

Report of the Commissioner of the District of Grand Bahama for the year ended Dec 31st 1912

Financial

1. The Revenue for the year amounted to £15..5..3 (£1..10..6 less that the previous year) and the Expenditure to £25..10..5 (£3..18..0 less than that of 1911).

Postal Statistics

1. The Revenue at the Post Office of Eight mile Rock amounted to £11..7..8 including £7..2..3 Customs duties on parcels.
2. 1892 Postal packets were received (118 being Registered letters) and 947 packets were despatched (including Registered letters).
3. 39 Parcels-post packets valued at £28..9..0 were received during the year.
4. 22 Money-orders amounting to \$157.60 were issued on the United States and 7 amounting to £10..5..0 on the United Kingdom.

Savings Bank

1. Eighteen deposits amounting to £107..12..0 were made during the year (£98..2..0 more than that of 1911) the majority of the people still prefer to keep their money at home. While many trust me personally, and burden me with the responsibility of their savings, they seem to lack faith in me as representative of an impersonal institution.

Agriculture

1. Agriculture still continues to be a supplementary industry to Sponging. Very little improvement has been made in the method of cultivating the soil, or in the amount of land under cultivation, but the amount of ground produce raised exceeds that of 1911 (this is owing to favourable climatic conditions).
2. Excellent crops of indian & Guinea corn, cow-peas, Cassava, arrowroot, sweet potatoes and Onions were made during the past year but the returns from the groundnut and sugar-cane fields were below the average.
3. Sisal: Encouraged by the advance in price, the people throughout the District are giving more attention to the cultivation of sisal. Clearing operations have been carried on more vigorously than in 1911, and the quantity of fibre shipped exceeds that of any previous year.
4. Stock-raising: Cattle farming shows little or no improvement, either as to quality or the numbers of cattle. The old pastures have been allowed to run down, and no new ones have been made Mr. John Martin (of Set & be damned farm) who owns a herd of about 60 cows, is the only person in the District who seems to display any energy in the selection of his breeding stock, and the improvement of his pastures Excellent butter is made at 8 Mile Rock, most of which is consumed locally.

Fisheries

1. Sponging is still the premier industry of the district, the aggregate returns from the sale of Sponge, was less than that of 1911 (due to the decreased number of men employed) but the individual receipts of the sponger, were more than that of last year.
2. The proposed closing of our Sponging grounds does not meet with the approval of the majority of the people, but it is an urgent necessity as our bars and banks are gradually being denuded of every variety

of sponge. I am still of the opinion that greta good will accrue from it. The guarding of the closed area will require careful supervision on the part of the Commissioner, if the deferment is to be successful.

3. Quantities of undersized wool and velvet sponges are still being hooked in the locality known as the Bight of Abaco. As these sponges are easily distinguished from those obtained from the banks, I think that a prohibitive port duty on this variety of sponge would have more effect than Rules 3 & 4 of the Marine Products Board, it would make the sponge of no value in Nassau, and the sponger would pass them by as they do loggerhead sponges today.
4. The trade in conch-shells has not been very brisk this year, nor has their been so many men employed in gathering them. This is probably due to the fact that there is only one buyer in Nassau, who takes advantage of having no competitors to give the lowest possible price for shells. /

Education

1. There are 4 Schools in the District, one Board School two Church of England schools, and one Grant in aid School.
2. The average attendance at the 8 Mile Rock School has been very good, and it has been well conducted during the past year. The progress made by the school has not been entirely satisfactory, the falling off in the efficiency of the pupils, is probably due to the epidemic of measles in June, and the inadequate staff of instructors. I think that the attention of the Board of Education should be called to the fact that Teachers (like Commissioners) are apt to get stale if kept too long at one station.
3. The Church schools at West-End and Barnetts point, and the Grant in aid School at Water Cay do not make any progress. The teachers are inefficient and the Schools conducted in an irregular manner.

Public Health

1. The Public Health and Sanitary conditions of the District have been fairly satisfactory. There was an epidemic of measles in the District in May and June, and a fever of a mild type was prevalent at Freetown and High rock in September and October, with the exception of consumption and venereal diseases, there have been no other diseases of a contagious nature during the year. /

Judicial

1. No serious offences were reported during the year. Thirty-four minor cases were dealt with during 1912, a large proportion of which were school cases.

Public Work

1. The improvement to roads throughout the District (mentioned in my report for 1911) have been continued, a road across the Island at Freetown has almost been completed, and a boat landing constructed at 8 Mile Rock, so as to make it possible to land passengers and freight in any weather, except when the wind is blowing strong from the South or Southwest.
2. The Residency has been repaired, re-shingled, painted, and colour-washed on the outside and painted and papered on the inside; it now presents an attractive appearance. The grounds have also been improved, the unsightly heaps of rocks that spoil the beauty of the place, have been removed, and used to fill in several large holes, that were breeding places for flies and mosquitoes.
3. The erection of an Office at 8 Mile Rock is an urgent necessity, as the premises now used for that purpose will be required by its owners in the near future.

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1. The general condition of the people of my District at the end of 1912 was very satisfactory. The past year has been a most successful one, the fields have yielded good harvests, and the prices paid for Sponge in

Nassau were most generous. The manner of living and the morals of the people, also show great improvement and thrift is gradually being recognized as one of the virtues of man.

2. The usual tripping backwards and forwards to Florida still continues; there is a slight increase in the number of men, who have migrated to Florida this year.

N.G.B. Stevenson
Commissioner

Transcribed from the original by James Baker as a reference so that these past "snapshots" of the Island's economic and social history are available.