

GRAND BAHAMA

Commissioner's Report for 1935

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

SESSION COMMENCING ON
THE 21ST DAY OF NOVEMBER, 1935

AND ENDING ON
THE 1ST DAY OF JUNE, 1936.



NASSAU, NEW PROVIDENCE.

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1936.

Temperature. Highest 90 in January, lowest 62 in February.

GENERAL REMARKS.

Beyond the loss of fruit, poultry and some small stock, no serious damage resulted from the hurricane which passed over the District in September.

From a financial point of view, however, the year under review was not a successful one. Adverse weather conditions affected crops considerably but the people are not disheartened and have in no way become less industrious.

GRAND BAHAMA.

R. H. CULMER, ACTING COMMISSIONER.

REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE.

The Revenue from all sources and Expenditure during the year were as under.

Revenue.

Balance on hand 1/1/35	£ 53 15 2
Crown Land Rentals	8 3 9
Library Subscriptions	2 5 11
Parcel Post Duty	13 3 2
Remittances from Treasury	830 0 0
Remittances from Coll. Rev.	474 0 1
Sale of Draft	94 5 11
Sale of Stamps	10 4 0
Liquor, Shop and Drivers' Licences	21 15 5
Sale of Money Orders	33 5 9
Savings Bank Deposits	2 18 0
King's Fines, Justices' Fees, etc.	17 2 3
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	£ 1560 19 5

Expenditure.

Public Works, Jan. to March	£ 174 11 10
Public Works, April to Dec.	279 15 10
Telegraph Department	55 19 0
Library	37 4 3
Medical Department	6 15 6
Prison Department	45 7 6
Education Department	93 1 2
Out Island Administration	49 2 0
Police and Local Constables' Salaries	310 17 3
Agricultural Department	72 18 7
Lightkeepers' Salaries	50 0 0
Withdrawal, Savings Bank	3
Assistant Registrars of Births and Deaths	15 10 0
Conveying Telegrams and Letters	26 16 0
Police Travelling	8 4 4
Miscellaneous Expenses	250 19 5
Balance on 31st December	83 16 6
	<hr/>
	£1560 19 5

On January 1st the Acting. Collector of Revenue at West End had on hand a balance of £27 5s. 10d.

TRADE.

This, as usual, was carried on principally with Nassau; West End, the commercial centre of the District traded with several ports of Florida during the months from October to December.

IMPORTS.

The principal imports comprised foodstuffs, gasoline, dry goods, liquors, building material, ice and empty cans.

EXPORTS.

The chief exports consisted of sponge, shark skins, wood and a small quantity of fruit to Nassau; and live and canned crawfish to ports in Florida.

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MAIL SERVICE.

The motor vessel *Alice Mabel*, under the capable and amiable captaincy of John M. Carey, has performed a very prompt and efficient service during the year. On one or two occasions she was delayed by extremely bad weather, when such delay could not have been avoided. The m. v. *Paddy Halferty* substituted during the months of January and February while the *Alice Mabel* was on dry dock.

POSTAL FACILITIES.

There are two Post Offices in the District, one at Eight-Mile Rock and the other at West End. Receipts from all sources amounted to £59 10s. 11d. at Eight-Mile Rock and withdrawal from P. O. Savings Bank was 3d.

At West End, the sum of £63 10s. 0d. was realized from sale of Stamps and £22 18s. 10d. from parcel post duty.

RADIO TELEGRAPH.

The only station in the District is at West End. Its operation was quite satisfactory during the course of the year. As will be seen in the itemized account, the sum of £26 16s. 0d. was paid for the conveyance of official telegrams and letters which could have been avoided if a telephone line had been installed to link Headquarters with the Wireless Station.

901 words were transmitted and 543 were received during the year. receipts for which amounted to £189.

SHIPPING.

Coastwise: Inwards, with cargo, 81 vessels, 1712 tons, 698 men; in ballast, 61 vessels, 652 tons, 435 men.

Coastwise: Outwards with cargo, 97 vessels, 1295 tons, 847 men; in ballast, 59 vessels, 1129 tons, 312 men.

Foreign: Inwards, with cargo, 58 vessels, 1494 tons, 258 men; in ballast, 114 vessels, 826 tons, 209 men.

Foreign: Outwards, with cargo, 143 vessels, 2110 tons, 415 men; in ballast, 29 vessels, 184 tons, 53 men.

JUDICIAL.

There were 63 cases of trivial nature reported during the year. The number of persons summoned or apprehended was 96. They were disposed of as follows:

1 discharged for want of prosecution, 1 discharged on the merits of the case, 17 imprisoned, 9 whipped, 30 fined, 38 bound over or otherwise disposed of.

Of the above cases 21 were tried at West End and 42 at Eight-Mile Rock.

Except that a certain Albert Reid was apprehended for the murder of his wife in Florida and was sent up to Nassau to await extradition, no serious cases were reported in the District during the year.

EDUCATION.

There are two Board schools and five Grant-in-aid schools in the District. The daily attendances suffered terribly during the year on account of hard times during the summer months and especially so after the hurricanes of September and November. The Grant-in-aid school at Sweeting's Cay was closed directly after the September hurricane and remained closed until the end of the year, as there was no house available in which the teacher could live. The Board of Education kindly granted the request of the Acting Commissioner in allowing the teacher to work in the Eight-Mile Rock School. At the request of the Inspector of Schools all schools in the District were examined by me in October and November. The results obtained in the Board schools were quite satisfactory, but work exhibited in the Grant-in-aid schools was disappointing.

The inhabitants of West End are extremely grateful to the government for the elaborate schoolhouse which was erected during the year under the supervision of Mr. J. E. Roberts, Foreman of the Public Works Department, Nassau, who laboured hard to complete the building in so short a time. The teacher and pupils seem quite happy in their new schoolhouse.

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MANUFACTURES.

In October, a factory was opened at West End for the purpose of canning crawfish for export to the United States. Under the management of the Hansen & Cobb Company, the factory remained open until the end of the year, thereby giving spasmodic employment to quite a number of people of the District. The total output from this institution was 122,990 lbs. Due to the fact that the sugar-canes were destroyed by the hurricanes, no syrup has been made.

SOCIETIES.

There are three Burial Societies in the District which continue their work in aiding the sick and burying the dead. The number of members in these totals 200.

LIBRARY.

The Public Library is at Eight-Mile Rock. During the early part of the year this institution was well patronized, but as the times grew harder and harder, the number of subscribers decreased from 75 to 18.

New books have been added, which increased the number of volumes to 145. Both local and foreign newspapers and periodicals have been supplied during the year.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND SANITATION.

Except that Flu fever and Diarrhœa were prevalent during the last three months of the year, the public health was fairly normal. To safeguard the general health, the Acting Commissioner issued instructions after the hurricanes to boil all water used for drinking.

The rules of sanitation were, as far as circumstances permitted, strictly adhered to. The local Board of Health secured the active co-operation of the majority of people in the District, who scrupulously cleaned their lots and yards when appeals were from time to time made. The local Board of Works also continued the work of cleaning the roads and streets.

PAUPERS.

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

FISHERIES.

Sponging is the chief of fisheries. During the summer months while the Little Bahama Bank was closed to the gathering of wool and velvet sponges, many cargoes of the grass species were sold for very unremunerative prices. From January to October, the whole fleet of about 15 vessels (at Headquarters) on three voyages, realized a sum of only £119.

Wool and Velvet sponges seemed to have increased in site, quantity and quality during the closed period. This statement has been proven after the opening of the Bank on November 1st, when 9 vessels, in a short time, gathered fairly good cargoes, which were sold for £913. Should the prices keep up, I have all reason to expect that hard times will fall victims at the hands of prosperity.

Several vessels have been re-conditioned for the purpose of catching and keeping (alive) crawfish for the Cannery at West End. These, with a few dinghies, have been occasionally employed in this industry, which did not prove satisfactory. Oftimes they were held up, on account of the Cannery not being able to take their catches. Had it been possible to invite other buyers so as to form some competition in prices, etc., the industry would have been more beneficial to the fishermen.

During the summer, a few vessels made a turtling voyage to Cotton Cay on Salt Cay Bank. Fairly good catches were made and the prices obtained for shell and meat were very remunerative. Many green turtles have been caught north of Hawksbill Creek and were sold locally.

A small quantity of shark skins has been shipped to Nassau during the year.

PUBLIC WORKS.

In addition to the usual upkeep of roads, wells, burial grounds, public grounds, etc., the following works were undertaken:

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- (a) Repairs to walls around Residency grounds.
- (b) Construction of well west of Hawksbill Creek.
- (c) Repairs to roads at Eight-Mile Rock.
- (d) Continued improving Landing place, Eight-Mile Rock.
- (e) Repairing and painting Residency.
- (f) Continued improving streets, West End.
- (g) Repaired and painted Flag-pole, Commissioner's Office.
- (h) Deepening Mother Brinyard's Creek.
- (i) Repairs to walls around Burial Grounds.
- (j) Cleaned Hawksbill Creek.
- (k) Repairs McLainstown Bridge.
- (l) Repairs to Bridge at Hawksbill Creek.
- (m) Colour-washed Police Station, West End, and repaired and painted Flag-pole.

METEOROLOGY.

Barometer: Normal, 30.00; Highest, 30.20 in February, Lowest, 29.20 during the hurricane of September. In November hurricane the reading was 29.30.

THERMOMETER.

Highest, 87 in August, Lowest, 62 in January and February.

Rainfall: 23.14 inches in 43 days.

On September 27th the administration of the District was entrusted to me in consequence of the transfer to the District of Abaco of the late Commissioner J. E. Russell. On the night of the 28th to the sad disappointment of all, the district was visited by a disastrous hurricane which struck the eastern settlements of the island with terrific force, the results of which damaged and dispelled the thoughts of the people ever being happy again. Over 120 homes were destroyed and many rendered unfit for shelter. All clothing was lost, all crops destroyed; many vessels sustained damage, and over 200 dinghies were blown away or broken in pieces; the roads in all parts of the District were filled with debris, and in many sections made untraversable; several persons were seriously injured and the lives of nineteen were taken. On all sides there were gloom and sorrow. The people were left in a very embarrassed state of mind—being homeless,

naked, hungry and sad at the loss of lives and property; but they were not left long alone. The Government rushed to their relief foodstuffs, seeds and farming implements, while sympathizing friends sent clothing, shoes, hats and cooking utensils from Nassau, to the great joy of the distressed. Capt. Holmes of the Public Works Department was sent, and on his return to Nassau, made recommendations relative to the quick sheltering of the people. Building materials were then rushed to the District, and the work of re-construction began under the supervision of Public Works Foreman Mr. Ferguson.

All efforts were exerted to the tasks of re-construction and farming; whole-hearted co-operation was a very noticeable feature among the workmen; and when the District again thought that there were peace and safety, on the 4th November there was sudden destruction. This was occasioned by the visitation of another disastrous hurricane, which wrought considerable damage to vessels, dinghies, public wharves and the farms which were under cultivation after the September hurricane. A few homes which were being rebuilt at Sweeting's Cay, were again thrown down. The progress in the re-construction was retarded, and quite a few who expected shelter in a short time, continued their roosting around the trunks of large trees. The effects of these hurricanes on the District made the times to be the hardest in its history.

AGRICULTURE.

Grand Bahama is an island very much unsuited for farming on a large scale. More than nine-tenths of it is covered by pine-barren, leaving only a very narrow coastal strip on the south, whereon a little farming may be done. This strip of land (mostly white) has been worked over and over, and in many sections the soil is deficient of the necessary plant foods; it is also exposed to the rough south and south-west winds which dash spray from the sea over young plants and sometimes immatured crops and consequently results in losses to the farmer. A fairly good outlay had been made for general crops during the year, but as a severe drought was experienced from January to June, all efforts eventually proved a failure.

A little rain fell in June. General planting was indulged in by all farmers in July. Every farm afterwards promised

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a good supply of foodstuffs, until the hurricane of 28th September came and destroyed everything, including citrus fruits and pears. Seeds were again sown in October, which germinated and grew amazingly. The hurricane of November came and left the District in a desert-like condition. Nothing is left to be reported on, except that a few people may be able to produce a small quantity of onions and cabbages should they be blessed with rain.

The people of the District have been urged to try to make themselves more self-supporting, by getting back to the soil and cultivating the drought-resistant plant, sisal. It is hoped that they will follow the advice given them, and that a start in this direction will be made early in the next year.

CASUALTIES.

On the night of the hurricane of the 28th September, the following persons were drowned: Patience Kemp, Florina Kemp, Tamar Kemp, John Kemp, Essex Kemp, Rose Kemp, Diana Carey, Gladstone Carey, Diana Thomas, Amy Gibbs, Daniel Laing, Victoria Laing, Doris Roberts, Charlotte Edden, Ronald Edden, Charles Edden, Bruce Edden, Harry Edden, Olga Thomas.

On 26th December, Nathaniel Roberts, while on his way home from sponging in a dinghy, was drowned after the boat capsized.

VITAL STATISTICS.

Births, 104, deaths 52.

GENERAL REMARKS.

Since my inception of office as Acting Commissioner, I have visited all the out-lying settlements and acquainted myself with the general prevailing conditions among the people. The year has closed leaving a general impression of extreme hardships on the visage of many an individual, which time alone will wear away. There has been only a beginning made in the re-construction work, and the food problem in the eastern settlements is still very acute. The land in many places is so salt, that seeds have refused to spring, and people are obliged to eat fish alone for subsistence when government relief is not to hand.

The inhabitants are extremely grateful to His Excellency the Administrator, J. H. Jarrett, for the voluntary visit paid them on the 1st October to acquaint himself with their conditions so soon after the hurricane.

I also wish to record the sincere appreciation of the visit of the Representative of this District and also that of the Chief Medical Officer, who accompanied His Excellency the Administrator.

The visit of Capt. Holmes to the District was a blessing. He deserves commendation for the sound recommendations made by him to the government for the quick sheltering of the very unfortunate victims of the hurricanes.

The relief in foodstuffs, farming implements, seeds and building material sent by the government to the District from time to time was received by the distressed, who beg to offer their humble appreciation and gratitude.

I wish to record my appreciation of the help given by all the friends at Nassau, and especially Mrs. T. A. Toote, Mrs. A. F. Adderley and Mrs. Frances Butler, who shouldered a great burden to muster contributions to provide clothing and cooking utensils for the destitute of my District.

I am also indeed very thankful to the Rev. Canon Wyatt for the very valuable assistance rendered to those who were injured in the hurricane of September.

This report is closed with the hope that very soon the conditions of poverty will be changed to prosperity in the coming year.

HARBOUR ISLAND.

M. GERASSIMOS, ACTING ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER.

Receipts and payments during the calendar year were as follows:

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