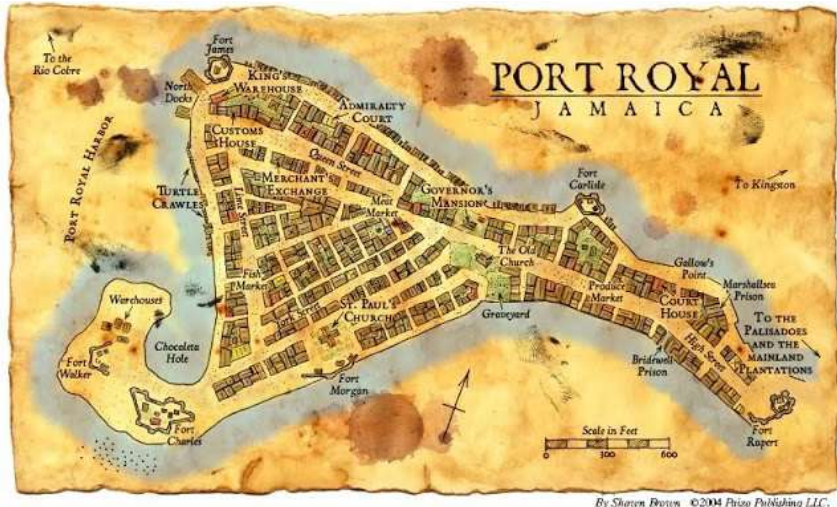


# Chapter 5.1

## *Port Royal, part II*



During the two years following the invasion of Jamaica, the fleet of 38 warships that had arrived in 1655 had been greatly reduced in number. The larger ships had returned to England with Admiral Penn and, as other vessels became unseaworthy, they too were sent back to England. By 1657, Governor D'Oyley and Admiral Goodson had maybe eleven seaworthy warships to defend the new colony. Exactly which ships these were, we do not know. However, we do know that after Penn sailed for England, the following ships remained on station in Jamaica: *Torrington*, *Martin*, *Gloucester*, *Marston Moor*, *Laurel*, *Dover*, *Portland*, *Grantham*, *Selby*, *Hound*, *Falmouth*, and *Arms of Holland*, with three brigs and a dogger.

Readers should remember that in the Age of Sail the term “ships” meant full-rigged ships, i.e., a sailing vessel with at least three square-rigged masts and a full bowsprit. Brigs, therefore, were not classed as ships for they were two-masted vessels, square-rigged on both foremast and mainmast. Other types of vessels were also defined by their sail plan, e.g., barques, brigantines, etc.

Governor D’Oyley saw the situation as desperate, for he knew the Spaniards would almost certainly outnumber his forces in a counter-attack from their many nearby settlements. Therefore, Jamaica’s fate as an English colony depended on disrupting any attempt by Spain to mobilize and transport forces to his colony. In other words, D’Oyley believed Jamaica needed a much stronger naval presence than was currently available at the Point.

Desperate situations require desperate solutions, and Governor D’Oyley believed he had one. To that end, D’Oyley wrote a fateful letter in 1657 inviting Tortugans to transfer operations to Jamaica, thereby augmenting the state-owned ships he had on station at the Point with privately-owned vessels operated by the Brethren of the Coast. Here was his quid pro quo: The buccaneers would help defend the English colony against Spain. In return, they would have a safe harbour at the Point at which to purchase food and other supplies, careen and repair their vessels and dispose of their prizes and loot.

The Tortugans also had another talent. Many were experienced hunters, for, as we saw in an earlier chapter, they had once made a living hunting and curing feral livestock on Hispaniola.

Jamaica desperately needed such men for, although the army had wantonly slaughtered and wasted livestock left behind by the fleeing Spanish planters, many feral horses, cattle, and hogs remained in the woods and the foothills throughout the central parts of the island. With a contingent of experienced hunters who could handle themselves in difficult tropical terrain and who could ward off Spanish harassment when necessary, the governor could provide meat, fresh and cured, to his much-undernourished forces.

How many buccaneers became hunters, we'll never know. We do know, though, that several hundred transferred to Jamaica and provided a pool of experienced manpower available to the increasing number of privateers being outfitted and provisioned at the Point.

Although we have no documentation to tell us if Harry Morgan participated in these early seaborne raids by Goodson and Myngs, it is safe to infer that he had somehow earned a reputation as a man of action and leader of men. And we do know that he owned and captained a small ship in 1662. Therefore, he would have needed such a reputation to have attracted a fighting crew for his ship and received a privateer's commission from the governor.

Moreover, it is hard to explain how, on a junior infantry officer's pay, Morgan had been able to acquire sufficient means to build or buy and equip a small ship. A reasonable explanation is that he had shared in the loot obtained from one or more of Myngs's raids.



Battle of Santa Cruz de Tenerife (1657)

The Point at Cagway played a significant role in the Caribbean operations of the Anglo-Spanish War (1654–1660). It was from that port at the heart of Spain's New World empire that England was able to launch several successful naval campaigns.

As Commander-in-Chief, Jamaica Station, Vice-Admiral Christopher Myngs undertook another retaliatory raid early in 1659. Again, he targeted the flourishing

communities of the Spanish Main. With three frigates, *Marston Moor*, *Hector*, and *Cagway*, and with their crews augmented by buccaneers, Myngs sailed some six hundred miles south-east of Jamaica to present-day Venezuela. Once off the coast, and taking the enemy by surprise, Myngs plundered the port of *Cumaná*, capital of the province of *Sucre*. Myngs next turned his attention to *Puerto Cabello* in the province of *Carabobo*. Recognizing the need to maintain the element of surprise, his fleet reached *Puerto Cabello* before news of the sacking of *Cumaná*. *Puerto Cabello* was, in fact, taken by surprise, and it too was looted.

The next target was the mainland town of *Coro* in *Falcón* province, south of the Dutch island, Aruba. To attack the town, Myngs had first to land his men at the port of *La Vela de Coro* and march seven miles inland. Despite the extra time, he arrived ahead of the news of his earlier successes and caught the enemy totally unprepared.

Myngs raids on *Cumaná* and *Puerto Cabello* yielded only moderate amounts of treasure, but *Coro* was another story entirely. Among the plunder sized, there were 22 chests of silver ingots belonging to the King of Spain. Each chest was said to weigh 400 pounds, and the total value of the chests was placed at 1,500,000 pieces of eight or about £375,000, with some estimates running as high as £500,000. Thus, Myngs returned to *Cagway*, “with more plunder than ever was brought to Jamaica,” to the delight

and enrichment of the increasing number of Cagway's inhabitants.

After his arrival at the Point and officials had examined his treasure, Myngs admitted that a significant portion had already been shared with his men—a common practice among privateersmen. However, this led to a dispute with Governor D'Oyley, who in 1660 suspended his naval commander and ordered his return to England on the *Marston Moor* to stand trial. But, by the time he arrived, Charles II had been restored to the throne. And, because Myngs had been an early supporter of the monarch, the king cleared of all charges and restored him to his post. He did not return to Jamaica until 1662, however.

The success of Myngs's raids encouraged privateers stationed at the Point to undertake expeditions of their own. Besides, the lure of such riches saw more private ships of war equipped and provided with the governor's letters-of-marque.



In early 1656, Robert Sedgewick had published a proclamation encouraging army officers to settle down on their land-grants and become planters. Those that did became the backbone of Jamaica's emerging society. However, many—like Harry Morgan—were battle-hardened veterans who were not content merely to live out their lives

peacefully as planters and merchants. Some, who did become planters, chose to augment their fortunes by obtaining privateering commissions. Others who were men of means outfitted vessels and contracted with captains and crews to sail them on their behalf. In this way, fortunes were secured without the inherent personal danger—though still bearing the financial risk.

So, by 1660, we find at Cagway army-trained commanders of private vessels of war, manned by crews recruited from a growing pool of ex-soldiers—Spanish resistance had ended and so too had the need for so large an army—and the best fighting men in the West Indies at that time, buccaneers. These were, of course, the buccaneers who had emigrated from Tortuga and Hispaniola. And this at a time when the fleet Vice-Admiral William Goodson had commanded in 1655 had dwindled so that soon after 1660, there was at times no naval vessels at all in Jamaica. The colony had no shortage of enemies, however.

Legitimate privateers—those holding official letters of marque—often joined forces with the buccaneers who styled themselves as the *Brethren of the Coast*. Together with the few English naval vessels available from time to time at the Point, they formed Jamaica's navy. These were commanded by able, resolute, resourceful, and ruthless men like Edward Mansfield, Sir Thomas Whetstone (a maternal nephew of Cromwell), Harry Morgan, John Morris and son, Maurice Williams, David Martien and Captains Jackman and Freeman, to name but a few. By

the end of 1663, there were at least 22 full-time privateering craft using facilities at the Point.

Other buccaneer contingents of the Brethren of the Coast were headquartered elsewhere (principally Tortuga) and sailed under French and Dutch commanders. During substantial operations, the buccaneers elected an “admiral” to lead them. Edward Mansfield led Jamaica’s contingent.

As described earlier, Cagway and the Point, which we know as Port Royal, made up the last of a series of cays that formed a narrow sand spit, which became known as the “Palisadoes.” Between these cays were marshy areas that separated each tiny island. Within a very few years, it became so crowded with houses and other buildings, it became necessary to fill in the marsh to make room for expansion.

*Villa de la Vega*, which became known as Spanish Town, was officially the colony’s capital, as it had been under Spain’s rule. People flocked to Cagway, though, for that was where the wealth was. Plundered emeralds and pearls, gold and silver began circulating as freely as guineas and pounds on the streets of London. Merchants opened shops and set up booths to exchange English products for gold, silver and other loot raided from Spain’s colonies. The Spanish copper coins called *maravedies* and Spanish silver dollars we know as “pieces of eight” were Jamaica’s *de facto* legal tender. And Jamaicans began to receive



increasing amounts of these from the contraband trade with Spanish colonies.

Spain continued to claim a monopoly on trade with its American colonies but was unable to enforce its embargo for, at the best of times, Spain's inadequate merchant fleet had been unable to supply the growing need for cloth, tools, and other essential and luxury items. After losing treasure fleets in both 1656 and 1657, Spain's trade with its American colonies virtually halted with no Spanish fleets sailing to the New World for seven years.

English merchants at Cagway were only too pleased to step in and satisfy those colonists' day-to-day needs. Soon, the spacious protected harbour at Cagway began to fill with large English merchantmen, which came laden with cargoes of textiles, tools, glass and other items the Spanish colonists could not manufacture for themselves.

Upon arrival at the Point, these commodities were distributed to smaller, swifter vessels that could slip past Spanish authorities into numerous small bays where they could be traded for Spanish coin. So ubiquitous and symbiotic did this illegal trade become that Spanish officials, whose jobs were to prevent such trade, often looked the other way.

As the population and commercial activity—legal and illicit—at the Point increased, so did the need for worldly pleasures. In his book, *Jamaica; Its Past and Present*

*State* (London, 1843), James Phillippo of Spanish Town wrote about Port Royal of those days:

The character of the white population was deplorable—composed of disbanded soldiers, Spanish refugees, hordes of pirates and buccaneers, convicts, and indentured servants, and dregs of the three kingdoms, who exhibited every kind of excess, and perpetrated almost every degree of wickedness.

Robert Marx (*Port Royal Rediscovered*, Doubleday, 1973) tells us that in 1661, Jamaica's Council issued "40 new licenses for taverns, grog-shops, and punch houses during the month of July alone." Before long, Cagway/Port Royal became notorious as "the most wicked city in the world."

This was only the beginning, however. Jamaica was entering a new phase as a fully functioning English colony with a civilian administration and a diversified population of planters, pen-keepers, wharfingers, merchants, judges, lawyers, surgeons, tradesmen of several sorts, soldiers, and seamen, supported by labourers and servants, some of whom were slaves, and inevitably, ladies of dubious virtue.

By 1662, Jamaica had been divided into 10 districts, including the district of "Upon Point Cagway." And, after Sir Thomas Modyford became governor in 1664, he divided the island into seven parishes. (Jamaican parishes are the island's main units of local government.) At that time,

the district of Upon Point Cagway (renamed Port Royal) was made a parish. The parish encompassed not just the Point, but what is now Kingstown and parts of current-day St. Andrew parishes. The Point, though, continued to be the main attraction.