

GRAND BAHAMA
Commissioner's Report for 1933

BAHAMAS

VOTES
OF THE
HONOURABLE
HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
OF THE
BAHAMA ISLANDS.

—•—
SESSION COMMENCING ON
THE 23RD DAY OF JANUARY, 1934
AND ENDING ON
THE 18TH DAY OF JUNE, 1934.



NASSAU, NEW PROVIDENCE.
PRINTED BY THE NASSAU GUARDIAN, LIMITED,
PRINTERS TO THE LEGISLATURE.

1934.

PUBLIC HEALTH.

There has been no serious illness; the health and sanitary condition of the District is satisfactory.

PUBLIC WORKS.

Except the usual upkeep under the Recurrent items, no new work was undertaken during the year.

GENERAL REMARKS.

Very difficult times were experienced by the whole farming community during the year under review.

Extensive farming has been the chief improvement and a good harvest is anticipated.

 GRAND BAHAMA.

J. E. RUSSELL, COMMISSIONER.

FINANCIAL.

Balance on hand on Jan. 1, 1933	£ 271 15 7		
Revenue from all sources	1624 7 5		
	<hr/>	1896	3 0
Local expenditure	1226 11 1		
Remittances to the Treasury	607 6 0		
Balance on hand on 31 -12-33	62 5 11		
	<hr/>	£1896	3 0

TRADE.

This was carried on with Nassau and several ports in Florida.

IMPOPTS.

The chief imports comprised food-stuffs, liquors, dry goods, building material and gasoline.

EXPORTS.

These chiefly consisted of sponge, craw-fish and shark-hides. Some cattle, poultry and fruit were also shipped to Nassau.

MAIL SERVICE.

The *Madam Queen* (formerly the *Castlerag*) very satisfactorily performed the major part of this service. Only on a few occasions was she unable to serve as mail carrier, when she was substituted by the *Alice Mabel* and *Paddy Halferty*. It might be mentioned here that this mailboat has to carry on a dual service, the other being with Exuma and the Northern end of Long Island.

POSTAL STATISTICS.

Sale of stamps £10 12s. 3d., Sale of Money Orders £2 4s. 0d., Savings Bank deposits £4 12s. 0d., Savings Bank withdrawals £5 14s. 9d., Parcel Post Duty collected £16 0s. 2d., Parcels received 93.

The above is in respect of Eight-Mile Rock. At West End, Parcel Post Duty amounted to £50 5s. 2d. and this was collected on 200 parcels.

RADIO TELEGRAPH.

Messages despatched 2553; messages received 2356; the revenue collected amounted to £361 11s. 10d. The station is at West End and messages from all of the other places are taken there, either overland or by boat. It is very serviceable but a link-up by telephone would be a great boon to the District as a whole and particularly from an administrative point of view. On more than one occasion, Government telegrams have been several days old when received at Headquarters and the same can be said of weather reports. Upon inquiry, I have been informed that a messenger was not available for the purpose. A telephone line would obviate the necessity of sending a messenger and save his fee.

SHIPPING.

Inwards (Foreign), 210 vessels, 2406 tons, 644 men.

Outwards (Foreign), 207 vessels, 2252 tons, 505 men.

Inwards (Coastwise). 197 vessels, 609½ tons, 1743 men.

Outwards (Coastwise). 234 vessels, 6368 tons, 1498 men.

JUDICIAL.

There were 88 offences reported and 88 persons were summoned or apprehended. These were disposed of as follows:

Discharged for want of prosecution 8, Dismissed on the merits of the case 9, Fined 37, Imprisoned 19, Whipped 1, Brund over or otherwise disposed of 14. Total 88.

Of the above, 31 cases were heard by the Commissioner at headquarters and the remaining 57 by the Commissioner and Justice of the Peace at West End.

No cases of a serious nature appeared during the year.

EDUCATION.

There are two Board and five Grant-in-aid schools in the District which have been opened and attended as regularly as circumstances would permit. Both teachers and pupils have been obliged to work under adverse conditions during some part of the year. At the request of the Inspector of Schools, the five Grant-in-aid schools were examined by the writer during November and December, and in spite of the very hard times which they experienced after the hurricane, a fairly good showing was made by the majority in the tests.

The school at West End was closed from the very early part of September to the 11th December on account of the schoolhouse being demolished by the hurricane. School is now being conducted in a rented building. Until the building at Eight-Mile-Rock was repaired, some difficulty was encountered during rainy weather, as a portion of the shingles on the northern side was torn off when the storm lifted the roof of the wooden annex, which was so badly damaged as to render it unfit for further use.

MANUFACTURES.

Due to the fact that practically all of the sugar-canes were destroyed by the hurricane, very little syrup has been made.

The canning of craw-fish has been attempted at West End, with fair results, and it is hoped that this will develop into a large industry.

SOCIETIES.

There are three Burial Societies with a membership of 240. These are very helpful in burying their dead and helping the families of deceased members.

There are no agricultural societies. The one established here has ceased to function since 1931.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND SANITATION.

With the exception of a number of cases of diarrhoea in September and October, occasioned to a large extent by the drinking of contaminated water after the hurricane, the public health has been good. Sanitary conditions were very fair.

PAUPERS.

Forty-one persons received out-door relief from the Bahamas General Hospital during the year.

FISHERIES.

Sponge is the principal one. This was carried on throughout the year but the winter trips, as usual, were more remunerative than those made during the summer. The sponging grounds are far from being devoid of sponges, although marked signs of depletion have been seen during the last few years, perhaps due to a large extent to the ravages of hurricanes. Encouraging voyages were made by all the boats during the month of December, as the weather and the market were fairly good. If such conditions prevail in the New Year, it is hoped that more satisfactory trips will be made.

Several boats were on turtling voyages at Cotton Cays during the summer months but the prices obtained for shell and meat were not very remunerative.

Craw-fish and sharks were also taken in small quantities, the former for food and the latter for their hides. These were disposed of to foreign concerns and, in spite of the fact that the prices offered were not very high, they have helped in a small way.

METEOROLOGY.

Barometer: Normal, 30.00; highest, 30.10 in January. February, November and December; lowest, 29.68 in September, during the hurricane.

Thermometer: Highest, 86 in June, July, August and October; lowest, 62 in January.

Rainfall: 21.50 inches, covering a period of 54 days. There was no rain during the month of December.

PUBLIC WORKS

In addition to the usual upkeep of roads, wells, burial-grounds, public lots, etc., the following works were undertaken from special grants and from Head 27. Item 50a:

- (1) Repairs to the Residency.
- (2) Enlargement of Commissioner's Office.
- (3) Repairs to Public Wharf at Water Cay.
- (4) Construction of public well, Hawksbill Creek (North).
- (5) Hurricane repairs to roads and burial ground walls.
- (6) Improvement of Main Street at West End.
- (7) Clearing of storm debris and wreckage.

The hurricane which occurred on the night of the 3rd September was the only genuine one which has passed over this district since the year 1899 and it did not fail to play its pranks in the greater part of the settlements and particularly those from Smith's Point to West End. Crops were destroyed, many buildings damaged, some destroyed, planes and boats were blown ashore and damaged and in the western section of the island, the roads were blocked with tons of large stones thrown up from the ocean. Many sections were submerged and the whole situation was chaotic for a few days. In spite of all this, the manner in which the people as a whole faced the situation, with the timely aid of the Government, was very commendable. At the end of the year, damaged roads, boats and homes, with a few exceptions, were in very fair condition.

VITAL STATISTICS.

Births, 96; deaths, 46; total, 142.

AGRICULTURE.

Indian and Guinea Corn. When I assumed charge of the district in July, the prospects were very encouraging, particularly in the eastern section of the island, but apart from a few instances the stalks, with their tender shoots, were laid waste by the hurricane. The prompt action of the Board of Agriculture in sending a supply of seeds was responded to by the people and early in the new year there will be a fair harvest of these commodities.

Peas and Beans. These also suffered terribly during the storm as most of the fields, which were made in the white land on the southern coast of the island, were submerged by sea-water. The pigeon peas and lima beans, supplied by the Government, comprised practically all of the available seeds and even though these have been sown it will take a few months to secure another crop.

Sweet Potatoes. Small areas are under cultivation but better stock and larger fields are necessary.

Sugar canes. These are grown in small quantities and manufactured into syrup, most of which is consumed locally. Very little has been made this year because the canes were ruined by the storm.

Bananas. Grown for home consumption by a few persons.

Other crops. These comprise onions, pumpkins, cabbages, citrus fruit, etc., which are cultivated by a small part of the people. The several citrus fruit orchards are well cared for and, under normal conditions, the yield is more than sufficient for local use and a part is shipped to Nassau.

The greater part of the men in this district follow the call of the sea, thereby leaving the onus of tilling the soil to the fairer sex, who are quite capable of so doing. If they would always follow the advice given, I fail to see why the husband on the boat and the wife in the field cannot make ends meet

and live in some degree of comfort. The cultivation of more of the black land, which is farther from the ocean and less subject to its spray, of much larger areas and of more kinds of crops have been advised and I hope they will follow.

CASUALTIES.

David Nesbitt and Charles Jones were accidentally drowned on the 25th January and the 6th May respectively. (In this connection I desire to mention that the southern coast of this island is well exposed to the ocean, which becomes frightfully rough when there is a high wind from the South-East. South or South-West and I fear that, in spite of the fact that these men are intrepid seamen, too many chances are taken in small boats.) On the 16th August one Oriel Grant died very suddenly of paralysis, while sponging in the vicinity of Mangrove Cay. The body was brought to his home at Hunter's and interred by his relatives.

A certain Lorena Grant, 18 years of age, died in childbirth at West End on the 13th November.

GENERAL REMARKS.

I relieved Mr. W. B. Cooper on the 3rd July, when he went on vacation prior to his leaving the service on pension. Since taking charge, I have visited all of the out-stations as often as possible and made myself acquainted with the general conditions of the district.

The inhabitants are very grateful to the Government for the help given them after the hurricane. It really meant much to them as in many cases there was no food in the homes and nothing left in the fields.

I wish to record my sincere appreciation of all help which has been rendered to the district during the year. I am indeed thankful to the Government for aiding the people in times of need, to the Board of Education for their kindness in allowing Mr. M. H. Strachan, the teacher at West End, to assist in hurricane relief work, and to F. H. S. Bowe, Esq., J.P., for his invaluable assistance in various ways.

I close this report with the hope that the people of this district will be entirely self-supporting during the new year.