

Grand Bahama
Commissioner's Report for 1909

VOTES
OF THE
HONOURABLE
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF THE
BAHAMA ISLANDS.

SESSION COMMENCING ON
THE 11TH DAY OF JANUARY, 1910
AND ENDING ON
THE 6TH DAY OF JUNE, 1910.



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1910.

GRAND BAHAMA.

AGRICULTURE.

The year just ended has been a very good one for the farmers; fairly good crops of maize, Guinea-corn, peas, beans, ground-nuts and benny have been made all over the island.

Large quantities of sugar canes were grown at some of the settlements, most of which were made into syrup. There are two American mills and several wooden cane mills on the island. This industry is progressive and a larger area will be planted with canes this year.

The onion industry was also very successful; all the planters were well satisfied with their experiment as they made good money out of it; all made arrangements to grow larger quantities this year but they were very much disappointed for the seed obtained from the Curator did not germinate successfully.

Sisal is still being despised and rejected by the majority of the people, but a few good plantations are to be found at Golden Grove, Free Town, Bootle Cove and Water Cay.

Arrowroot is grown at Eight-Mile-Rock and other settlements in its vicinity. The whole crop has not yet been harvested but from individual reports I judge that at least 60 bushels of arrowroot starch will be made.

The fruit growers have had a poor year. The crop of grape fruit was large but the prices realized at Nassau were hardly more than sufficient to pay the expense of shipping and packing.

Bananas and other fruit were also grown in certain districts, but the shipping facilities were so poor

that the growers were obliged to dispose of them locally at small prices.

Stock-raising is confined to Eight-Mile-Rock and the adjacent settlements. There are about 225 head of cattle distributed among the various settlements. The quality of the cows has greatly deteriorated through in-breeding and the introduction of new blood is imperative if this industry is to be successful.

SHIPPING.

Eight-Mile-Rock was made a Port of Entry on December 1st last, but no foreign vessels have entered or cleared. The following is a return of the coastwise trade during the year.

INWARDS.			OUTWARDS.		
No.	Tons.	Men.	No.	Tons.	Men.
94	1435	1045	78	1283	869

EDUCATION.

The public school at Eight-Mile-Rock shewed a good deal of improvement this year; the attendance was better and the progress made by the children was very good.

The school-master is very hard-working and energetic and takes a great deal of interest in his work, but has been greatly hampered in the past by not having efficient help and by the poor attendance of his scholars.

The parents as a whole take very little interest in the education of their children and take them away from school as soon after they arrive at the age of 14 years as possible.

There is also a Grant-in-aid school at Water Cay, and Church schools at West End and Barnett's

Point, all of which render valuable aid in educating the people.

Schools are urgently required at Free Town, High Rock and Sweeting's Cay where hundreds of children are growing up in ignorance. It is a shame that nothing has been done to lighten the darkness of the people of this part of the island.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND SANITATION.

The year has been free from epidemics, and there has been very little disease of any kind, with the exception of the usual periodical attacks of diarrhoea and the itch.

The sanitary condition of the island is far from good as the people are very careless about their water supply and keep their wells in a very unsanitary state, leaving them uncurbed and uncleaned. There are also several swamps in the neighbourhood of settlements, which ought to be drained as they are foul and stink in dry weather, and breeding places for mosquitoes and disease germs in the summer. These matters will receive my attention in 1910.

PUBLIC WORKS.

The roads throughout the island have been improved and extended and new roads have been opened at West End, Water Cay and Sweeting's Cay. A new road at West End leading from the south side is very much required to enable the farmers to reach their farms at West End.

GENERAL.

From what experience I have had during the short time I have been in this district I judge that the condition of the people this year compares

favourably with past years. There have been no disastrous hurricanes and the farmers have made good crops as a whole.

The reduced price of sponge and grape fruit in the Nassau market has made money a little scarce, but the effect will not be felt if the January sponging voyages are up to the average.

From information given me by the retired Commissioner I am able to say that the people have been law abiding and well behaved during the year and in consequence there has been but little judicial work.

The usual emigration of our young men to Florida still continues and will continue until something is done to enable them to make a decent livelihood at home. The majority of our boys are sensible enough to make periodical remittances to their families, and the effect of the American money is to be seen in the comfortable shingled houses that have been built at the various settlements.

The people in general do not appreciate the value of sisal, but are very much interested in cattle and the onion industry.

The stock-raising industry especially needs fostering as it is possible to raise quantities of good cattle on Grand Bahama, but the Government must encourage the people by providing them with a well bred bull to improve their stock.

There have been 12 paupers (old people) provided for during the year. This was due more to the good nature of the last Commissioner than to utter destitution.

W. G. B. STEVENSON,
Commissioner.

22nd Jan. 1910.