

Introduction to Central Andros Island, The Bahamas

This is a story of Central Andros, on Andros Island, which Bahamians also call the Sleeping Giant or the Big Yard. Nearly all human activity in this 1200 square mile area is found within a two-mile strip bordering the eastern shoreline.

Approximately 3000 people call Central Andros their home. They work and play on only a small portion of Andros Island, Bahamas, and only a tiny bit of the world. However, generations of Androsians have come and gone and their history is alive with

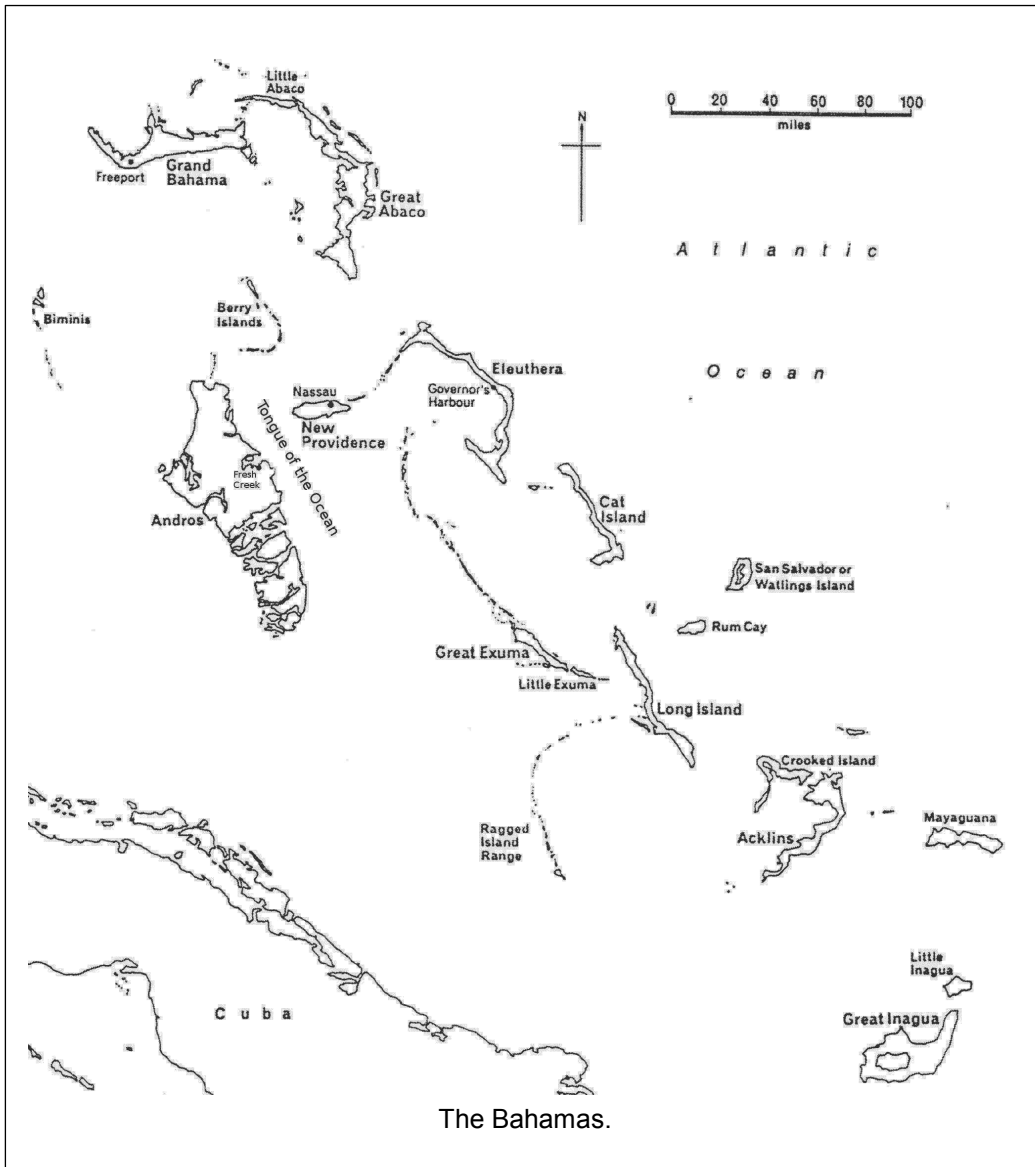
events determined by the local environment and by world events. They have also influenced the world, especially with their music.

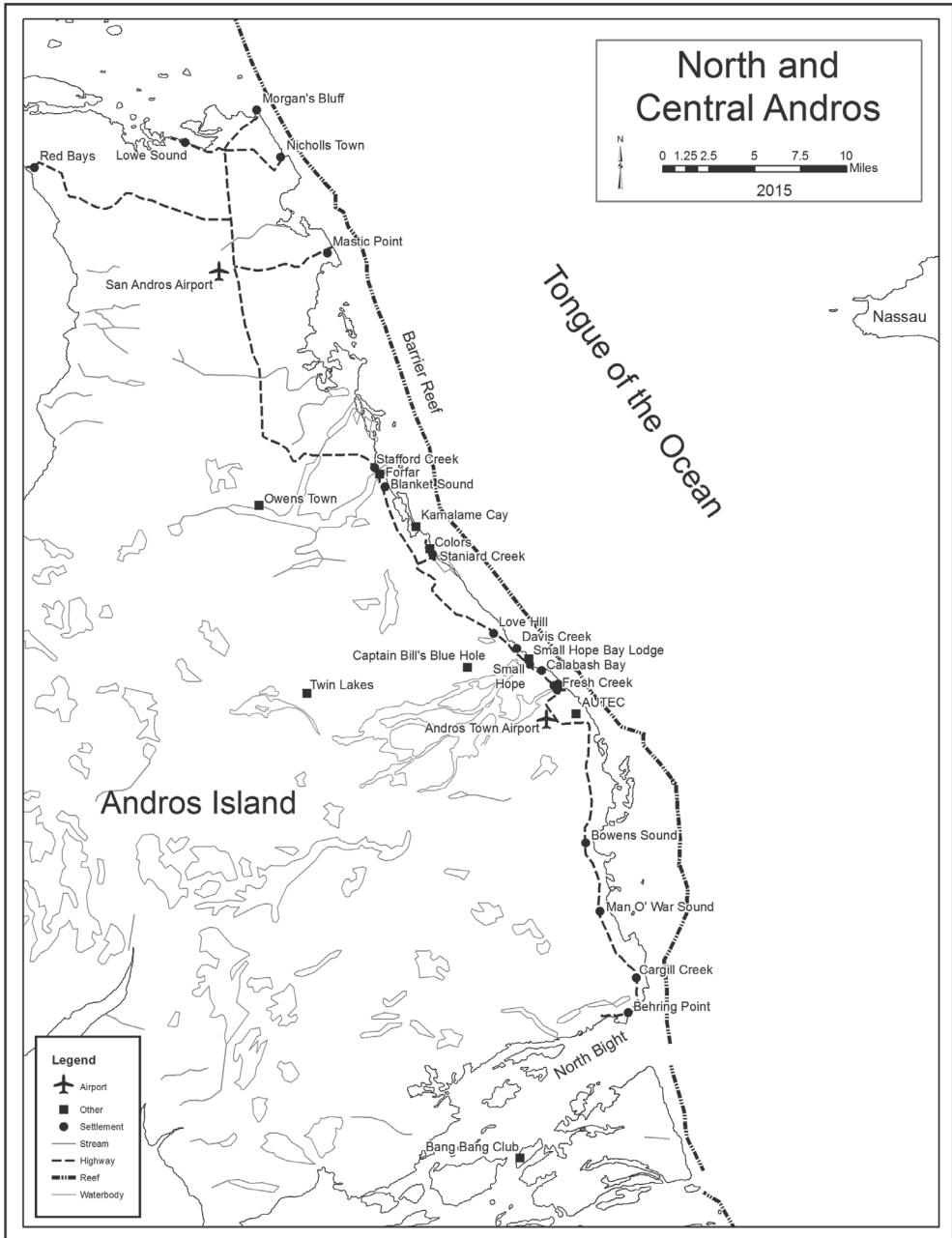


John Fisher riding the beach to Small Hope Bay Lodge, which can be seen in the distance.

The background for this story has come from various research materials, local residents, former visitors and my own personal experience, which began in 1997. This story is mostly factual history but with an occasional fictional tale as indicated. The Andros Hope story is continuing, so changes and additions are welcome.

Whether factual history or fictional tale, a story is waiting to be told and I hope all the bits that I have assembled over my 17 “winters” on Andros Island will add to the big picture of how Central Andros evolved into a vibrant community.





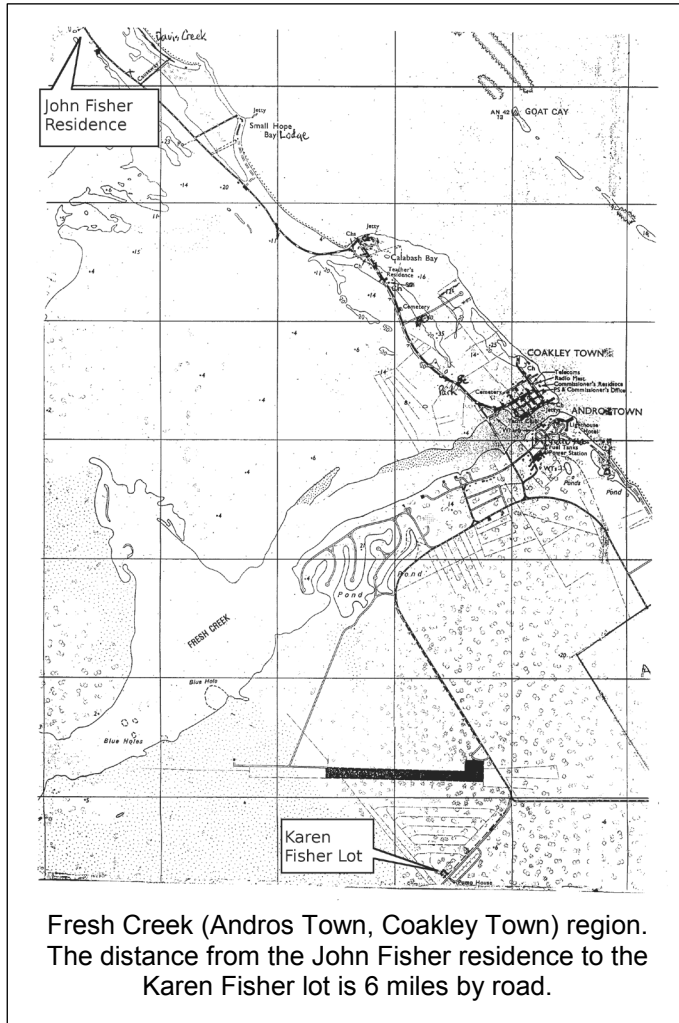
Sleeping Giant/ The Big Yard – First Trip

My mission in 1997 was to find “the lot.”

Back in February 1963, Karen and Idris Griffith departed Nassau by air, westward over the Tongue of the Ocean to Andros Island. They were to inspect land which, according to the sales pitch, would not only be the site of their retirement home, but it would greatly increase in value, because events were taking place to create an “economic boom” on Andros.

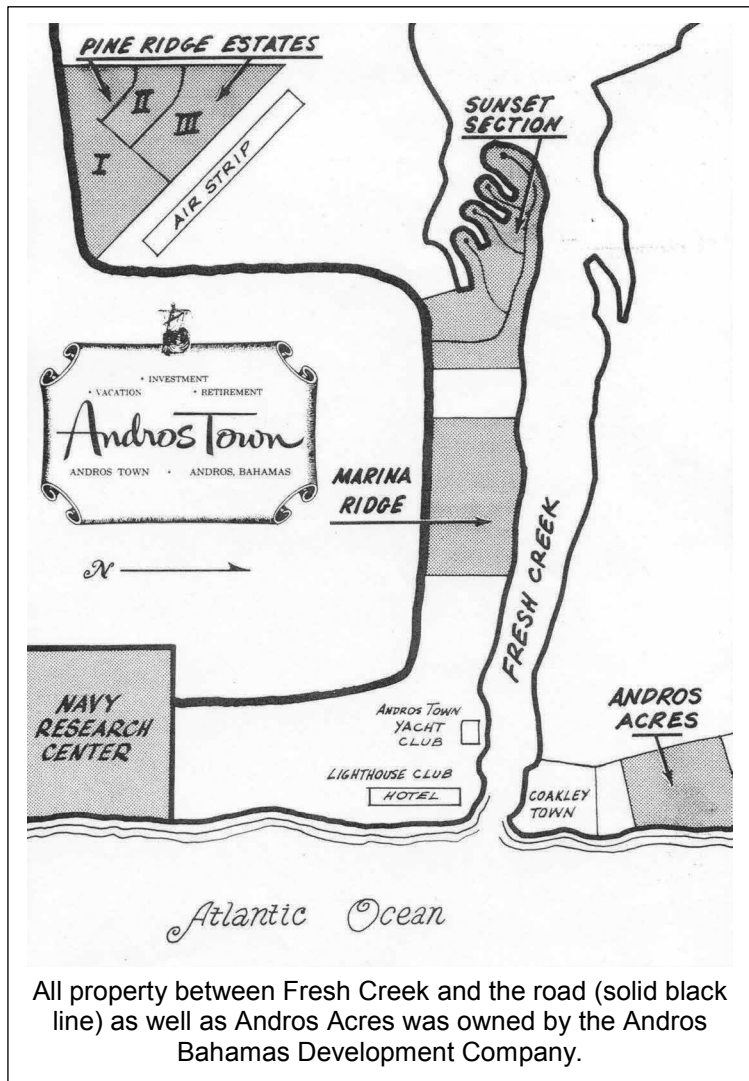
The Griffiths were lodged at the luxurious Lighthouse Club hotel, which in the 1950s and 1960s was the Jewel of the Bahamas.

All this must have impressed the Griffiths, because for \$2240 US, they bought a 150 feet by 200 feet lot (B14L2)



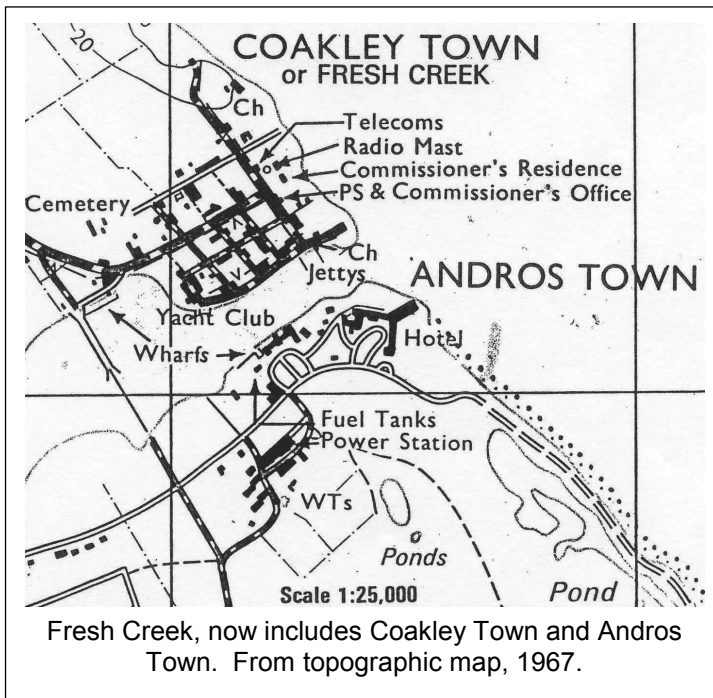
in the Pine Ridge Estates near the Andros Town airport.

In the 1990s, Karen Griffith, by then married to my father, would drop interesting bits and pieces about Andros Island. This fired my imagination as I was already looking for “my island in the sun” where an Ontario snowbird could find a home away from home during a Canadian winter.



By the fall of 1997, my search focused on Andros. I left Chatham, Ontario by bus and forty hours later, I arrived in Miami and caught a Bahamas Air flight to Nassau. My Andros Hope adventure had begun.

I had heard about “out-island mail boats” which arrive and depart from a small commercial island called Potter’s Cay (pronounced “key”), under the bridge to the upscale playground of Nassau’s Paradise Island. With a little luck I found the Lady D mail boat and after climbing



over and around boxes marked “cornflakes” to “computers,” I settled in for the four-hour trip to Andros Island.

Sailing time of noon came and went. Captain Prince Munroe then informed passengers that because of weather conditions we would not be leaving until the next day.

What happened in the next few hours on the Lady D was a microcosm of my experiences on Andros. At no extra charge, I was given a bunk for the night and the eight other passengers and the crew started preparing supper. I offered a few goodies that I had brought along for the trip. I was to experience a similar hospitality as I came to know Andros Island better, but I also learned to expect the unexpected.

So in Nassau harbour not only did I sleep and eat well, but all evening I was entertained by music from the upscale Atlantis Resort on Paradise Island just across the channel from Potter's Cay and the passing "party boats."

The next day cars, boxes, construction materials, propane tanks and coolers full of meat and drinks clogged



In 1997 the mail boat *Lady D* transported freight and passengers between Nassau and Fresh Creek.



Aerial view of Fresh Creek, taken in northeast direction. Note the darker (deeper) creek channel and deep Tongue of the Ocean beyond the reef.

the deck but people were still jumping on board and throwing boxes to passengers as the boat left the dock.

It was on that first trip to Andros that I met Tavaris Minnis, Crackers, Justina Rolle, Mabel Minnis, Marvin Riley, Prince Rahming, Tyrone Bain, and others that would help to shape my future visits to the island.

My plans for my week on Andros were to locate Karen's lot, take some pictures, sample island life and return to Ontario, but like mail boat schedules or shifting sand on an Andros beach, my plans kept changing.

While booking into the Chickcharnie Hotel, I asked owner Charlie Gay about Pine Ridge Estates, but drew a blank look. Even at the local hangout, Hank's Place, no one seemed to know where Pine Ridge Estates was located. However, all was not lost as Tavaris and his mother Violet were cooks at Hank's so I knew I was going to be treated well!

Hank and his wife Eva also made their guests welcome, so if my first night was any indication, I knew I would be returning to the island many times.

The week passed too quickly and I could find no one to direct me to Pine Ridge Estates. However, I began to hear stories of a Swedish industrialist, Axel Wenner-Gren, who during the early 1950s had big development plans for the south side of Fresh Creek. I was directed to offices in Nassau where I might find more information. It became obvious that another trip to Andros would be needed to accomplish my "find the lot" mission.