

ABSTRACT

A History of St. James: The Settlement of A Frontier 1665-1761

This paper is a preliminary examination of the settlement of the parish of St. James from 1665 to 1761. It is a preliminary attempt, because limited documentation exists on the topic. The main purpose of this research was to investigate why St. James remained a frontier up until the late eighteenth century although it had been established in 1665, ten years after the island was captured by the English. St. James is located in the north western section of the island, and the earliest recorded plat is for the year 1667.

The main factors hindering the growth of early settlement in the parish were: lack of defence from internal and external threats, difficulty of getting to the area, and other factors that made it generally unattractive to the early settlers. By the 1730s the major factors hindering the growth of settlement were the presence of the Leeward Maroons and inefficient policies for issuing land to settlers. The Crown's attempt at attracting settlers to the parish failed, as the large tracts of land being issued did not entice them. The threat of economic instability and the widening ratio between white and black inhabitants finally compelled the Government to provide secure and organized settlements.

The 1730s witnessed the suppression of the Maroons and the creation of planned settlement at Norman's Valley. These two major developments laid the foundation for growth of settlement in St. James. The plat records and cartographic evidence for the period after the Maroon Treaty and the settlement of Norman's Valley indicate an increase in the number of settlers and in infrastructure for the area. The implementation of a secure and planned settlement policy was what finally ensured the growth of settlement in St. James.