

(Enclosure in Governor's Message No. 29.)

REPORTS OF OUT ISLAND COMMISSIONERS
FOR 1915.

ABACO.

CHEROKEE SOUND.

(HEADQUARTERS AT WILSON CITY.)

The direct revenue amounted to £249 16s. 0d., a slight decrease as compared with 1914.

It is estimated that Customs duties paid in Nassau on behalf of merchants in this district aggregated about £3,500.

Local expenditure was £305 4s. 10d. a decrease of £175 14s. 7d. due principally to less expenditure on account of public works, travelling allowances and pensions.

TRADE.

Imports. Practically everything was imported by steamer via Nassau where entries were passed. Statistics have been furnished by the principal merchants and shopkeepers of the district which show that the value of such imports exceeded £20,700.

Exports. The exports were valued at £31,079, as follows:

Lumber, 9,000,000 feet	£26,445
Fish	3,600
Ice, 1200 tons	984
Sisal	50

£31,079

It is hoped that when the total sum is expended there will be at least 1000 wool plants growing at the experiment, and at the end of two years every penny spent will be received back with cent per cent. interest.

From observations taken, cuttings $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches square, planted in August are now (February) very nearly twice the size, and should be at the end of two years at least 5 inches in diameter.

Sponge farming in the near future will be the great industry of the Colony; to the peasant, a sure way of making money, rain or no rain; to the capitalist, a gilt edge investment.

£100 spent in this line of experimenting, apart from furnishing valuable instruction to the peasant, will surely bring foreign capital into the Colony, and unless some very unforeseen calamity comes along the investment cannot be otherwise than a safe one for the Government.

STANLEY V. S. ALBURY,
Commissioner.

GRAND BAHAMA.

REVENUE.

King's Fines and Justice's Fees	£12	4	3
Liquor Licenses	5	0	0
Customs Duties	1	10	2
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Total	£18	14	5
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Increase on previous year	£8	1	2

EXPENDITURE.

On account of the war no non-recurrent items were included in the amounts granted for the performance of the public works, £116 Os. 0d. for the upkeep of the roads, public wells and other annual works being allowed. Other expenditure was as follows:—

Bahamas General Hospital	£6 2
Prisons	5 7
Police	4 15
Travelling by Commissioner	45 13
Miscellaneous	3 15
	£65 13 15

POSTAL.

Ordinary letters despatched	1002
Registered „ „	171
Ordinary „ received	1462
Registered „ „	159
Customs duties (Parcel Post)	£4 17 2
Stamps sold	6 9 1
Money Orders	18 14 6
Postal Orders	2 18 5

Strictly speaking, there is only one postal station—that at Eight Mile Rock—but letters for residents in the vicinity of Smith Point are forwarded by the Post Office in Nassau direct to Smith Point.

There has been a slight improvement in the handling of the mail-boat, but there is still great room for improvement, as the service is still done in a slovenly manner.

IMPORTS (VIA NASSAU).

Groceries, alcoholics, medicines, dry-goods, hardware, crockery, lumber &c.

A, B and C have built up their land—have employed labourers to carry earth, seaweed manure, &c. to their fields and to prepare the land carefully. It is to be hoped that the success which has attended the efforts of A, B and C, will soon stir up the women to try to do likewise, although it will be much harder for them. I must confess that the growing of corn here is a very difficult task. I myself had Indian and Guinea corn planted out in both well manured and also in unmanured or ordinary soil, and in spite of very good seasons my attempts were miserable failures owing to the ravages of worms, birds, rats, &c.

As I said in last year's report: "The soil is so shallow, especially in the neighbourhood of Eight Mile Rock, that even moderate rain makes it sappy and submerges it, and then after a few days of sunshine, it becomes all parched up."

There are a few small cays to the north of Grand Bahama where agriculture is more successfully though less extensively carried on than on the mainland. These islets, with the exception of Water Cay, are uninhabited, the farmers—women—remaining for a fortnight or so at a time, being carried and brought back by their sponger relatives. Water Cay is a kind of oasis or Canaan in the district, but it is only about 3 miles long and a quarter of a mile wide; it has a population of about 100.

Moore's Island contains agricultural land, but it is almost entirely owned by non-residents. The main settlement, appropriately named "Hardbargain," is built on a strip of "white-land" a few yards in width and only a few inches above sea level, and lies between the sea and a salt-water marsh. The J. D. Lowe & Son cane syrup factory gives the women a fair amount of employment.

Bats and birds generally, and wild hogs in addition at Sandy Point and Cross Harbour, cause

"sewing, &c., before and after the regular school hours, which would help to maintain it and themselves."

Praise worthy efforts in practical agriculture were made with the seeds supplied by the Board.

VITAL STATISTICS.

Population at last Census	2170
Births during the year including three stillborn	120
Deaths do. do.	41

PUBLIC HEALTH.

The public health of the district has been fairly good, no serious epidemic occurring.

EMIGRATION AND IMMIGRATION.

The usual number went to Florida but a large proportion returned very soon, as the United States Authorities went after them for evading the immigration fees. Wages were not so high there during the year under review as they were before the war. From most of these wanderers come remittances by Registered Post to their relatives at home. On the other hand a few husbands, after they have been down there a short while, take up with other women, leaving their wives and children to manage as best they can.

CRIME.

The following cases occurred:—

Common Assault	7
Pre-dial Larceny	6
Other	4
Police Regulations, Breach of	7
Other offences	8
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Total	32