

Tuberculosis in the colonial and independent British Caribbean  
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This project, which will lead to an international research network, several articles and a book, focuses on the extent to which race and ethnicity shaped the control and treatment of tuberculosis in the British Caribbean in the years preceding and following independence. It concentrates in particular on three distinct parts of the region: Jamaica (95% of the population of African descent), Barbados (the largest white minority) and Trinidad and Tobago (the largest Indian-Caribbean minority).

The project also assesses the financial and other support that colonial governments received from the Imperial government as well the Rockefeller Foundation and other American organisations in their fight against TB; the role played by voluntary and professional health workers in the prevention, control and treatment of the disease; the responses of the population to prevention and control campaigns; and the attitude of TB patients towards the treatment offered in sanatoriums.



FIG. 33. Photograph of the barracks for male tuberculous patients at the poor house of Kingston and St. Andrew.

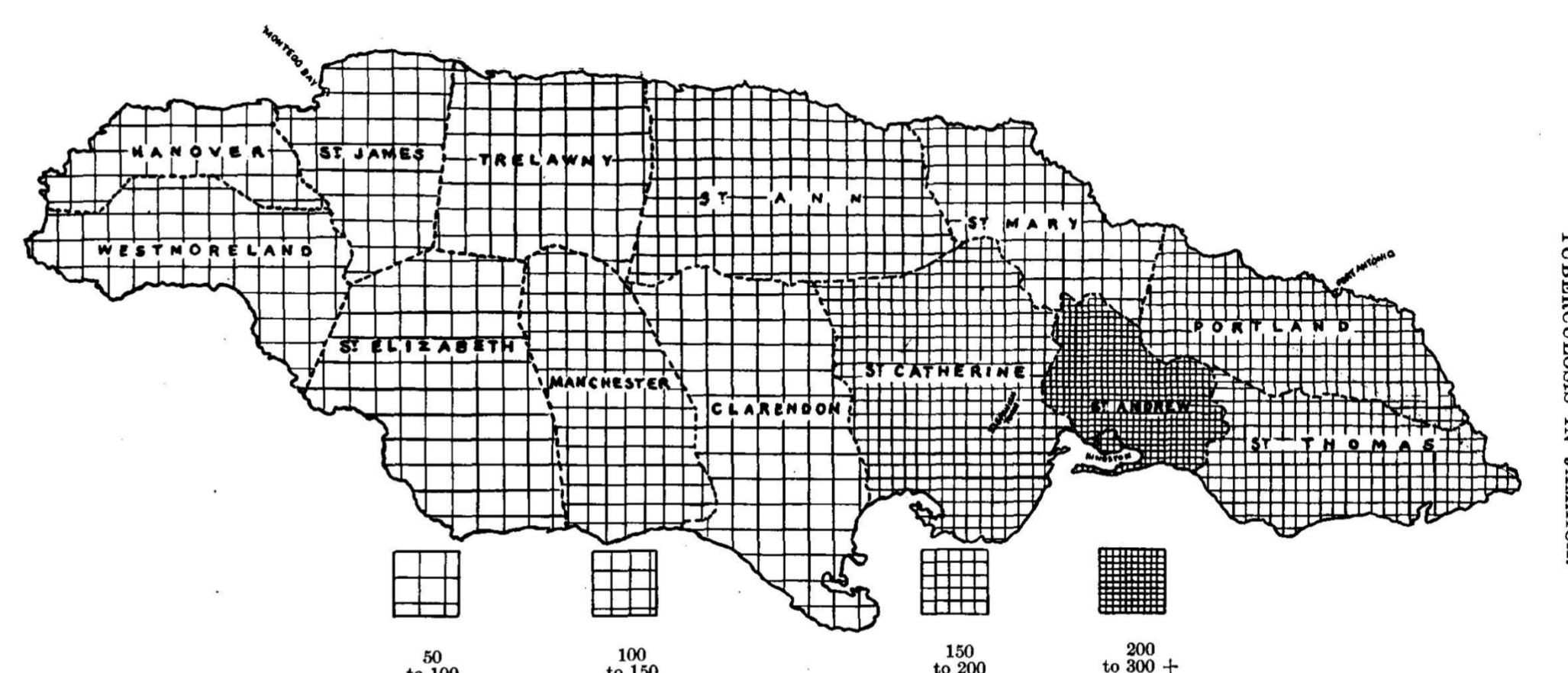


FIG. 2. Map of Jamaica showing the relative incidence of deaths from tuberculosis in the parishes of the island as indicated by the report of the Registrar-General for 1927. The death rate per 100,000 is indicated by cross hatching. It is noteworthy that the highest death rate is in the parishes of Kingston and St. Andrew (City of Kingston) and in general diminishes as distance from the city increases. The accuracy of the figures are discussed in the text.

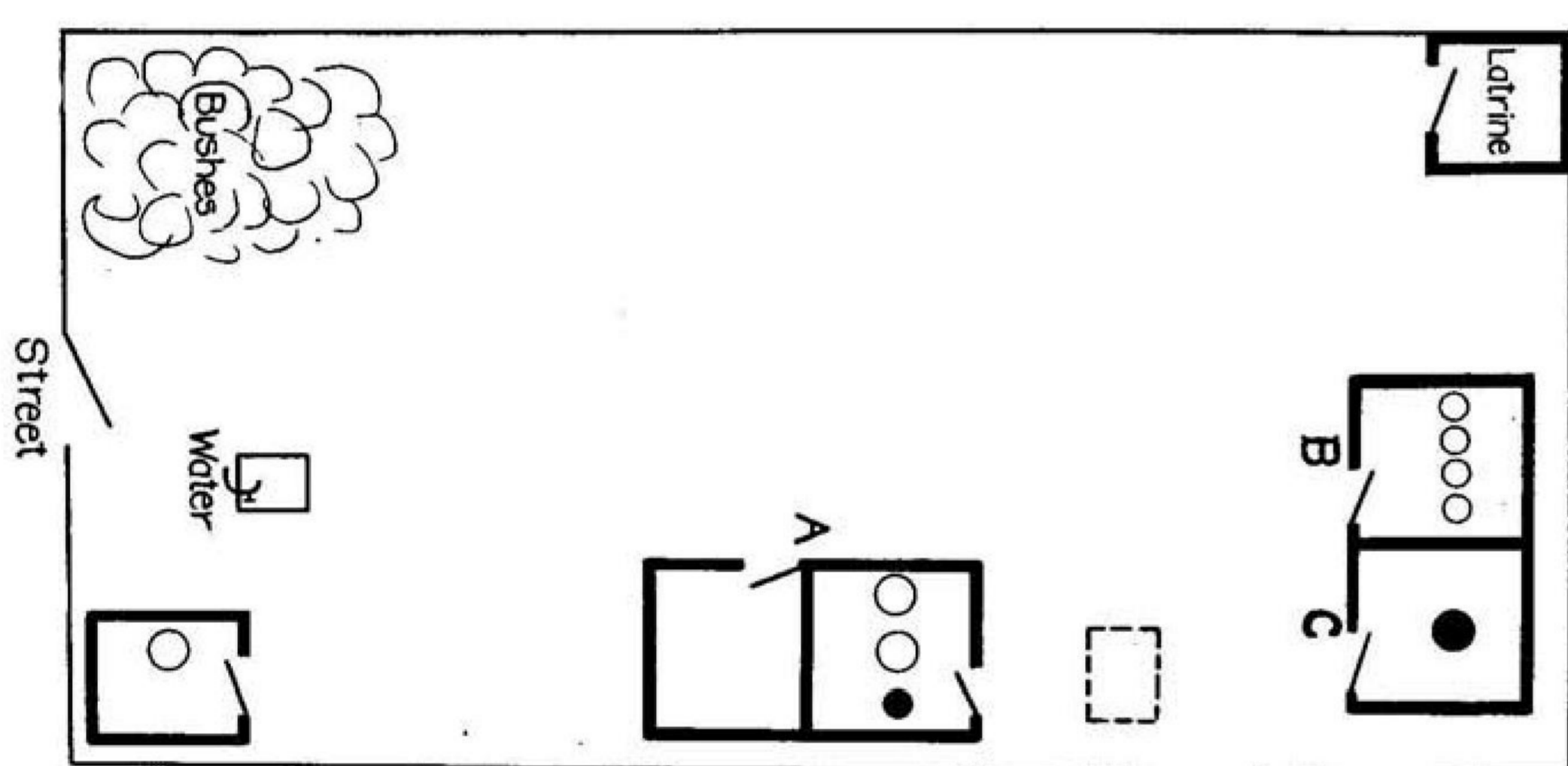


FIG. 25. Plan of the large yard occupied by family 151. The rooms in which they lived, marked A and B, contained the parents and 5 children. A tenant with tuberculosis occupied the room marked C.



FIG. 26. Photograph of the interior of the yard occupied by family 151. The rooms marked A in fig. 25 are shown in the foreground and those marked B and C in the background.

This social and cultural history of public health in the British Caribbean will not only shed greater light on the nature of colonial rule in the region, in particular the extent to which colonial governments helped to uphold racial and class hierarchies. It will also challenge the idea that race and ethnicity ceased to matter after independence by exploring in detail the attitude of post-colonial governments towards the control and treatment of TB.

The research will more generally add to the scholarship on Caribbean history and the history of colonial and post-colonial health and medicine. Caribbean historians have only recently begun to address medical practices, discourses and professions. Most of this work, however, focuses on child and maternal welfare and has largely ignored major diseases, international health organisations, and large-scale specialist hospitals, such as TB sanatoriums.