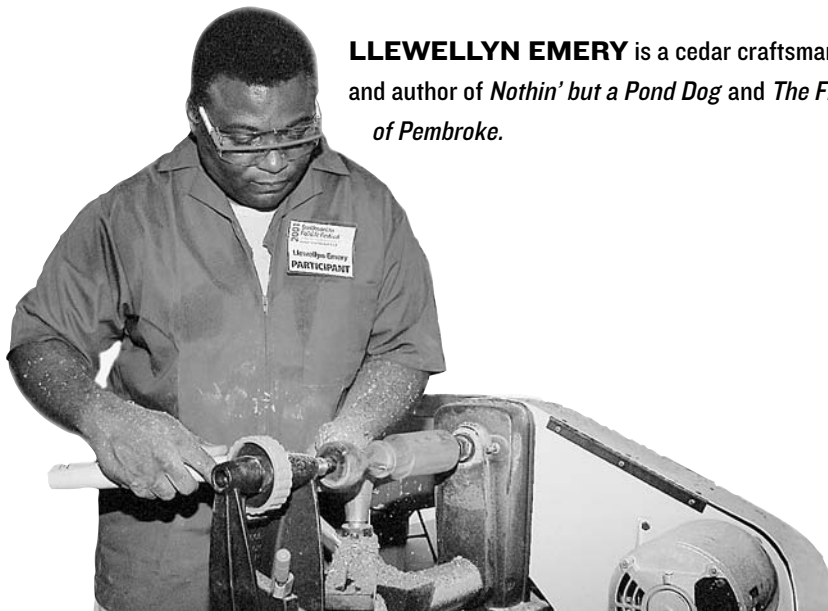
cedar logs by the truckload and at prices that would make any modern-day artisan green with envy. The reasonable price, however, allowed them to offer their wares to the stores at reasonable “souvenir prices.” Today, with supplies of the raw material rapidly dwindling, the value of the remaining cedar stock has skyrocketed and, while the ongoing programme of reforestation is enjoying encouraging success, the “glory days” of the cedar market have long passed. So have most of the “Old Masters.”

Now, each of a handful of surviving craftsmen struggles to preserve this important piece of Bermuda’s culture in his unique way. Chesley Trott, for example, is a renowned sculptor. His collection of elegant abstracts includes numerous cedar carvings. Fred Phillips makes fine cedar furniture featuring intricate dovetails, mortises, and tenons. Llewellyn Emery, one of the few remaining woodturners on the Island, specialises in exquisitely finished cedar gifts and souvenirs.

Examine any piece produced by one of these artisans and it’s easy to see the pride and passion they have for working with Bermuda cedar. Cedar is a warm, rich wood that’s full of character. So, a good finish enhances its natural beauty. But if the preparation is rushed, the finish won’t be up to par. Herein lies the challenge of working with cedar. It has been described as a complicated and obstinate wood with swirling, changing grain patterns. It needs to be pampered and fussed with in order to bring out the best in it. Thankfully, we still have a few artisans who are willing and able to ‘pamper and fuss with’ this national treasure, carving out a place for cedar in Bermuda’s rich and diverse culture.



Fred Phillips, furniture maker.



LLEWELLYN EMERY is a cedar craftsman, and author of *Nothin’ but a Pond Dog* and *The Fires of Pembroke*.

