

# A World Away

By STANLEY CARR

**G**OVERNOR'S HARBOUR, Eleuthera, the Bahamas — In the public library of this tiny port is a plaque which records that a group of Bostonians sent a relief ship here in 1650 to aid 70 Puritan refugees. The refugees, exiles from Bermuda, had landed on the then uninhabited island, as they had planned, but only after their ship had been wrecked on a coral reef and all their provisions had been lost.

The plaque tells how the settlers expressed their gratitude by sending back to Boston 10 tons of brazilletto wood to be sold for the benefit of the infant Harvard College.

This memorial is one of the few tangible links with Eleuthera's past, for, although this long, slender, scenically beautiful island is rich with stories of pirates, buried treasure, mysterious caves and shipwrecks, there are few overt signs of its history.

## A Different World

Eleuthera, a hump-backed ridge stretching for about 100 miles, is still an unspoiled island. One of the larger coral formations in the group forming the self-governing British colony of the Bahamas, it is bounded on the east by the

Atlantic Ocean and on the west by the Caribbean Sea. Busy Nassau, on the island of New Providence, is only 60 miles—but a world—away.

The visitor who seeks history on Eleuthera—it is six miles at its widest — must search for it. There are no ruins or monuments. There are scarcely any road signs, few telephones, no buses and no curio shops. The population of about 7,000, of whom 15 per cent are white, lives in small settlements that are linked by the island's single, pothole-pitted, hardtop road.

## A Jolting Ride

Exploring Eleuthera in a rented car (\$90 a week) with a Keep Left sign on the windshield is a jolting but rewarding experience. The road often winds to the shore, as if to remind the visitor that bright, sandy beaches washed by the turquoise sea are always only a few steps away. Visible through the water are the coral reefs in which bluefish, angelfish and stingray dart.

The settlements exist where there are good anchorages. Governor's Harbour, in the center of the island, winds around a bay shaded by trees, the houses dotting the slope and commanding magnificent views.

Over the ridge and down on

the Atlantic shore is French Leave, the biggest hotel on the island (43 rooms). It is set in a grove of casuarina trees and palms beside a mile of curving pink beach, one of the best on Eleuthera.

Hatchet Bay, a smaller harbor, is a popular anchorage. Yachtsmen can see bougainvillea, hibiscus and oleander blooming as they step ashore.

Around the harbor is the Hatchet Bay Plantation, one of the few places on the island providing a meadow for

cattle. Pineapples, tomatoes, cucumbers and bananas are grown elsewhere on Eleuthera, but most of it remains uncultivated.

## American Interest

Many Americans have a personal stake in the island, for there are several companies selling homesites here. Eleuthera Island Shores, with headquarters in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., has sold most of its 2,000 lots, but only nine homes have been built or are

under construction within the development.

Although there is no income tax in the Bahamas, import duties keep prices high, and the cost of building on Eleuthera must be reckoned at a minimum of \$20 a square foot. Most building materials have to be brought from the United States, and local labor, while not demanding high wages, has an easy-going *mañana* outlook.

The visitor who is not dreaming of a home in the

sun is probably fishing or skindiving—and dreaming of how much time he could spend in these pursuits if he lived on Eleuthera. The fishing for bonefish, grouper and gray snapper is excellent. Skindivers occasionally spot small barracudas close to shore.

Davis Harbour, in the south of the island, is one of the best points from which to go deep-sea fishing. A powerboat can reach 500 fathoms of ocean in 15 minutes, and

dolphin more than three feet long and weighing 14 pounds are common catches.

It is claimed that a person can walk 100 miles along Eleuthera's beaches and still be alone. Clouds never seem to linger for long over the island and winter frosts are unknown.

## Three Airstrips

For the investor seeking an island home or the beachcomber hoping to find coins

left by buccaneers or Spanish sailors, the place holds great magic. But with planes landing every day on three airstrips, one of them designed for jets, it is not hard to wonder how long this happy-go-lucky charm will last.

Reservations are usually necessary, for accommodations are limited. Some establishments, including French Leave, close in the summer, but others, like the Buccaneer here in Governor's Harbour, remain open the year round.