Social and Economic Change in St. Maarten, Netherland Antilles, 1868-1968 as Seen Through Land Transfer Deeds

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This paper is the result of three months' fieldwork in St. Maarten, two months in the summer of 1977, when I collected general information about the island and its history, and one month in the summer of 1978, when I worked on the deeds. The research was undertaken as part of a doctoral program in anthropology at Teachers' College/Columbia University, and was funded by a Tinker Foundation Summer Field Training Program Award. The reader should keep in mind, therefore, that the "present" is 1978.

There are many people in St. Maarten who made my stay enjoyable, but here I would particularly like to single out those who spent so much time with me outlining their family histories. Without these oral histories, the written record would have been much more difficult to interpret. I am also indebted to the people who helped me find my way through the files in the Census Office and the tomes of the Cadastral Office.

"Welcome to St. Maarten, the friendly island" - so reads the large sign that greets the 150,000 or so tourists who arrive each year in the Dutch part of this small (thirty-seven square mile) island in the eastern Caribbean. Front Street and Back Street, the two main streets of Philipsburg, the capital and only town, are lined with over one hundred shops filled with tourist goods - from China, linens, jewelry, and clothing to liquor, cigarettes, watches, and hi-fi equipment - and each of the better beaches has a large hotel set firmly on its shores. In the early 1960s St. Maarten was "discovered," and it has since become a major tourist island, while the tourist industry has become the inhabitants' major employer.[1]

The Dutch West India Company was granted the original patent for the island in 1632, and half was ceded to the French in 1648. Company-appointed commanders were granted plantations, but by the early 1700s large tracts were being sold to private owners, leading to the establishment of a small plantocracy (Keur and Keur 1960: 37-38). A few of the colonists came directly from Holland; others were privateers, or soldiers and sailors who had jumped the ships of various nations; and still others were plantation owners and yoemen farmers from neighboring British and French islands. English was the spoken (although not official) language as early as the 1790s (Hartog 1974: 48).

In common with other Caribbean islands, St. Maarten's plantations produced agricultural products for export, tobacco in the beginning and then sugar and salt, with minor crops of cotton, hay, and indigo. The labor force, until emancipation in 1863, was largely slave, although the ratio of slaves to free men was never as high as in such colonies as Jamaica or nearby St. Kitts. Many plantation owners left immediately before and after emancipation, which they pleaded, as had their counterparts in the British islands thirty

years earlier, would cause them to suffer the "harrowing pangs of Bankruptcy, Destitution, and Want."[2] Although it is doubtful that the abolition of slavery was in itself the cause, St. Maarten's economy did proceed to suffer a decline after 1863 as its exports became increasingly less competitive on the world market. By 1900 there were reportedly only six estates that still grew sugarcane (there had been twenty-three in 1830), and by 1915 there was only one (Keur and Keur 1960: 69). Salt production ceased in the mid-1940s.

The outflow of population increased after 1900. Estate owners and merchants generally went to Holland or the United States, while the laboring poor went to the sugar plantations of the Dominican Republic and Cuba, the phosphate mines of Connatable, French Guiana, and the oil refineries of Curaçao and Aruba. The population, 5500 in 1789 and 3600 in 1850, was by 1950 down to 1500 souls, living largely from subsistence farming and shopkeeping, and heavily dependent on remittances from abroad, on government employment, or on welfare.

Then, in the late 1950s, St. Maarten was discovered for a second time, and over the next twenty years the island saw both renewed prosperity and an invasion of sorts. By 1976 the population had officially reached 11,000, only 28 percent of whom had been born on the island.[3] The first newcomers were prospective merchants and restauranteers - American, British, French, Indian, Chinese, Antillean, and a few Holland Dutch - who rented and bought old houses in Philipsburg, and hotelkeepers, who established rights to beach land.[4] They were followed by those who came to open the many businesses associated with any expanding economy - construction companies and grocery stores, for instance - and by the civil servants who came to provide the necessary administrative machinery.[5] Some of these were St. Maarteners, or their children, who were finding opportunities in Curaçao and Aruba constricting as

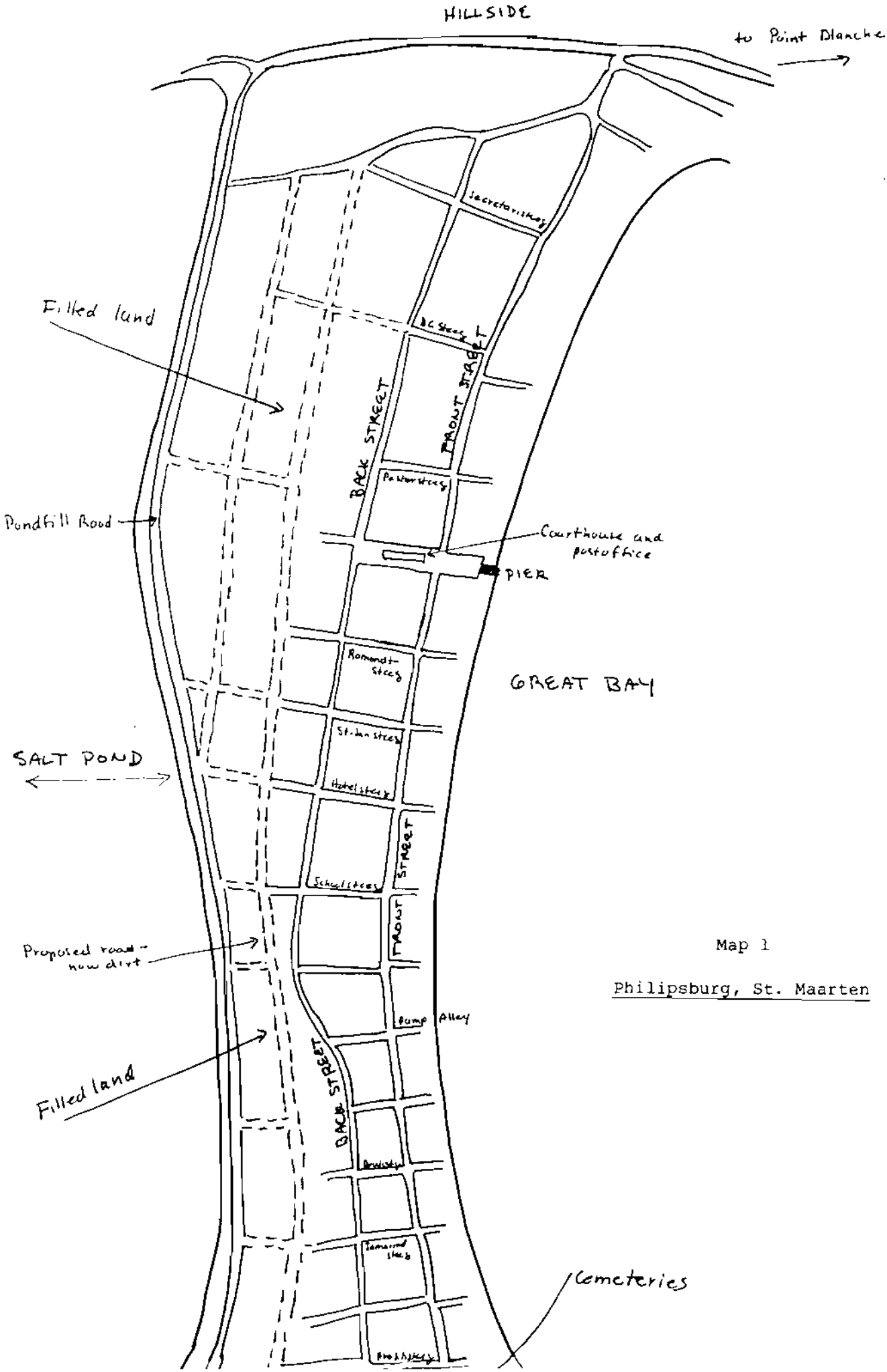
the refineries automated and large numbers of people were laid off. Despite the influx, however, those St. Maarteners who were on the island at the beginning of the boom were in a position to take advantage of the new opportunities in a way that their relatives, who had left the island to earn their livings elsewhere, were not. They controlled local politics and thus certain key government departments, they owned key agencies and businesses, and, not the least important, they owned land, land in town that had been considered next to worthless but had suddenly become very valuable - lots on Front Street that were bought for as little as $5,000 in the 1950s were selling for over $100,000 by the late 1960s.

In small islands with limited resources and a climate unkind to historical records, the social historian is faced with a formidable task: the ravages of hurricanes, fires, and insects - along with the milder but no less harmful ravages of disinterest, neglect, and lack of funds - means that all too few records survive and that those that do are generally incomplete. The purpose of this research, therefore, was not only to learn something of St. Maarten's history - to trace the island's path from a flourishing plantation economy to a sleepy backwater to a bustling tourist spot - but to discover how much can be learned from one of the best preserved of historical records, the land transfer deed. Since part of the purpose of the research was methodological - to learn about the use of this type of record - what follows will necessarily focus both on the kinds of information the deeds give us, as well as on the story they tell. This type of record has been used far less than other historical records - censuses, for instance, or parish registers - and yet, as we shall see, through them we can learn a great deal about St. Maarten, and about its people: we can in fact use them to study a people in motion, not only in space, but over time as well.

The deeds

The official recording of deeds in St. Maarten began in 1868, five years after emancipation. The deed itself is inscribed in longhand in a large ledger, usually in English, and gives the date, the seller(s), buyer(s), price (in Dutch guilders, and sometimes in US dollars as well), the terms of sale, and the location of the lot (not by number, unfortunately, but by listing the contemporary owners of properties on each side). The occupation of both buyer and seller is often included (not necessarily their sole occupation, but presumably the one best known to the notary), and their country of residence at the time of the sale or transfer. If the seller retains usufruct rights, or if he or she acquired the land by means other than sale (by prescriptive rights, by inheritance), this is noted. If the division of an estate is called for and land is involved, all property, movable and immovable, is listed; if the property is transferred by will, the will itself is often copied into the deed. Both of these happen infrequently, however, the first because divisions are confined to the larger estates, and the second because in this period most people - including the wealthy - died intestate.

Inheritance in St. Maarten is partible but not necessarily divided, and marriages can be "with community of goods" and without. Selling land that has been in a family for more than one generation thus involves the consent of all the living heirs, and, since court cases can result if an heir is omitted, the deeds contain a highly accurate enumeration of living heirs - wherever they are; an heir whose whereabouts is unknown is so noted. Deceased siblings, however, will only be recorded if the property was bought before their deaths (because their share is then part of the division), and yet-to-be-born children will obviously also be omitted. The information is thus specific to a particular moment in a family's history. Nevertheless, the deeds contain



Map 1

Philipsburg, St. Maarten

the relationships of all the sellers to the original owner, and occasionally birth and death dates as well, and allow the construction of genealogies that often have greater depth and completeness than those collected from the living, who tend to forget both relatives who have predeceased them and those who have left the island. Conversely, but equally importantly, the fact that a population is highly migratory will not necessarily mean that those who have left escape recording, one of the major problems with other types of historical record. In this respect the deeds are much more useful than wills, because legatees are likely to be confined to those who are nearby.[6]

What, then, can be learned about St. Maarten over the past 100 years from this data? Since I was particularly interested in the history of those people who were in position to take advantage of the new opportunities when the island was "rediscovered" in the 1960s, I confined my research to land transfers in Philipsburg itself, the center of commercial activity and the site of the earliest tourist-oriented businesses.[7]

As can be seen from Map 1, Philipsburg occupies a narrow sandbar between the ocean and a large salt pond. Although part of the pond has recently been filled to allow for a by-pass road, until 1970 there were only two parallel streets, Front Street and Back Street, connected by a series of side streets, called "alleys." The social center of the town is the pier, with the courthouse and post office at its head, a bank and a popular café on one side, and stores on the other. Front Street between the pier and Secretaristeeg is known as "up street," and was where the earliest elegant two-story houses (or "upstairs houses") were built; as this became crowded, a few others were erected below the pier as well, but the farther "down street" one goes, the smaller the houses become. By 1978 Front Street as far down as Pump Alley was

almost entirely tourist shops, while Back Street was still a combination of residences and stores that sold to the local market. Tourist shops had only just begun to move back there, as Front Street filled up and rents became expensive. Since tourists, especially cruise-ship day-trippers, are not expected to want to walk very far in the sun, there was not only constant jockeying to move up street, but a debate about whether down street Front Street or Back Street was the "coming" location.

In working with the deeds, I began with the properties on Front Street that had become the sites of tourist businesses, and traced each lot as far back in time as possible; I then took each family name and traced every lot ever listed under that name. I ended up with data on 159 lots, about 58 percent of the total number of lots in town.[8]

General aspects of change

The first step, then, was to see what could be learned about the pace and nature of change by analyzing certain aspects of the entire set of deeds. The 114 properties for which I have data for the entire 1868-1968 period have changed hands an average of three times: the most occupiers any property had was 8, and the least was 1.

Table 1
Number of Occupiers, 1868-1968

No. of Occupiers	No. of Cases
8	1
7	1
6	2
5	14
4	28
3	46
2	20
1	2

Note: This count includes occupiers as of 1868, but does not include transfers within families.

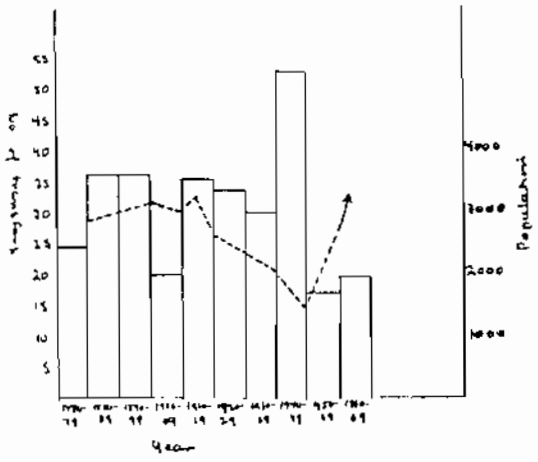
Looked at another way, only 14 (11 percent) of the 128 properties for which I have this kind of data have been in one family for more than sixty years, while 45 (35 percent) have been in the same family since 1908 and 69 (54 percent) only since 1938 (see Table 2). One interpretation of this would be that the rate of turnover accelerated as the population decreased - a not unexpected finding if people sold out as they left. This must be demonstrated, not assumed, however, and to do this we must look at the nature of the relationship between population and transfer more closely.

Table 2
Length of Present Occupation
(till 1968)

Years	No. of Cases
0-9	12
10-19	25
20-29	31
30-39	20
40-49	16
50-59	9
60-69	4
70-79	3
80-89	3
90-99	1
100 -	3

Note: Transfers within families are not included.

Number of Sales and Population
1868-1968



Note: Transfers do not include sales or donations within families, or inheritance across generations.

The graph, which plots number of transactions (sales) against population, shows that in fact the interpretation does not hold up under closer scrutiny. Although the population decreases steadily until 1950 (see Appendix for more detailed population figures), the number of sales varied greatly throughout the period. Further, an examination of the deeds for the two peak periods, both during a world war, shows that they have different characteristics. In the first, 30 of the 36 transactions were to people with St. Maarten family names, and 6 to "outsiders" - including under this rubric both institutions and individuals whose family names did not exist on the island in the pre-emancipation era.[9] Four of the "outsiders" were merchants and all of the buyers and sellers were on the island. In the second period, on the other hand, there were 51 transactions, 8 of which were to "outsiders," but only 2 of these were merchants, and they were from the French side of the island. Further, at this point many of the buyers with St. Maarten names were no longer on the island, and some of the sellers - often heirs of the original owners - were also selling from abroad. Thus although the number of sales was high in both periods, and the population continued to decrease into the second, the nature of the transactions had changed. By the 1940s, sales to "outsiders" had decreased, and islanders (or their children) had begun to buy back properties on the island, preparing for their own return. This was accelerated as the refineries in Aruba and Curacao began to automate. Equally important for an understanding of St. Maarten's social, political, and economic life, the number of people involved in land in St. Maarten had come to include far more than the population resident on the island itself - indeed, in certain respects the boundaries of "St. Maarten" were not its shoreline, but extended far beyond.

An analysis of the position of the properties reveals that it is those at the center of the town that have turned over the most frequently (see Map 2, Appendix). An examination of the deeds shows that these were the more expensive properties owned by the few remaining estate and merchant families - particularly the van Romondts, Percivals, and Nisbets - and were also those most desired by incoming merchants - Rijnenberg, Armonie, and Netherwood. Of the first, the van Romondts had long dominated St. Maarten life: the original settler, Diederick Johannes, arrived in 1801 at the age of 20, married the daughter of a landowner, and had 4 sons who married daughters of colonists (Hartog 1964: 32). One had 11 children, one had 19 (by two wives), one had 4, and one had 3. They in turn had children, so that between 1880 and 1948, when the last van Romondt property was sold, there were at least 87 blood-related members of the family who had an interest in the island. The van Romondts had the largest of the merchant firms, A.A. van Romondt and Company, run by Diederick Johannes' youngest son August Alexander (the eldest son was in administration, as governor from 1840 until his death in 1849, the second was a doctor and the third was also in administration), in partnership with his cousin Willem Henrik Rink van Romondt. Other branches of the family were involved in other merchant firms.

The better land in town, particularly on Front Street, did not begin to leave the hands of these families in earnest until the 1920s (see Map 3, Appendix). This was in part because they often sold to each other, and in part because, even though they were leaving the island, they did not necessarily sell their properties at the time they departed. Thus of the 74 final sales for which I have records, at least 45 did not take place until after - often long after - the owners or their heirs had left. In addition, like other properties sold by those who had already left, these latter were more often sold to the government and to such institutions as the Catholic church than to individuals.

Nevertheless, almost all of the major Front Street properties had passed into the hands of an entirely new series of families by 1960 (see Map 4, Appendix). These, then, are the families who rented their houses and shops to the incoming tourist store and restaurant owners, who tore down their homes and erected multi-store "arcades," and who eventually sold to outside corporations for large sums of money. The deeds are most rewarding for what they can tell us about where these people came from and about their climb up through the St. Maarten social hierarchy - a rise that is mirrored in their step-by-step progress through the town itself.

Occupation, property, and marriage

If all the purchases made by the merchant families, by institutions and governments, and by a few other "outsiders" over the 1868-1968 period are separated out (see Table 4), there remains a long list of other people who bought land in town during this period. They are listed in Table 5. As their occupational ascriptions reveal, they were primarily tradespeople and artisans, although a few were on the government payroll - as marshall, teacher, salt measurer, and policeman, for instance. They have mostly British names, such as Davis, Stephens, Wathey, Conner, Richardson, and Howell, although a few sound Dutch: deWeever, van Gurp, and Kruythoff.

TABLE 4

Post-1868 Purchases, Merchants and Outsiders

Date	Name and Occupation	Price	Lot No.	Comments
1868	Judith van Romondt		C6	auction
1869	Harriet Percival	500	D16	
1869	L.H. and G.H. Percival	837	D21(part)	
1871	W.H. van Romondt	750	C14	
1873	Johannes Rijenberg, gov. schoolteacher	2255	D25	auction
1873	D.C. van Romondt		D28	
1875	L.H. Percival	400	C14	
1878	G.H. Percival	1000	D21(part)	
1878	Judith van Romondt ter Laag		C28	by will
1879	G.H. and L.H. Percival	325	A22	
1883	Ann Nisbet		D39	
1883	J.F.J. Rijnenberg	285	B14	
1884	J.F.J. Rijnenberg, merchant; major	1750	D20	
1885	Aletta Percival*	475	C20/21	
1888	J.F.J. Rijnenberg	2000	D20[1]	
1888	E.G. van Romondt	1750	C12(part)	
1888	E.G. and D.C. van Romondt	1750	C10/11 (part)	
1889	G.H. Percival	25	C62	
1891	D.C. van Romondt		B15	
1892	Wesleyan Methodist Church	300	B27	
1892	E.G. van Romondt	1500	C10/11(part)	
1893	E.G. van Romondt		B10	
1893	E.G. van Romondt	512	C12(part)	
1893	J.F.J. Rijnenberg	2000	A28[2]	
1893	J.F.J. Rijnenberg	30	D20(1/2)[3]	
1893	D.C. van Romondt		D10	
1894	D.C. van Romondt		D13	
1894	J.F.J. Rijnenberg	600	D23	
1895	D.C. van Romondt		C9[4]	
1896	H.O. Nisbet	875	D31[5]	

1898	N.A. Rijnenberg*	1000	D25	
1901	N.A. Rijnenberg, merchant	2500	D26	
1903	W. Netherwood	2250	C13[6]	
1903	Gov. Curaçao		D17[7]	
1904	W. Netherwood	1250	B33	
1904	H.O. Nisbet	2500	C19[8]	
1907	G.H. Percival	300	A23	
1908	T. Armonie	2125	D33[9]	
1910	Wesleyan Methodist Church		D24	by will
1910	Roman Catholic Church	1200	C18	
1912	A. deLain	4500	D20	
1913	T. Armonie	740	C29	
1916	E.G. van Romondt, landed proprieter	3750	D26[10]	
1916	J. Every, merchant/Statia	2000	D30	
1918	T. Armonie	1250	A9	
1919	D.H. Nisbet		A34	
1921	W. Netherwood	6250	D30[11]	
1924	T. Armonie, merchant	1000	B24	
1924	Roman Catholic Church	2250	C9	
1926	C.M. Percival,* merchant	2062	A22	
1927	T. Armonie	2500	C24	
1927	T. Armonie	3000	C25/26	
1928	A. van Romondt, in Massachusetts	1750	D14	
1930	Gov. Curaçao		A39	
1931	Roman Catholic Church	2500	D13	
1937	Gov. Curaçao	2000	D7	
1937	L-C Fleming, merchant/St. Martin		D27	
1939	L.A. van Romondt, merchant	3000	C6	
1943	Roman Catholic Church		B28	by will
1943	Gov. Curaçao	1625	D18	
1944	Gov. Curaçao	14500	C14	
1944	Windward Is. Governor		B30	
1944	Gov. Curaçao	4000	D8/9	
1945	Roman Catholic Church		A9	
1945	C.D. Beauperthuy, merchant/St. Martin	1875	A18	
1948	Philipsburg Mutual Savings		A22	

1949	L.E. Beauperthuy, merchant/St. Martin	4700	C10/11
1956	E. deHer, Iles de Saintes	1000	D1
1956	H. Vialenc, merchant/St. Martin	5000	C34/35
1959	A. Lachine, France	21600	D29
1961	Philipsburg Utilities	80000	C13[12]
1961	Y. Fleming, merchant/St. Martin		
	H. Plantz, gov. off./Curaçao	20000	D20
1964	M. Fawcett, US publisher	22200	D16
1965	Philipsburg Properties	53178	D29[13]
1966	Spritzer & Funrman, Curaçao company	175000	C19
1967	M. Bryan,* shopkeeper	9000	A18
1968	Spritzer & Funrman	32000	B18
1968	Boolchand, Curaçao company	95000	C18
1968	Rika Company	125000	D1[14]

General note

Footnotes refer to additional stipulations in the deed. Sales to heirs across generations are included and marked with an asterisk, and donations across generations are also included. Sales and donations within generations have been excluded as making the list needlessly complicated. Blank spaces indicate no information; all prices are in guilders, and if there is no price, this is generally because an early purchase was merely noted in a subsequent deed, giving year but not price. If there is no lot number, it is because I am unclear where the property is; if no occupation, none was listed in the deed. Some occupational information comes from other documents for that person at that time. Fractions after the lot number mean that only a share of the property was bought.

Additional stipulations

1. This property was bought by Rijnenberg in 1884, sold to the A.A. van Romondt Company in 1888 for 2875, and then bought back from them immediately for 2000.
2. To be paid in 16 quarterly payments, beginning in eighteen months, with interest at 4 percent beginning in one year.
3. The seller retains usufruct with a house that the purchaser will put on the property. The seller is a carpenter.
4. The seller and her sister retain the right to live in the house rent free without paying for repairs.
5. The seller retains usufruct and her heirs can remove the house.
6. Payable within five years at 6 percent interest; the property is to be the security.
7. This was a trade for another building (C13).
8. The purchaser renounces all mortgages. One of the sellers retains occupancy rights for his lifetime for a portion of the house and yard, and has the right to use a certain amount of water from the cistern per day, all of which is carefully stipulated.
9. Payable in installments.
10. Plus an additional 750 for the movable goods in the store. Payment at 500 now and 500 per year at no interest.
11. Payments at 1250 in two years at 5 percent interest, with the balance due within nine years at 5 percent interest.
12. This is a sale from an owner to a family-held company.
13. This is a sale from an owner to a family-held company.
14. This is a sale from an owner to a family-held company.

TABLE 5

Post-1868 Purchases, Tradespeople and Others

Date	Name and Occupation		Price	Lot No.	Comments
1869	Hassell & Buntin	bakers	25	B29(1/2)	
1873	J.W. Wathey	shopkeeper	25	A53	
1873	R. Buncamper	blacksmith	50		
1874	E. Windfield	fisherman	200	D65	
1874	A. deWeever	shoemaker	225	D50	
1874	J.W. Wathey	shoemaker	300	D65	
1875	J.W. Wathey		412	A44	auction
1876	C. Lemke			A2	donation
1877	A. Gumbs	ship carpenter	200	D51(1/2)	
1877	D. Hodge	shoemaker	200	D51	
1878	J.W. Wathey	shopkeeper	200	D66[2]	
1878	J.N. Davis	bookeeper, Sombrero	1875	C34/5[3]	
1879	M. Morris	proprietress	375	C3/4	
1880	A. Gumbs	ship carpenter	112	D51(1/2)	
1880	S. van Gurp	shopkeeper	250	C50[4]	
1881	J.J. Wathey	shopkeeper	87	B45	
1883	C. Rozea,	marshall, gaoler	60	C52/3(1/2)	
1884	P. Buncamper	pigmaker		C3	
1884	J. Larmonie	saddlemaker		B42	
1885	J.W. Wathey	shopkeeper	25	A48	
1886	A. Burke & mo.	carpenter/peddlar	375	C51	
1886	A.J. Buncamper	shopkeeper	31		
1886	W.H. Stephens			B40	
1886	J.R. Arrindell			C65	
1886	J.J. Wathey	shopkeeper	40	A50	
1886	C. Rozea,	marshall	280	B29	
1887	G.L. Stephens	carpenter	250	D55	
1888	E.J. Richardson	shopkeeper	150	B14	
1888	J.J. Wathey	shopkeeper	40	A52	
1889	J. Larmonie & dau.	shoemaker/seamstress	2000	D20	

1889	S. Balborda	seamstress	412	A18	
1891	W.F. Conner	policeman	75	C52/3	
1891	H. Barnes	seamstress	500	D16[3]	
1892	J.A. Richardson	principal lighthouse keeper, Sombrero[6]	500	D49	
1892	Petersons*		250	D1	
1892	A.M. Howell	baker	500	D18	
1892	E.F. Stephens	gov. salt measurer	250	D48	
1893	J. Stewart			B20	
1893	M. Sharp & J.J. Buncamper	seamstress butcher 1926	550	B12	
1893	W.H. Buncamper	teacher, shopkeeper	100	A56	
1895	J.J. Wathey	shopkeeper	300	A46	
1895	A.J. Buncamper	salt overseer	75	C3/4	
1895	A.C. Wathey	merchant	250	A37	
1895	E.C. Kruythoff	carpenter	250	D54	
1897	P. Davis		500	A18[7]	
1897	J.F. Richardson,	carpenter	250	B14	
1898	I.R. Salomons		D48		
1898	J. Peterson	harbormaster	137	D1	
1901	J.E. Richardson		110	C62	
1901	W. Salomons	blacksmith	1500	C31/32	
1902	W.F. Conner	policeman, 2nd cl.	133	A55(1/2)	
1902	A.C. Wathey		1500	D36[8]	
1902	J.J. Wathey	merchant	500	B45	
1903	A.J. Buncamper	merchant	125		
1904	G. Richardson	asst. lighthouse keeper, Sombrero		D49	donation
1906	J.G. Nadal	blacksmith	4750	B33	
1906	R. Gosepie	seamstress		C27	
1908	E. Illidge	cook	1000	B18	
1908	G.A. Richardson & T.I. Richardson	seamstress/NY mariner/USA	1250	C28[9]	
1909	S.Wilson		100	C11	
1910	J.C. Wathey		700	D47[10]	
1910	E.C. Labega	gov. salt measurer	275	D49	

1911	A. Vlaun	tradesman/NY	480	C50
1911	C.V. Vlaun	overser/St. Martin	480	C50
1912	J. Vlaun	shopkeeper	150	B47
1912	J. Vlaun	merchant	60	A54
1912	A.M. Molenstein	baker	430	D18(1/2)
1912	S. Morris	baker	100	B2(2/3)
1912	C.W. Conner	carpenter/NY	875	B48
1913	B. Hautman*		750	B29(1/2)
1913	J. Clark	platelayer	350	D51
1913	J. Vlaun		375	C51
1913	E. Illidge	in US	212	D36 (part)
1913	P.G. Williams	shopkeeper	1250	B33
1914	Richardson&Labega		400	D52
1914	P. Hautman*		750	B29(1/2)
1914	P. Richardson	mariner		D44/45
1914	A.C. Wathey	merchant	1750	D39[11]
1914	J.W. Williams	storekeeper	3000	D25[12]
1914	A.C. Wathey	merchant	260	D37[13]
1915	C. Williams		150	D52
1916	B. Warner		500	C30
1917	J.A. Thomas		250	C62
1918	A.C. Wathey	merchant	1000	D44/45
1918	N.L. Richardson		750	D16
1918	J. Illidge Leonard		600	A20/21
1918	Silveist&Pantophlet		800	A56
1919	P.L. Richarson	mariner	800	D44
1919	C.V. Richardson		750	D45
1919	E.A. Carty	policeman	1250	D23
1920	A.L. Vlaun		2000	C27
1920	E. Richardson		1500	C43
1920	A.C. Wathey	merchant	4750	C20/21
1920	W.B. Peterson	policeman	60	A54
1920	J.R. Carty		125	B41
1921	E. Hassell	electrician/Aruba	1250	B33
1921	P.G. Williams	merchant	4000	D26[14]
1922	A. Wathey*	widow	700	D47

1924	M. Hazel		1100	A12	
1924	A.C. Wathey	merchant	400	B4[15]	
1925	I.C. Richardson	in NY	500	B40	
1925	W. Labega		375	C30(1/2)	
1925	B. Hautman		2500	B15[16]	
1925	B. Hautman		2500	C16	
1925	M. Richardson	laborer	175	C65	
1925	I. Richardson	in NY	500	B40	
1925	M. Woods			D10	donation[17]
1926	C.M. Wathey	merchant	6750	C22/23	
1926	W.B. Peterson	agent of police	1200	C18	
1926	J. Vlaun	merchant	3500	C15	
1927	C.W. O'Conner		7000	C14	
1927	Cooks		1200	D39	
1927	P. Gumbs&mo.	mo. in US	925	D6	
1928	C.A. Lejuez	policeman	1500	D14	
1929	F. Williams		250	B41	
1929	V. Warner	in NY	500	B8/9	
1930	A.L. Conner	schoolteacher	2175	D21	
1930	Cremony&Vanterpool	in Aruba	1125	B12	
1930	E. Bruce		625	B15	
1931	E. Duncker	in US	1250	A54	
1931	A. Brown	mechanic	3000	B24	
1932	C.A. Vlaun	policeman	2400	D24	
1932	Maillard			B14	
1934	W.A. Conner	gov. official	3350	C14	
1935	M. Hazel		200	B15	
1935	Leonard		150	A70	
1935	E.A. Carty	pensioned gov. off.	3500	C15[18]	
1935	J. Voges	gov. official	1700	C36	
1935	W.P. Labega			A23	
1937	J. Larmonie			A56	
1937	G. Howell		1000	C65	
1937	M. Hazel		75	A20	
1937	C.W. Wathey	merchant	10000	D27[19]	
1938	M. Hazel	merchant	1670	A34	

1938	H. Waymouth Reed	in Antigua	3625	D30[20]
1938	J. Larmonie		450	D48
1938	F. Illidge	joiner		C6
1938	C.M. Wathey	merchant	3000	C6[21]
1938	E. Carty	machinist	1875	C39
1939	E. Hodge		900	B42
1940	J. Carty		350	A20/21
1941	A. Salomons		150	C54
1941	M. Hazel		500	A35/36[22]
1941	D.A. Peterson	merchant	2000	D28
1942	W.B. Peterson		3220	D30
1942	V. James	carpenter	1000	A2
1943	C. Hughes		1400	C50
1943	I. Arrindell		1150	B4
1943	D.A. Peterson	merchant	3550	D54
1943	O. Williams	teacher/Saba	1200	A37
1944	D. Doncker		1125	A18
1944	M. Hazel	hotelkeeper	2000	C29
1945	C.A. Carty	merchant	8750	D19
1945	C.M. Wathey	merchant	1250	B44
1945	C.M. Wathey		2438	D33
1945	C.W. Wathey*	merchant	1000	D36/37
1945	A. Richardson	houseservant/Curaçao	2125	B48
1946	F. Williams	gov. watchman	800	B23
1946	C.A. Cannegieter	liquor dealer	2000	B23
1946	M. Hazel	hotelkeeper	125	B20
1946	J. Smith	mariner/Aruba	3750	B15
1946	J. Brill		3000	C52/53
1946	S. Hodge		450	A55
1947	V. Flanders	in Aruba	5000	C39[23]
1947	L. Scott	contracter	2750	C25
1947	M. Hazel	hotelkeeper	5000	D34(part)
1947	Arrindell			A20/21
1947	J.W. Carty		2000	A34
1948	C. Gumbs	workman/Aruba	280	D2
1948	Petersons*		1250	C18

1948	W. Labega	goldsmith	375	C30(1/2)
1949	A.H. Hodge	Lago employee/Aruba	8500	D40
1949	E. Hughes*		1000	C25
1949	C.A.Cannegieter	liquor dealer	12500	C26
1949	W.G. Buncamper	gov. official	7400	C12
1949	W.G. Buncamper	gov. official	7000	B10
1949	C.W. Wathey	merchant	7000	D26
1949	L. Scott &	contractor/Curaçao	1000	A46
	G. Antonio	electrician/Curaçao		
1949	L.A. Lejuez		1000	A46
1949	E. deHer	mechanic	1000	D1
1949	J. Dollison	electrician/Curaçao	7500	A28
1949	M. Illidge	domestic/Aruba	10000	C36
1950	J. Richardson	waiter/Curaçao	225	C54
1950	J. deWeever	farmer	625	A35/36
1951	C.A. Cannegieter	liquor dealer	750	A19(1/4)
1951	W.G. Cannegieter	agent of police/Statia	750	A19(1/4)
1951	C.T. Vlaun	merchant	2865	D35
1951	W.M. Richardson		1250	B44
1952	F.W. Vlaun*	merchant	3000	D35
1952	T. Fat (Carty)	doctor	5500	C7
1954	C.A. Flanders	merchant	3000	D37
1955	L.R. Carty*	gov. official	2000	D23
1955	R. Cannegieter	Curacao	325	C54
1955	J. deWeever	merchant	1500	A71
1955	F. Froston	taxi driver	400	D49
1956	B.,C., & R. Carty*		1000	C15
1956	W.G. Cannegieter	gov. official/Statia	9000	B28
1957	C.T. Vlaun	merchant	1000	B8/9
1957	W.B. Williams	gov. official	3000	B43
1957	M. Hazel	hotelkeeper	7375	B34(part)
1957	W.B. Peterson	gov. official	11250	D55
1957	M. Holman		1000	B8/9
1957	N.C. Wathey*	merchant	500	D26(part)
1959	R.&A. Hautman*	teachers	8000	C16

1960	N.C. Wathey	merchant	38000	C13
1960	J. deWeever		1250	B48(part)
1961	R. Richardson		1500	B42
1961	L. Larmonie	merchant	2800	B24
1961	M. Hazel	hotelkeeper	1375	D34(part)
1962	C.W. Wathey	merchant	6000	B18
1962	G.A. Richardson*		500	D16
1963	P. deWeever	merchant	7310	C41
1963	M.& A. Hazel	hotelkeepers	9000	D33[24]
1964	L.A. Lejuez		9500	A47
1964	P. deWeever	merchant	5550	C42
1969	G. Howell	taxi driver/Curaçao	3000	D3

General notes: See general note to Table 4.

Additional stipulations:

1. The donation was to Cassius Lemke, natural son of Sarah Lemke, from Robert van Romondt. The resident, Nancy Stones, retains use during her lifetime, along with Cassius Lemke, who is to get the property at her death. If Cassius Lemke dies before Robert van Romondt, the property is to revert to Robert.

2. The house is already in J.W. Watney's possession.

3. Payment is one-half now and then four installments without interest. The property remains that of the seller, A.A. van Romondt and Co., until purchase is completed. It is not clear if it was, because the property was declared the possession by prescriptive rights of the next owner in 1956.

4. Payment was 200 now and 50 in two months.

5. The owner retains usufruct without paying expenses; she was the widow of Lucas Percival, Sr., and was named Harriet Mason Illidge. The new owner is Harriet Illidge Barnes, and possibly a relative, but equally likely a servant named after her mistress.

6. He is also listed as "tinsmith and blacksmith."

7. In three monthly installments.

8. He is to take immediate possession, with 1000 now and the balance in 12 monthly installments.

9. Four-fifths now and the balance as soon as possible, with Richardson's mother, a washerwoman, having usufruct "without security." She was not the seller.

10. A house on the lot is not included in the sale and can be moved.

11. To be paid 250 now and the balance in installments of 150 every six months; owner to retain the usufruct.

12. The owner retains the right to live there until 1915.

13. Price is to extinguish a debt.

14. Payment is 3750 now and 750 in one year.

15. The seller retains usufruct; the buyer is to maintain the property and to use the purchase price to renovate.

16. Payment is 2500 in cash now and the balance in three months.

17. The property was "granted and ceded" for "past services rendered"; the agreement is to close all obligations to her. The doner was D.C. van Romondt.

18. To be paid within four years.

19. Price includes business and agencies.

20. Part of the purchase price is in cancellation of a mortgate debt.

21. The seller (Illidge) has the option to buy the property back within three years for the same price plus repairs. The purchaser had a mortgage on the land.

22. The owner retains usufruct.

23. Payment is 2500 in cash and the balance over three months; the transfer of the property to be made when the full amount has been paid (both purchaser and seller were in Aruba).

24. They also take over a mortgage to C.M. Wathey for 1500.

Post-1868 Declarations of Prescriptive Rights

Year of Declaration	Family name	Lot No.
1878	Howell	C11
1912	Howell	B47
1921	Hautman	B23
1940	Howell	D2
1945	Vlaun	B44
1956	Wathey	C34/35
1957	Conner	A47
1978	Hodge	C5

Note: In all cases but one, the possesser declared possession for at least thirty years; in the one other case, the declaration was for sixty years (B47).

Taking Table 5 and extracting the first purchases made by those with the same surnames as the owners of the Front Street properties in 1960 gives the following listing:

Table 6

Name	Date appears on list	Occupation
Buncamper	1873	blacksmith
Wathey	1874	shopkeeper
deWeever	1874	shoemaker
Larmonie	1884	saddlemaker
Conner	1891	policeman
Hautman	1891*	?
Labega	1910	government salt measurer
Vlaun	1911	overseer
Vlaun	1912	shopkeeper
Williams	1913	shopkeeper
Carty	1919	policeman
Peterson	1920	policeman
Lejuez	1928	policeman

* Estimated date; prescriptive right.

The first appearances are thus spread over a period of almost forty years, and those who bought for the first time after about 1910 not only did so a generation later, but also tended to begin purchasing further up street. The earliest purchasers have thus been in town for four generations, and the later ones for three. This is no indication of how long either has been on the island, however, although where descendents recount their own family histories, these also fall into two sets - even though the oral account is occasionally somewhat belied by the historical record, and sometimes by the deeds as well.[10]

The earlier set believe themselves to be the descendants of military officers, or of Britishers who came to work on or with the plantations. Thus the Watheys believe that the first settler in their family was an English book-keeper on a plantation, the Conners that theirs was an Irish flour

merchant, the deWeevers that theirs was a Dutch army officer, and the Buncampers that theirs was the descendant of a French soldier on Guadeloupe. In each case, however, the route to St. Maarten was probably more circuitous than remembered, and the original settler slightly less respectable. "Book-keeper" was the term used at the time for estate overseer, and, as William Green notes, "Overseers were recruited, almost indiscriminately, from the body of needy young adventurers, a great portion of whom were Scotsmen, who arrived each year in Caribbean ports seeking a reversal of their fortunes" (1976:61). The unsettled conditions, both politically and economically, in the Caribbean during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries led to a great deal of movement, and yoeman farmers were often forced to join the militia, settling on the islands that they attacked (Lowenthal 1972: 29-30); this is the likely route for many of the others. For the Buncampers, the record is unusually precise: a plantation owner named Frederick Augustus Richard Buncamper gave his name to three of his illegitimate ("outside") children, who were in 1833 left some land by one of their mother's relatives, a free Negro blacksmith named Cuthbert. One of the three, Richard, also a blacksmith, became the sole owner of this property in 1866, and it is the deed recording his possession that gives this information. The original property, unlike that of most of the others in this set, was on Front Street, but well above the fashionable section.

The post-1910 set are known locally as "Simsonbay people," and many trace their origins back to Scandinavian, French, and British military men who settled in the isolated, all-white fishing village of Simsonbay after coming to the West Indies on military missions in the late eighteenth century; others believe they are descendants of English pirates who landed on nearby Anguilla. Lowenthal's comment, cited above, applies equally to these

families, and occasional references to Simsonbay names in the Repetorium Notarieele as early as the 1840s indicates that the village was not as isolated as its present-day inhabitants believe. Nevertheless, it had closer ties with Anguilla and with the French-side capital of Marigot than with Philipsburg, partly because they were more easily accessible by water. Many of those who first came to town from Simsonbay were policemen, reportedly recruited into the island's police force as the number of whites diminished.

It is difficult to tell exactly who the first purchasers bought from, because the occupations of the sellers are less often included in the deeds, but they appear to have bought from other tradespeople and artisans - probably people who were leaving, since their names subsequently disappear from the records - from estate-owning families who also owned property in town, and from the A.A. van Romondt Company, which, immediately before and after emancipation, bought or acquired through mortgage default a large number of properties (35 in my sample). The lots thus acquired were small, cheap, and usually at the lower end of town. They were sometimes bought on very generous terms (see the additional stipulations to Table 5), and one person often bought several at about the same time. They provided these families with their first toehold on the socioeconomic ladder - an image that is conveniently appropriate to the layout of the town.

Thus as they moved up through the town, so they moved up in occupational status, and by the 1960s the generation that is now adult (the fourth in town for the first set, the third for the second) owned - sometimes still in cooperation with their parents - the larger stores in Philipsburg (A.C. and N.C. Wathey, C.M. Wathey, D.A. Peterson, P. and J. deWeever, F.W. and C.T. Vlaun, B.C. and R. Carty), held appointed government posts, often as administrators of other of the Netherlands Antilles (W.G. and C. Buncamper,

L.R. Carty, C.T. Vlaun, W.B. Peterson, W.A. Conner), and had bought virtually all of the more expensive up-street properties. Judging from their parallel progress up the ocupational and residential ladder, and the similarity of their final positions, the historically based distinctions between the two sets of families would appear to have been overcome with time. They had become St. Maarten's upper class.[11]

The deeds are a source of another type of information, however, one that allows a small glimpse of one aspect of interaction between people - their marriages. Genealogies put together from information contained in the deeds show that distinctions between the two sets of families have in fact been maintained. Not only have the members of each set married each other frequently, yet seldom married members of the other set - despite the fact that the pool of "suitable" mates on the island was never large and rapidly diminished in the twentieth century, and despite the fact that this left an astonishing number of unmarried daughters - but their marriage patterns differed. St. Maarten's upper class is more complicated than it might at first appear.

The marriage network of the first set included not only the families already mentioned, but several others as well - in particular, van Gurp, Stephens, Davis, Rozea, and Williams. Although these names no longer appear in the records (the Williams that appears is later and came from Simsonbay; he seems to be unrelated to the Williams who intermarried with the first set), they do appear on the purchases list in the early period, and they had similar occupations. They can thus be considered to have been part of the first set. The only exception is the Buncamper family, which did not intermarry with any of these families; but, as noted earlier, they were in origin also an exception.

The second set intermarried even more frequently than the first, and often more closely as well, since several married cousins. The two sets are distinguished, however, in that the second has continued to intermarry into the present, while the first has increasingly sought its mates elsewhere. This does not appear to be because they were traveling more, for it is the second set whose members are more likely to have been abroad to work.

The role of inheritance

The discussion thus far has focussed on the acquisition of land by purchase, but property was inherited across generations as well, as Table 7 shows. It is therefore possible to use the deeds to examine the role inheritance has played in the climb up the occupational and social ladder.

Although the discussions of inheritance systems in the European and Caribbean literature have differed in many respects (see Goody et al. 1976; Habakkuk 1960, Williams 1963 a/b, Clarke 1971, Smith 1956, 1962), all note the differential effect of inheritance laws in allowing for the accumulation of property or in forcing its fragmentation. From this perspective, then, what can the deeds tell us about the role of inheritance of property in St. Maarten?

Inheritance of property under Dutch law is partible, with the surviving spouse inheriting one-half and the children dividing the other half equally among themselves. If there are no children, property reverts to the parents of the deceased, and if they too are deceased, to any surviving brothers and sisters. It is generally considered that this type of system discourages the accumulation of property, and particularly its devolvement onto one member of a family (Habakkuk 1960), but it is also believed that it discourages its spread to collateral heirs (Sabean 1976: 105). However, since marriages in

TABLE 7

Post-1868 Inheritances Across Generations, to 1977

Dates held	Family name	Lot	Years held
? -1927	van Romondt	D25/26*#	
? -1949	Waymouth	D40*	
1831-1937	Buncamper	D7#	106
1852-1902	Illidge	D36*	50
1855-1916	van Romondt	D30*#	61
1856-1949	Peterson	D1*#	93
1857-1970	Gumbs	C40*#	113
1858-	Buncamper	C1	119
1863-1934	van Romondt	D33*#	71
1864-1944	van Romondt	D8/9*#	80
1868-1938	van Romondt	C6	70
1870-1913	van Romondt	C29*#	43
1873-1927	van Romondt	C24*#	54
1873-1941	van Romondt	D28*	67
1874-1926	van Romondt	C22/23*	52
1874/6-1929	van Romondt	B8/9#	55
1875-1927	Percival	C14*	52
1878-1930	Percival	D21*	52
1879-1925	van Romondt	C16*	46
1881-1952	Gumbs	C7*	71
1883-1914	Nisbet	D39*	31
1884-1921	Larmonie	B42*	37
1885-1957	Wathey	B43	52
1885-1918	Percival	A9*#	33
1886-1925	Stephens	B40*#	39
1886-1944	van Romondt	B30*#	58
1886-	Rozea	B29	91
1887-1957	Stephens	D55*	70
1888/92-1949	van Romondt	C10/11*#	61
1886/8-1972	Wathey	A50/52	86
1888/93-1949	van Romondt	C12*	61
1888-1925	Arrindell	C65	37
1891-1925	van Romondt	B15*	34
1891-1930	Percival	A39	39
1891-1918	Barnes	D16	27
1891-1912	van Romondt	B48	21
1891-1946	Conner	C52/53	55
1893-1949	van Romondt	B10*	56
1893-1949	Rijnenberg	A28*#	56
1893-1935	Rijnenberg	A70*#	42
1893-1937	Buncamper	B12*#	44
1893-1946	Stewart	B20*	53
1893-1925	van Romondt	D10*	52
1893-1945	Percival	D19*	52
1894-1931	van Romondt	D13*#	37
1894-1914	Rijnenberg	D25*	20
1895-1935	Davis	C36*#	40
1895-1943	Kruythoff	D54*	48
1895-1949	Wathey	A46	54
1895-1924	van Romondt	C9*#	29
1895-1970	Buncamper	C3/44	75

1896-1970	Nisbet	D31*#	74
1897-1932	Richardson	B14	35
1897-1924	van Romondt	B24*#	27
1898-1938	Salomons	D48	40
1902-1957	Wathey	B45	55
1904-1966	Nisbet	C19*#	62
1907-1969	Howell	D3	62
1908-1962	Illidge	B18*	54
1908-1947	Nadal	D34*	39
1910-1955	Labega	D49*	45
1912-1961	deLaine	D20*#	49
1913-1944	Armonie	C29*#	31
1914-1970	Williams	D25*#	56
1915-	Williams	D52	62
1920-1929	Carty	B41	9
1921-1949	Williams	D26	28
1925-	Woods	D10	52
1926-1935	Percival	A22*#	9
1926-1935	Percival	A23*	9
1927-1945	Cooks	D39*	18
1927-1949	Armonie	C25*	22
1927-1947	Armonie	C26*	20
1930-1970	Conner	D21*#	40
1932-1974	Maillard	B14	42
1934-1944	Conner	C14*#	10
1934-1945	Armonie	D33*	11
1937-	Larmonie	A56	50
1940-1949	van Romondt	C6*	9
1945-1973	Peterson	C24	28
1947-	Carty	A34	30
1961-1973	Larmonie	B24*#	12
1954-1963	Flanders	D33	9

Note:
This list covers all properties sold after 1868, and therefore includes the original purchase date if known. In two cases, it was not listed.

*Sellers are off the island at the time of the sale.
#Purchasers are off-islanders, either recently arrived or off the island at the time of the purchase.

St. Maarten can be "without community of goods," in which case the spouse is by-passed, the collateral heirs of the deceased are more likely to inherit than in situations without this stipulation.

The system of partible inheritance should have the least fragmenting effect on those families that have enough property so that after a division each heir will have a piece of some value, whether it is sold or used. For those with many heirs but only one property, on the other hand, there is often no choice but to sell, even if it be to one of their number. Properties are practically never physically subdivided (I came across only one instance of this), and the houses are generally too small for more than one family, particularly since families tend to be large. For the in-betweens, the decision to divide or not is less clear-cut, and in any case probably varies with the historical situation. For example, one family owns a large number of town properties, and all remain jointly held: there are enough to provide both living space and a guaranteed rental income from stores for all of them. If there were to be a division, however, no one heir could pursue this combined strategy, an effective one in St. Maarten at the moment.

In fact, very little fragmentation has occurred because of divisions: there have been few of them, and they have been confined to the wealthiest families.[13] I came across seven, and they were mostly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries - four were in the van Romondt family alone.

There have also been very few marriages without community of goods, but those that there were do seem to have been aimed at preventing the dispersal of property, for they occurred when the off-islander or less wealthy islander (male or female) was marrying into an island family with considerable property. They too were confined primarily to the merchant families of the

late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

If there is no division, the heirs may either continue to hold the property jointly or sell. Not surprisingly, they are more likely to sell when most of the heirs are off the island. This is the case for almost every one of the 41 cases I have recorded of heirs selling as a group, and they increase in numbers as the 1960s approach. In addition, in about half (16) of these cases, sales were made to "off-islanders," which, when taken with the figures given earlier about the similar likelihood of departing merchants selling to "outsiders" if they themselves have left, points to the way in which such movement can open up a community.

Scholars who have examined the effect of inheritance systems on the rise and fall of families over considerable periods of time have noted in particular the problem of setting up second and third sons when only the first is designated the heir to the family property (see, for instance, Greven 1970). Although in many of these St. Maarten families, one son alone has become the heir to his father's business, inheritance of property does not seem to have played a major role in this.

For instance, joint heirs may choose not to sell to a third party, but instead sell to each other, and thus channel property onto one member of the family. But although I have 33 instances of this, 20 of which involve off-island siblings selling to siblings (or spouses of siblings) on the island, and 11 of which involve sales to relatives in businesses on the island, the latter all involve Percivals and van Romondts, and not the upwardly mobile families we have been discussing. Further, a review of Tables 5 and 7 shows not only that properties bought by the first two generations in town were generally sold out of the family quickly - at most, property bought in one generation was sold in the next - but, more important, that one

generation did not wait to inherit property to establish itself but went ahead and bought on its own. In addition, kinship links wider than the nuclear family seldom played a role in the transmission of property, either by inheritance or sale. In families large enough to have two branches with people in business - the van Romondts, Percivals, and Watheys, for instance - they did not sell their properties to each other, even when one of them was leaving. Perhaps a function of the small size of the society, there are in each case reports of strong antagonisms between the branches that precluded such cooperation.

In an early article dealing primarily with customary inheritance, M.G. Smith (1956) points to the role of wills in avoiding such customary obligations. Taking this a step further, it is useful to look at all forms of what I will call "pre-settlement" - attempts to circumvent the fragmentation implicit in the rules of intestate inheritance.

A certain amount of fragmentation may be avoided by buying property in the children's name, thus avoiding the wife, and this occurs frequently, although often in cases where the wife has already acquired property of her own (so she is not deliberately left property-less). Fragmentation is further avoided if parents sell to one or more of their children, and I have records of 27 such sales. But on examination, it appears that these sales had other purposes as well. Although 16 singled out sons, in only 1 case was the son in business with the father, and then the sale was at a token price; in the other cases, the sale was at full price and would appear to have been more to guarantee the parent money at a time when it was needed - in several of the cases, the parents were retired off the island. In 7 additional cases, the sales were again for nominal amounts, but were to children in situations where there had been a divorce, a remarriage, or outside children; these sales in

effect guaranteed all the children of one father an equal portion of the estate where the law would have distinguished unequally between them (by law, children "of the first bed" and children "of the second bed," legitimate and illegitimate children each inherit different portions of an estate). Not surprisingly, most of the children upon whom these settlements were made were on the island at the time. Four more of the sales were to daughters, effectively guaranteeing them a place to live or an income - important when one remembers the number of women who never married.

A similar form of pre-settlement is outright donation. I recorded only 11 cases of this, but they are revealing in the light of the above since 7 were women, 5 of whom were single, widowed, or divorced and 2 of whom were "outside wives." Two more cases were of wedding gifts to wives married out of community of goods, again guaranteeing them some property. Only 2 were to men, one from a father to a son in order to avoid his second wife inheriting - with her agreement.

Turning to wills, only 19 of all the land transfers I recorded were through wills, but they continued this pattern of protecting the women: in 13 of the 19, females were guaranteed access to property, even if this meant by-passing otherwise legitimate male heirs, and even if this meant their getting an extra portion of the estate.[14] For example, a merchant married out of community of goods willed his property to his wife, another willed his to his second wife, a third to her daughter, and several others - tradespeople without heirs - left their properties to unrelated women. In one other case, a wealthy man was making sure his acknowledged outside children got a full portion of his estate.[15]

When looked at as a whole, all of these pre-settlements seem to have the effect not, as M.G. Smith has suggested, of avoiding customary

obligations,[16] but the opposite: they appear to have been made to guarantee a customary fairness where the intricacies of the law would go against this, and they appear to reflect a special concern for the economic well being and future of the women - to adapt the system to fit a historically and geographically specific set of circumstances.

It would seem, then, that neither the legal inheritance of property, nor the pre-settlements that maneuvered around it, were directly important in the economic and social rise of these families. On the contrary, in a situation where there was a great deal of migration in and out, where properties therefore frequently became available for purchase, and where property you owned (and its position in town) was an indicator of social status, old properties were shed and new ones purchased as rapidly as possible.

This analysis of land transfer deeds has given a picture of movement and change that belies the image of St. Maarten as a sleepy backwater. In the years between the emancipation of the slaves and its discovery by sunseeking North Americans, St. Maarten's population changed both in number and composition. Not only did many who had been born on the island leave - some to return and some not - but others who had been born elsewhere arrived, many to depart soon thereafter. Throughout the period, the number of people with an interest in the island was far greater than the resident population alone. And throughout the period, along with all the movement in and out, there was movement up, as a small core of people steadily worked their way up the socioeconomic ladder.

Notes

1. The tourist "industry," under which rubric I include all tourist-related activities, is not quite the sole employer on the island, but is far and away the major one. There is also a Japanese-owned fishing industry which uses the island as its home port, has a fleet, factory ship, and warehouse, and most of whose employees are Taiwanese or Korean. A West-German-owned rum distillery sends it products to West Germany for bottling and is highly automated.

2. This petition was inscribed into one of the few record books that remains on the island. The names and numbers of those who left can be roughly calculated by running through the Repetorium Notarieele, an index of the island's official documents, including marriages, probated wills, slave transfers, and various business dealings, which is available for the years 1840-1869. When a plantation-owning family's name disappears from this index, it probably indicates their having left the island, particularly where slave sales are involved; the appearance of a new name, however, cannot be taken to indicate arrival from elsewhere.

3. This percentage comes from a count I did of material gathered by the St. Maarten Census Bureau (see my "The Friendly Island: A Report on How Tourism Developed in St. Maarten, Netherlands Antilles" (1977)) for a more detailed analysis of population data.

4. Very little beach land is in private hands, and most of the hotels on the Dutch side are on long-term leases from the government, which acquired the land years ago as sites for forts, or more recently for airport clearances - the airport being in the beach section of the island.

5. Many of these came from Curaçao and Aruba, the larger of the associated states of the Netherlands Antilles (Curaçao, Aruba, Bonaire, St. Maarten, Saba and St. Eustasius), which are in turn an autonomous territory of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. St. Maarten has its own island council to

handle local affairs, and sends one representative to the Netherlands Antilles legislature in Curaçao.

6. This is not to minimize the problem of constructing genealogies from this kind of data, however, particularly when there are no informants to check with. First, it is often impossible to connect genealogical segments with the same surname. Second, there is a preference in St. Maarten (as elsewhere, including in other Caribbean islands) for certain given names, not just within families but throughout the population; this is compounded by the custom of giving two children in the family the same name if one dies before the second is born and a penchant for names that abbreviate to the same initials - thus there are, to take St. Maarten's leading families as an example, three D.C. van Romondts and three A.C. Watheys in three generations. A compensatory advantage is that women are almost always referred to by their family names: either Ann Mary Molenstein, wife of Henry Davis, or Ann Mary Davis, born Molenstein. The parallel and simultaneous research task of collecting family histories and genealogies from living family members was thus an essential part of the research, because these often made it possible to interpret information in the deeds that would otherwise have remained a mystery. Unfortunately for all of us - both researcher and reader - the generation than can remember back into the nineteenth century is in fast disappearing. Once they are gone, this kind of historical research will be that much more difficult.

7. In fact, except for the estate-owing merchants, few of those living in town had land elsewhere on the island. By the early 1900s the town contained mostly small shopkeepers, artisans, government workers, and laborers; and in 1950 its inhabitants were described as "landless" government officials, merchants, shopkeepers, domestics, public workers, retirees, and pensioners (Keur and Keur 1960: 24; to the Keurs "land" was

synonymous with "plantation.") This pattern did not change until the late 1960s, when renting out town properties became profitable and when several fashionable residential areas outside of town were developed.

8. They were distributed as follows:

Front Street	23 of 26 up street right
	17 of 21 up street left (3 of the missing 4 are church-owned)
	27 of 45 down street right
	30 of 44 down street left
Back Street	12 of 19 up street right
	5 of 18 up street left (much of the remainder are church-owned)
	20 of 44 down street right
	25 of 56 down street left
	159 of 273 total

This is a deliberately conservative estimate of the percentage. In mapping the town, I counted one house to a lot unless I had a lot description to the contrary. For down-street lots, the houses are very small and it is probable that there are two, or even three, houses to a lot, which would decrease the total number of lots and increase the percentage covered. Lots were both subdivided and amalgamated over the years, which makes a firm count extremely difficult; on the other hand, information is not equally complete for all lots, so that not all 159 are used at every stage of the analysis.

9. This is not as difficult distinction to make as it might at first appear, because many of the family names are known to me personally, or from reports and interviews; further, most "St. Maarten names" are readily recognizable since slaves in St. Maarten, as elsewhere, were given or chose as their surnames those of the estate owners on their estates, and these are in turn known from the Repetorium Notarieele and the protest petition (see note 2).

10. A third group should be noted briefly, since they are prominent in the later part of Table 5. Beginning in the 1920s, and continuing into the 1950s, lots began to be purchased by black men and women who had migrated either to New York (e.g. Doncker, Hazel, Richardson) or Curacao and Aruba (e.g. Carty, Illidge, Smith, Flanders, Scott, Gumbs), had such trades as mariner, electrician, carpenter, taxi driver, machinist, and mechanic, and bought properties with the money earned elsewhere.

It should be noted here that although the names are the same, there is no direct relationship between the Carty here and the Carty who bought in town in the 1920s, or the Gumbs here and the Gumbs who bought in town in the 1890s. There are many cases such as these - they are known as "white Cartys" and "black Cartys," for instance, and only by knowing the families can one make the distinction. There are also "English Williams" and "Simsonbay Williams," as we shall see later.

11. This was the situation in the 1960s. It has since been further complicated by the emergence of a black business group.

12. If, as Joseph Schumpeter for one suggests, families are the basic unit of class, and if classes are thus sets of interrelated or interconnected families, then we have here the basis for <u>two</u> such sets, even though they share a similar relationship to the means of production.

Furthermore, there seems to have been a similar distinction between the earlier merchants. Percivals, van Romondts, and Nisbets seldom intermarried: there is only one Percival- van Romondt marriage, for instance, although there were at least <u>five</u> van Romondt cross-cousin marriages. Nor did these three intermarry with the incoming merchants, except for one Netherwood-van Romondt connection; Netherwood was a very old family on the nearby island of St. Barthélemy (St. Barts).

13. There are, of course, "paper divisions," when a property is sold by the heirs and the shares need to be computed.

14. There is no way of knowing from the deeds if or how other members of the family were compensated for this. In addition, as E.P. Thompson has pointed out (1976), for families such as these it may well be more important to look at pre-mortem inheritance - at ways in which parents gave their children a start on life by providing for their education, finding them jobs, or establishing them in other countries. The deeds tell us nothing of this.

15. This was exceptional, however. The high rate of illegitimacy in the population as a whole - estimated at 65 percent in the 1910-1914 period and 50 percent in the late 1940s (Keur and Keur 1960: 219) - and the few instances of outside children coming in for a share of the inheritance (the Buncampers are the only case among the families considered here), is an indication of how seldom outside children are legally acknowledged (they are informally acknowledged much more frequently, of course). The fact that this can only be done before the father marries a woman other than the mother, or after the wife's death, effectively precludes much acknowledgement; on the other hand, I know of enough instances of married men with unacknowledged outside children in the families discussed here to hypothesize that the failure to acknowledge is a further attempt to keep property within the legitimate family and so prevent fragmentation.

16. M.G. Smith, who was writing about the small island of Carriacou, also found that the use of wills accelerated fragmentation, in this case because it led to the defensive assertion of customary claims. Although I did not examine court records, I came across a reference to only one court case in the deeds: in this case, the children of the first marriage had sued the children of the second marriage.

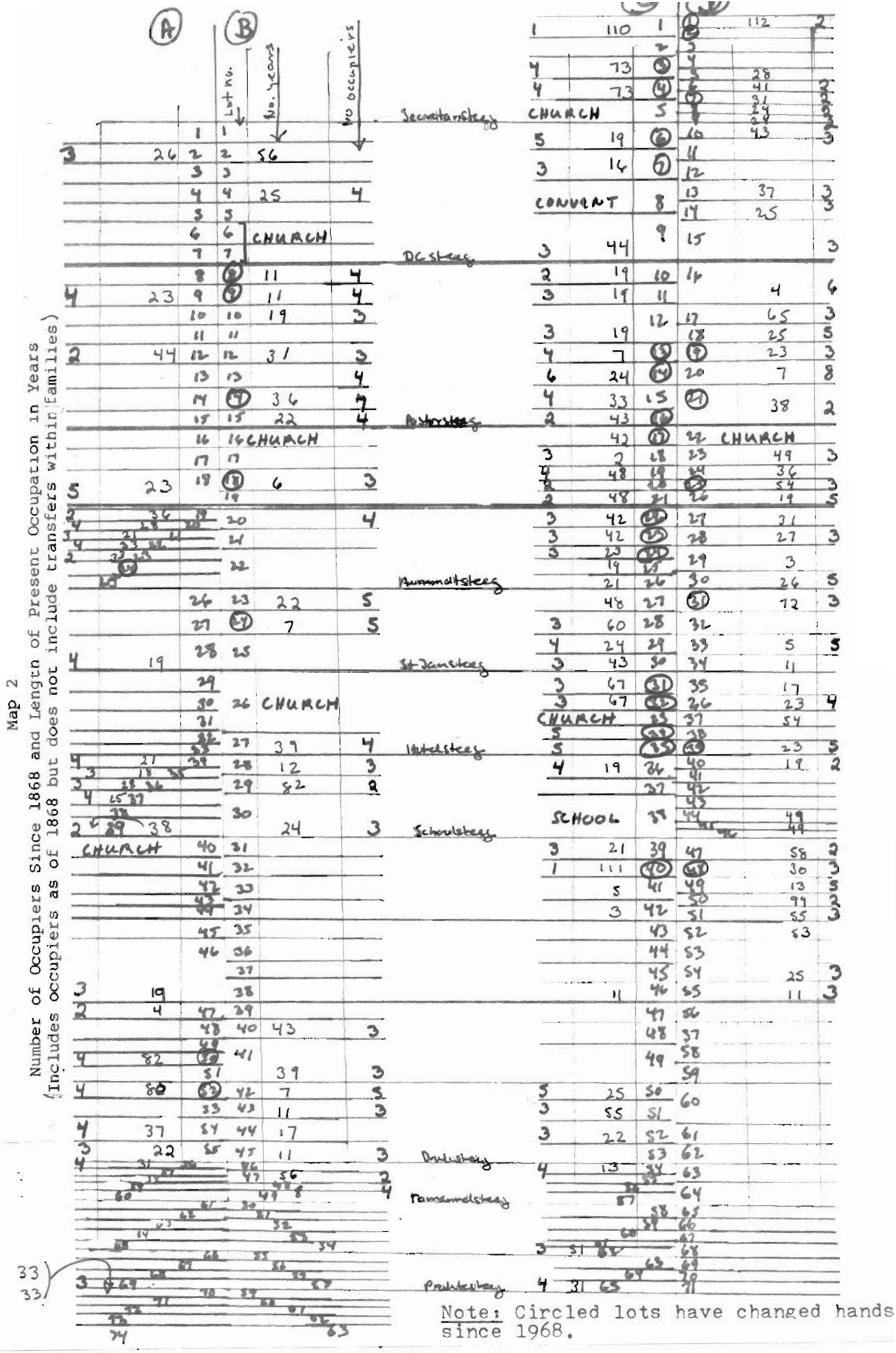
APPENDIX

POPULATION CHANGE

ST. MAARTEN

Year			Total	% Increase
1658			300	
1705			251	
1715	361 white	244 slave	605	
1740	533 "	1239 "	1772	
1751			2569	
1789			5571	
1816			3559	
1850			2890	
1862	1441 "	1883 "	3324	
1850*	600 "	3000 "	3600	
1880			2839	
1900			3174	
1908	1207 men	1863 women	3072	
1913			3550	
1915			3282	
1920			2633	
1928			2197	
1930 (census)	984 men	1351 women	2335	
1935	1090 "	1584 "	2674	
1940	736	1268	2004	
1945	673	1071	1744	
1950	591	893	1484	
1951	582	876	1458	- 1.7
1952	604	921	1525	4.6
1953	624	947	1571	3.0
1954	637	960	1597	1.7
1955	631	967	1607	.06
1956	606	954	1560	- 2.9
1957	618	936	1554	- .03
1958	630	907	1537	- .11
1959	636	901	1537	--
1960 (census)	1274	1457	2731	78.
1961	1397	1531	2928	7.2
1962	1559	1691	3250	11.
1963	1769	1874	3643	12.
1964	1879	1993	3872	6.
1965	2098	2141	4239	9.4
1966	2333	2357	4690	11.
1967	2518	2562	5080	8.3
1968	2770	2800	5570	9.6
1969	3056	3084	6104	9.6
1970	3509	3395	6904	13.
1971	4007	4807	7814	12.
1972	4688	4318	9006	15.
1973	5138	4691	9829	9.
1974	5351	959	10310	4.9
1975	5332	5126	10458	1.4
1976 (est)	5658	5523	11191	7.

Sources: For 1658-1930, Hartog 1964, pp. 228, 419, 422, 704, except for 1850*, which is from Knight 1978. For 1930-1949, Tjon Sie Fat, 1954. For 1950-1976, St. Maarten Census Bureau files. Note that for 1789, Keur and Keur give 2000 whites and 4200 slaves (Keur and Keur 1960: 44). Note also that the male-female ratio reverses in 1970.



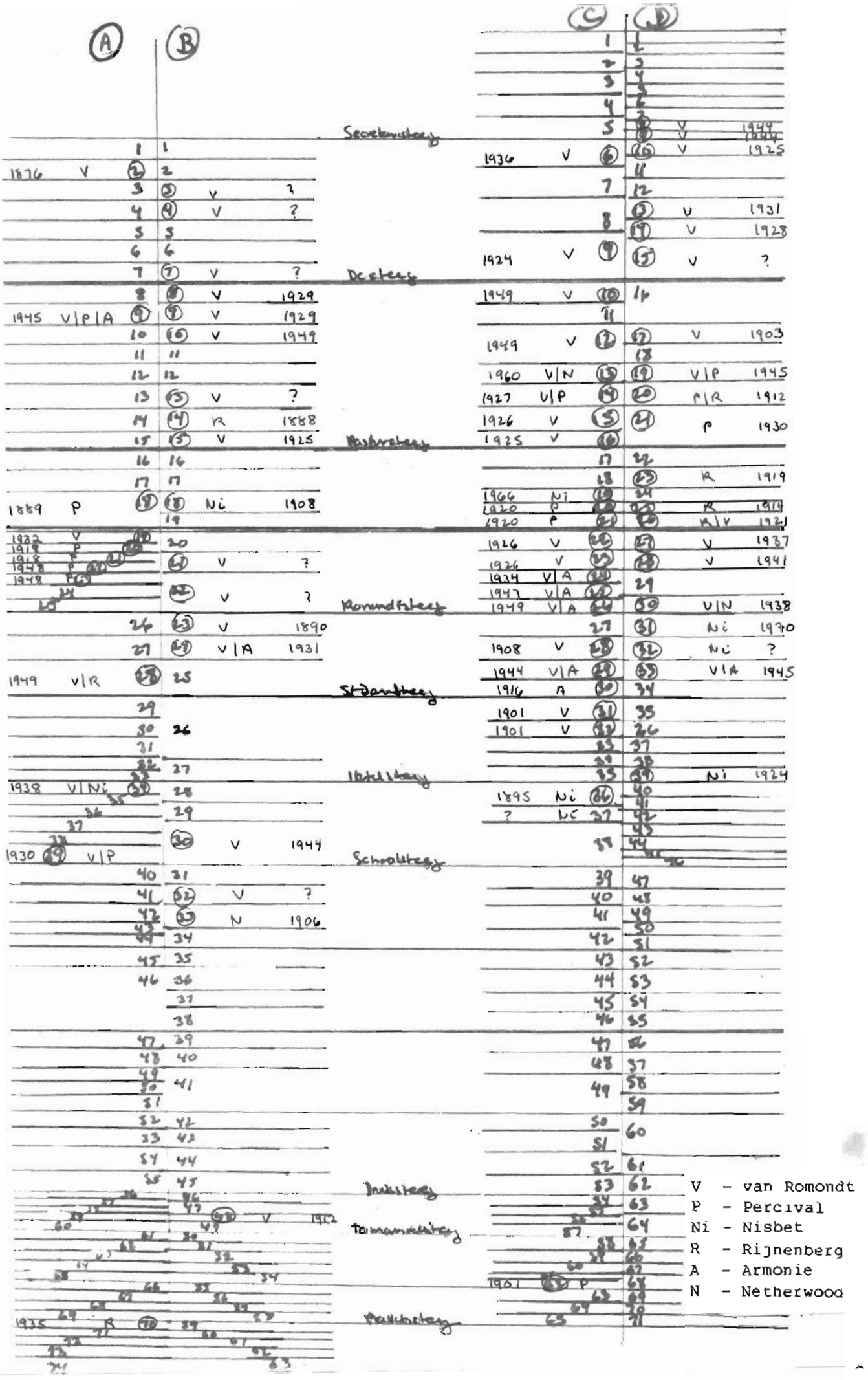
Map 2

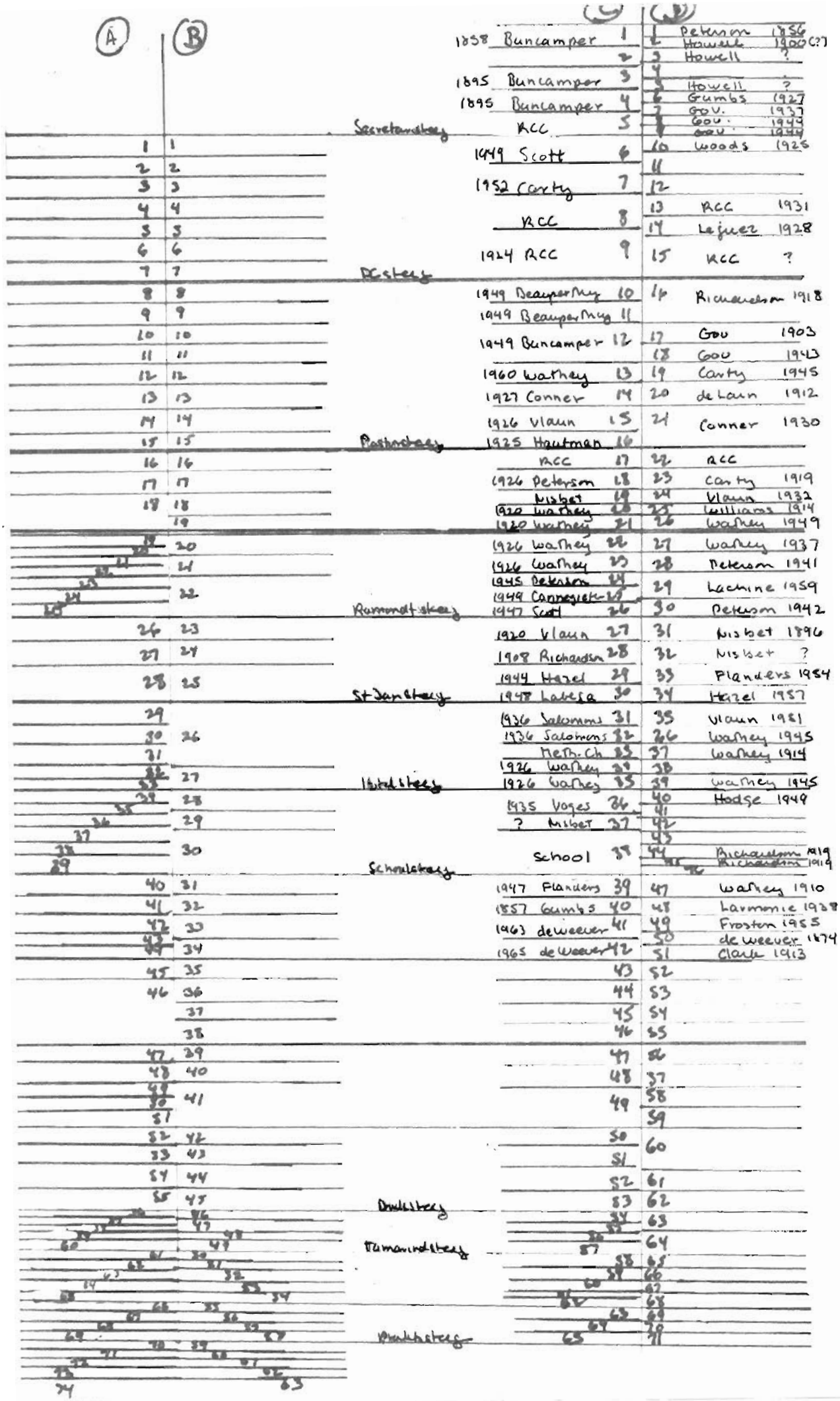
Number of Occupiers Since 1868 and Length of Present Occupation in Years
(Includes occupiers as of 1868 but does not include transfers within families)

Note: Circled lots have changed hands since 1968.

Map 3

Post-1868 Lots Owned by Six Merchant Families, with Date Lot Passed Out of Family





Map 4

Front Street Property Ownership as of 1960, with Date of Purchase

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