

Grand Bahama Commissioner's Report 1937

Commissioner's Office
West End, Grand Bahama
6th April 1938

Copy Annual Report 1937

Sir,

With reference to your telegram of the 5th instant, I have the honour to forward herewith a copy of the Annual Report of the District of Grand Bahama for the year ended 31st December 1937.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your obedient servant,

Commissioner.
The Honourable,
The Colonial Secretary,
Nassau, N.P.

Commissioner's Office
West End, Grand Bahama
17th February 1938.

REPORT ON THE DISTRICT OF GRAND BAHAMA, FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 1937. [LINE]

1. FINANCIAL

The following is a detailed statement of Revenue and Expenditure during the year:

Revenue.

		£50.19.10
Cash in hand 1st January 1937		
Licences, Liquor	...	15. 0. 0
Licences, Radio		5. 0
King's Fines and Justices' Fees		15. 10. 0
Royalty on Crawfish	...	621. 11. 7
Rental Crown Lands	...	5. 7. 6
Customs Import Duties	...	320. 4. 5
Parcel Post Duties	...	48. 18. 7
Sale of Stamps	...	48. 16. 0
Sale of Money Orders	...	21. 17. 5
Postage Short Paid Letters		4
Post Office Savings Bank Deposits		3. 14. 0
Library Subscriptions	...	1. 0. 0
Fees of Office	...	8. 0

Harbour Dues	...	22. 4. 0
Telegraph Revenue	...	151.14. 1
Repayment Hurricane Loans		1. 4. 0
Drafts and Remittances from Treasury		670. 0. 0
Miscellaneous	...	<u>5. 6. 4</u>
		<u>£2008.12. 5</u>

2.

	<u>Expenditures</u>	-
Judicial Department	...	£2. 2. 0
Customs Department	...	10. 0. 0
Registrar General's Department		12. 2. 0
Police Department	...	150. 0. 0
Prison	...	9. 8. 4
Education Department	...	4. 1. 1
Agriculture & Marine Products Board		58. 2. 0
House of Assembly	...	16. 11. 0
Public Library	...	28. 9. 4
Out Island Administration		56. 12. 11
Remittances to Public Treasury		607. 10. 10
Coronation Celebrations	...	50. 0. 0
Public Works	...	716. 18. 1
Maintenance Lights	...	58. 10. 9
Telegraph Department	...	12. 15. 8
Cost of Government Telegrams		56. 5. 9
Porterage Official Telegrams & Remittances		28. 10. 0
Medical Department	...	18. 10. 0
Post Office Savings Bank Withdrawals		8
Miscellaneous	...	1. 10. 2
Cash on Hand 31st December 1937		<u>110. 11. 10</u>
		<u>£2008.12. 5</u>

2. TRADE

Goods to the value of £1183. 2. 3 and paying £320. 4. 5 in Customs Duties were imported from West Palm Beach, Florida. These imports consisted chiefly of building supplies for Walker's Cay and West End.

3.

Exports to West Palm Beach and Miami Florida totalled £3418. 2. 10 and were as follows:

	valued at	£3058. 17. 6
589641 Lbs. Live Crawfish		
29962 Lbs. Canned Crawfish	" "	164. 16. 0
11200 Shells	" "	55. 8. 0
11200 Starfishes	" "	47. 0. 0
4700 Lbs. Conch Meat	" "	18. 5. 4
15500 Lbs. Fish	" "	66. 16. 0
5 bags Marine Curios	" "	3. 0. 0
1 Dinghy Boat	" "	<u>4. 0. 0</u>

Total Value £3418. 2. 10

The Local Trade was limited to the exportation of Sponge, Turtle shells, and Firewood to, and the importation of Dry Goods and Provisions from Nassau.

3. SHIPPING – FOREIGN

INWARDS: 167 Vessels, Totalling 3002 Tons, With 572 Men.
OUTWARDS: 158 Vessels, Totalling 2882 Tons, With 530 Men.

4. SHIPPING – COASTWISE

INWARDS: 143 Vessels, Totalling 2245 Tons. With 1154 Men.
OUTWARDS: 139 Vessels, Totalling 2184 Tons, With 1123 Men.

5. MAIL SERVICE

A regular fortnightly service has been maintained by the M.V. "Alice Mabel" and her occasional substitute the M.V. "Paddy Halferty". Owing to the treacherous nature of these shores, the performance of an efficient mail service is a rather difficult problem, and much credit is due to Captain J. M. Carey whose years of service in these waters has thoroughly familiarised him with their dangers.

4.

6. POSTAL

There are two Post Offices in the District, one at West End and the other at Eight Mile Rock. Postal statistics are as follows:

	...	£48. 16. 0
Sale of Stamps	...	
Postage on Taxed Letters		4
Customs Duties on Parcels Received		45. 18. 7
Sale of Money Orders	...	21. 17. 5
Savings Bank Deposits	...	3. 14. 0
Savings Bank Withdrawals		8

7. RADIO TELEGRAPH

The Radio Station at West End, under the efficient management of Operator L. G. Bethel has given useful and continuous service throughout the year. It has been well patronised by both natives and visitors, transmitting 1062 messages, and receiving 487.

Telegraph Revenue amounted to £166. 10. 6.

8. CRIMINAL STATISTICS

38 Persons, all of whom were dealt with summarily, were proceeded against in the local court. Of these 16 were for breach of the Compulsory Education Act. Of the total number, 1 was imprisoned, 16 fined, 14 Bound Over, and 2 discharged on the merits of the case.

9. EDUCATION

There are two Board Schools and five Grant-in-Aid Schools with a total roll of 322 scholars. With the exception of certain localities where the distance to the school house is excessively great, the attendance has been fairly regular. Sixteen persons were

5.

proceeded against in the court for breach of the Compulsory Education Act, but as in most cases excuses given were satisfactory, these were dismissed with cautions.

10. LIBRARY

The Public Library and Reading Room at Eight Mile Rock continues to play an important part in the life of the community, especially among the younger set. While no new books were added this year, the general appearance and condition have been improved by the addition of several new book cases. There are now 306 volumes on hand, and a fair variety of both local and foreign newspapers and periodicals. The number of subscribers is 23, and subscriptions for the year amounted to £1.

11. SOCIETIES

There are 3 Friendly Societies in the District, with a total membership of 238. These render valuable assistance in aiding their sick and burying their dead members.

12. PUBLIC HEALTH

There were no serious epidemics throughout the year. With the exception of a mild outbreak of fever in June, the Public Health has been generally very good.

13. VITAL STATISTICS

Births: Males 56; Females 51; Total 107

Deaths: Males 15; Females 16; Total 31.

This shows an increase of 33 in the number of Births, and a decrease of 13 in the number of Deaths, on the previous year.

6.

14. PAUPERS

There are 42 Paupers in the District, who are aided by the Bahamas General Hospital with the usual supplies of food.

15. METEOROLGY

The total rainfall for the year was 35.35 inches for 39 days, with the greatest fall 8.74 inches in August, and the lowest .42 in December. This shows an increase of 3.04 inches over the previous year. The highest Temperatures recorded at 8 A.M. was 89 degrees in July, and the lowest was 52 degrees in December.

The highest Barometric reading was 30.17 in December and the lowest was 29.65 in December.

16. PUBLIC WORKS

Expenditures on behalf of Public Works amounted to £716. 18. 1. In addition to the usual Recurrent Item for the upkeep of Public Roads and Properties, this included the following Non Recurrent Items:

1. Construction Light, Sweetings Cay.
2. Extension Breakwater, Hawkesbill Creek.
3. Construction Wharf, Smith's Point.
4. Extension Wharf, West End.
5. Blasting Shoals and Bar, Hawkesbill Creek.
6. Construction Well, Mother Brinyards.
7. Construction Cross Road, Pinder's Point.
8. Provision Burial Ground, West End.
9. Construction Road, West End to Eight Mile Rock.

7.

In view of the amounts already spent on the Eight Mile Rock – West End road, and the undoubted benefit that it would be to persons on this end of the island, it is to be hoped that the government will see fit to complete this road in the near future.

17. INDUSTRIES

SPONGING: There are more persons employed in the sponge fishing business than in any other. For generations the chief occupation of the natives, today it still ranks as the main sources of income to the inhabitants in general, though now closely followed by the Crawfish industry, which however is more or less limited to certain definite localities. On the whole good prices were obtained at the Nassau Market, sales for the year totalling £3239. 0. 0. This shows an increase of £163. 10. 0 over sales for the previous year.

CRAWFISHING: While but a comparatively new Industry. The Crawfishing business has expanded rapidly, and, in order of Revenue to the inhabitants, it today is surpassed only by the Sponging business. The combined sales from the two stations West End and Red Shank Cay, for the year, totalled 619603 Lbs., valued at £3223. 13. 6, and paying £621. 11. 7 in Government Royalties.

TURTLE FISHING: Although not now followed to any great extent, owing to the generally poor market prices obtained for the shell at the Nassau Market, there are still a few boats engaged in this business. Sales for the year amounted to £197. 0. 0.

8.

SHIP BUILDING: One new sloop was launched, and six others are in course of construction.

CRAWFISH CANNING: Under the management of Mr. J.J. Hansen, the Crawfish Cannery at West End was in operation from the 3rd February to the 23rd March. During this period 29,962 Lbs. of Crawfish valued at £164. 16. 0 were canned and exported.

18. AGRICULTURE

While by far the larger portion of this island is Pine Barrens and swamps, yet there are large tracts of excellent farming land, especially in the Western section. As compared with the Eastern section however, comparatively little is done, as these people spoiled by the easy money of the bootlegging period, seem loath to return to the soil. In the loose sandy soil bordering on to the Southern shore line Onions, Potatoes, and Corn thrive well, while the rich black soil further back is excellent for Cassavas, Beans and Vegetables. Arrowroot is cultivate fairly extensively in the Eight Mile Rock section, while in the extremely rich soil of Water Cay, it seems that anything can be grown to perfection. There are presently approximately 400 acres under general cultivation, besides numerous garden plots, and the cutting through of the Eight Mile Rock – West End road has opened up a large tract of

excellent farming land that, at the Eight Mile Rock end, is being rapidly cut down into profitable fields. Approximately 420 Bushels of Corn, 220 Bushels Peas, and 85 Bushels Beans were grown, most of which was either used within the District or sold at Bimini.

9.

There are possibilities of extensive Agricultural developments in this District, and the services of an Agricultural instructor to get around among the people, if only for a short period, would be a great advantage; especially so as, now that Headquarters have been removed to West End, the additional duties as Collector of Revenue at such a busy Port, prevents the Commissioner from getting around among the people as often as he should.

Citrus trees do well, but while there is an abundance of sour oranges, sweet oranges are rather scarce, as the trees almost entirely destroyed by past hurricanes have not been replaced. I am hoping to see within the near future, the establishment of a small Government nursery for the propagation and free distribution of a good sweet orange stock.

STOCK RAISING: In many sections of the District there are excellent pasture lands. With the exception of the Eight Mile Rock section however, very little stock raising is done. At the close of the year, there were 4 horses, 250 horned cattle, (all within the Eight Mile Rock section), 1 sheep, 90 swine, 7 goats and approximately 750 chickens in the District.

19. GENERAL REMARKS

In December of this year Headquarters were removed from Eight Mile Rock to West End. While this arrangement is unpopular with the inhabitants from Eight Mile Rock Eastward, and has its drawbacks from an Administrative viewpoint, yet there is no doubt but that future developments would be centered in and around West End.

The excellent fishing possibilities in the

10.

adjacent waters, and the fact that it has proven to be one of the haunts of the coveted Blue Marlin, are being widely advertised by interested parties, and its convenient position in regard to the Port of West Palm Beach, Florida, is making it a popular resort for cruising parties out of that Port.

At Walker's Cay an elaborate scheme of developments is being carried out, and at West End, Mr. Jack Russell internationally known operator of fishing g camps in both Canada and West Palm Beach, is establishing another fishing camp. Both of these places are already booked full long in advance of their proposed opening dates.

It is to be hoped that these activities are but the dawn of another period of prosperity for the District, which, if not so glamorous or remunerative as the bootlegging period, yet would be built on a surer and more lasting foundation.

[illegible]

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.