



Department of Fisheries Cottage, 1 Coney Island Road



Fisheries Cottage was a residence when it was photographed in 1990.

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This is part of a series of architectural articles by the Bermuda National Trust that will highlight some of Bermuda's endangered historic buildings.

Because of its recent use by the Department of Fisheries we've called this otherwise unnamed house Fisheries Cottage. Not only is the building's early history unknown, there is also the discrepancy as to which parish it belongs, with one government department placing it in Hamilton Parish and another in St George's.

Although the exact date of the cottage's construction is uncertain it appears on the 1898/1901 ordinance survey map. The Grade 3 listed cottage has many decorative features such as raised gable ends, corner pilasters and a small parapet on the south end. An architrave over the front door helps to deflect rain water. There is a large tank built into hillside.

As early as 1620 there was a little footbridge which led from the



main island to Coney Island where there was a horse ferry that went across to Ferry Island where then a short wooden bridge led to St George's Island. Before the 1871 construction of the Causeway there was steady business transporting people, horses and carriages to Ferry Island. Located close to the Coney Island pier is the Old Ferry House (now also used by the Fisheries Department) which was rented out, presumably to the ferry master who was required to keep all the buildings in good repair and to paint them inside and out every year.

In May 1910 it was decided to use the whole property as a Reformatory for boys and girls. By September plans had changed and the Coney Islands buildings were to be turned into an Isolation Hospital for infectious diseases. The House of Assembly had debated the pros and cons of the Coney Island location against those of the more remote Nonsuch Island. The above-ground water tank was built and the small building, possibly once stables, was converted into nurses' quarters. In January 1911 the Medical Officer reported that the new Isolation Hospital, although not complete, was open to receive a case of diphtheria and a case of whooping cough from the RMS *Trent*.

The isolation facility may have been perfectly adequate for sick seamen but in 1924 a tourist from the Grasmere Hotel in Pembroke developed scarlet fever and was transferred to the Isolation Hospital. She complained that there was no trained staff or medical support and cited the lack of electric lighting, running water and proper sanitary arrangements. Seemingly at odds with an isolation facility is the fact that the Bermuda Railway which opened in 1931 ran through Coney Island and past what was then known as the Quarantine Station. In 1937 the positions of caretaker and Bailey's Bay sanitary inspector were combined. Alfred Edward Redman, who had worked for the Department of Health for 16 years, moved into the cottage. He continued to reside there after his retirement in 1946 and until his death two years later.

Both buildings continued to be used as living accommodations well into the 1980s. Fenced off from public access, the Old Ferry House now serves as the administrative and research headquarters for the Marine Resources Section of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Fisheries Cottage became known as Crockwell's Cottage when it was rented by the late Inspector Custerfield Crockwell and his



family. Afterwards it was used as a storage and lab facility by Marine Resources. However, its location in a public park with a nearby beach made the cottage a target for vandalism and it was often broken into. Today it appears to have outlived its usefulness and sits abandoned and increasingly derelict. The cottage is owned by Public Lands and Buildings. As with the cottages at Blue Hole and Hog Bay Parks (see earlier at-risk articles) it will undoubtedly be difficult to find tenants who are willing to tolerate the bad behaviour of a few in our public parks.



Fisheries Cottage in 2022.

Sources: The Islands of Bermuda, Terry Tucker; Life on Old St David's, E A McCallan, 100 Years of Hospital Care in Bermuda, J Randolph Williams; various articles in The Royal Gazette between 1910 and 1937. Many thanks to Norbert Simmons.