

GRAND BAHAMA
Commissioner's Report for 1939

APPENDIX
TO THE
VOTES
OF THE
HONOURABLE
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF THE
BAHAMA ISLANDS.

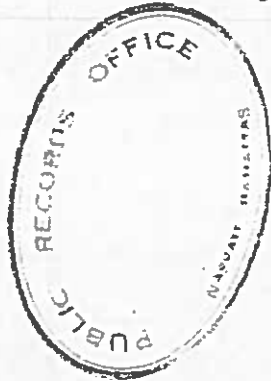
SESSION COMMENCING ON
THE 15TH DAY OF NOVEMBER, 1939
AND ENDING ON
THE 2ND DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 1940.



NASSAU, NEW PROVIDENCE.
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1940.

Although war has burst upon the Empire the people face the future with confidence. They have taken up the challenge and are ready to march forward with the rest of the Colony to develop our resources.



GRAND BAHAMA.

H. A. BARTLETT, COMMISSIONER.

A fortnightly service by the m.v. *Alice Mabel* has been very satisfactorily maintained throughout the year.

The distinctive feature of this service has been the punctuality of arrivals and departures of the mail vessel, which must be attributed to the aggressiveness of Captain John M. Carey, whose acquaintance with the dangers of these waters leaves nothing to be desired.

There are in addition to the Post Office at Headquarters two Sub-Offices in the District.

Postal statistics for the year are as follows:

Sale of stamps	£ 41	8	6
Postage on taxed letters		9	6
Customs Duties on parcel post	19	3	8
Sale of Money Orders	22	19	6
Savings Bank deposits	146	7	0
Savings Bank withdrawals	92	4	7
	<hr/>		
	£322	12	9

TELEGRAPH.

The Radio Station at headquarters gave good service throughout the year, and has been well patronized both by natives and visitors.

Although the value of this service to the district is appreciated both from a commercial as well as from an administrative point of view, it would become of greater value if the two important settlements, West End and Eight-Mile Rock, were linked by up telephone, which would relieve the difficulty encountered in patronizing the service by people in and adjacent to the latter settlement.

The replacement of batteries by new ones is becoming an urgent necessity, if a continuous and efficient service is to be maintained throughout the coming year.

The total amount of revenue derived during the year amounted to £132 13s. 9d.

The station at Walker's Cay also gave very satisfactory service, and was well patronized by foreign visitors during the winter season. The revenue amounted to £123 19s. 5d.

TRADE.

Trade was carried on with Nassau and, to some extent, with West Palm Beach, Florida.

The chief imports were foodstuffs, building materials, clothing and gasoline. Of these, goods to the value of £532 11s. 4d. and paying £170 12s. 11d. in Customs duties, were imported from West Palm Beach, Florida.

The total value of imports entered at Walker's Cay amounted to £398 5s. 0d. and Customs duties collected thereon amounted to £101 3s. 1d.

The value of exports to West Palm Beach, Florida, amounted to £1,219 3s. 3d. and were as follows:

121,315 lbs. live crawfish	£ 917 5 3
38,500 pink conch shells	94 16 0
10,000 lbs. fresh fish	38 0 0
1,600 starfish	17 10 0
810 pine logs	100 12 0
560 shark skins	51 0 0
Total	£1219 3 3

Trade with Nassau comprised live stock, agricultural produce, shells, firewood, charcoal and sisal.

The following returns include that portion of the district from West End to High Rock:

Live stock	£ 65 4 0
Agricultural produce	69 0 0
Pink conch shells	36 4 0
Charcoal	25 0 0
Firewood	16 0 0
Sisal (850 lbs.)	3 4 0
Total	<hr/> £214 12 0 <hr/>

Several native vessels have been converted into smacks during the year, and subsequently have been engaged in the fishing trade with the Nassau market.

It is understood that because of the large number of craft of this type engaged in the industry, sales have not been very remunerative.

SHIPPING.

Foreign: Inwards, 69 vessels, 1071 tons, 279 men.
 Foreign: Outwards, 85 vessels, 1606 tons, 85 men.
 Coastal: Inwards, 71 vessels, 1434 tons, 305 men.
 Coastal: Outwards, 72 vessels, 1613 tons, 479 men.

AGRICULTURE.

The year has been an eventful one in the history of agriculture in the district. The annihilation of the sponge trade (one of the main industries of the island), the declaration of war by England and France against Germany, the appointment of an Agricultural Instructor, the visit by the Resuscitation Executive Committee to the district, the establishment of four Agricultural Associations, and last but not least, the general supplies of seeds and tools by the Board of Agriculture, have contributed, each in its own way, to the improvement of the industry throughout the District.

During past years, farming in this district was done, more or less, on a small scale, for the reason that the greater part of the male population was engaged in the sponge trade and other marine pursuits, and with few exceptions, the women did most of what was done; consequently, the impression given was that the people of Grand Bahama were improvident, whose only ambition was to prowl the sea.

I found this to be quite contrary to the truth shortly after taking over the district in June.

The men are generally industrious on land as well as on the sea; and although they have for many years earned a living as seamen, I am now persuaded to say that if they were given the opportunity to choose one of the two occupations, ninety per cent would choose farming, providing it could be done successfully.

Activities during the year have been very encouraging and show that the people throughout the district have not been heedless of the warnings given. Even at West End, where the inhabitants have previously shown no interest in farming, a satisfactory attempt has been made in the cultivation of food crops.

With no less achievement, I am confident that the district is heading towards a permanent goal.

There are 1,281 acres of food crops under cultivation, which promise a good harvest early in the new year. These include 374 acres of peas and beans, 384 acres of corn, 373 acres of sweet potatoes and 150 acres of cassava and other crops.

There are to be found in the West End and Eight-Mile Rock sections numerous vegetable gardens planted with onions, tomatoes, cabbages, beets and carrots.

About 5,000 lbs. of marketable onions have been raised during the early part of the year, and sold at Nassau, Bimini and Cat Cay.

Successful farming has been carried on at Sayles Cay and Grand Cay during the year by people of this district, who depend entirely on the industry.

Information as to the number of acres under cultivation has not been available.

Improvement in stock-raising has not been a satisfactory issue, although conditions throughout the island are suitable. With the exception of Eight-Mile Rock, very little in this direction has been done, but it is hoped that the near future will bring about a substantial increase both in number and kind.

There are 139 horned cattle, 205 swine, 1005 chickens and 7 goats in the district.

Judging from the several fine orchards at Eight-Mile Rock, Golden Grove, Rocky Creek, Peterson Cay and Sweeting's Cay, there are bright possibilities for the citrus industry throughout the district. Plans have been made for the establishment of a nursery under the management of the Agricultural Instructor for propagating and distributing improved stock.

Coconut planting has been sadly neglected by the inhabitants in all parts of the island, despite the many miles of "White-land" stretching along the coast, which can be made into prolific coconut groves.

To encourage this industry, it will be necessary to secure seeds or plants through the Board of Agriculture, as these cannot be obtained on the island.

PUBLIC WORKS.

In addition to the customary upkeep work, improvements have been made to roads, and several public wells have been sunk throughout the district under the O. I. I. Act 1939.

The construction of two public latrines, one at West End and the other at Eight-Mile Rock, the opening of a channel at Golden Grove Creek, all having been provided for under the Non-recurrent Vote, have been completed.

Also under the Economic Scheme, road construction has been in operation, to some extent, in various sections.

EDUCATION.

There are two Board and five Grant-in-Aid schools in the district. One of these, a Grant-in-Aid school, was established during the year at Holmes' Rock.

At the request of the Inspector of Schools, I examined all schools in the district during the month of December, with the exception of the Water Cay school, which was examined in July.

A report on the result of the examination has been forwarded to the department concerned.

The requirement by the Board that each school cultivate not less than one acre for practical instruction has been satisfactorily demonstrated at West End, Eight-Mile Rock and Smith Point. At the latter settlement, parents have given voluntary assistance in clearing up a plot, which the pupils were unable to do themselves.

LIBRARY.

The Public Library at Eight-Mile Rock has been kept open to the public at regular hours during the year, and was patronized in the usual manner.

A supply of local and foreign newspapers and periodicals has been maintained. There are 20 subscribers.

CRIME.

Eighteen cases were heard in the local courts. All, with one exception, which was sent to the Supreme Court, were generally of a trivial nature and were dealt with in the following manner: 2 discharged for want of prosecution, 4 imprisoned, 1 fined, 1 whipped and 7 bound over or disposed of otherwise.

LABOUR.

Occupation among the working class has been chiefly confined to agriculture.

From January to March, the crawfish industry kept a number of men from various parts of the district employed at regular intervals.

A number of women at West End have been hired occasionally to do laundry work by foreign visitors during the winter season, while some of the men have been hired for short periods on board yachts.

During the early and latter part of the year, from 30 to 50 persons have been employed at West End in clearing, planting and decorating land known to be the property of the Hon. H. G. Christie, and about 20 persons have been employed at Walker's Cay from January to June.

POPULATION.

The total population of the district is estimated at 2,071 and is distributed as follows.:

West End 415, Eight-Mile Rock 648, Smith Point 65, Peterson Cay 49, Free Town 60, High Rock 200, Rocky Creek 32, Pelican Point 30, McLean Town 52, Sweeting's Cay 250 and Water Cay 270.

PAUPERS.

Forty-two persons received outdoor relief from the Bahamas General Hospital.

SOCIETIES.

There are three Burial Societies in the district with a membership of 212. These institutions render valuable assistance in aiding the sick and burying dead members.

Four Agricultural Associations have been established during the year with a membership of 386. They have been very active since, and forecast the important part they will play in agricultural development.

In connection with the Association at Eight-Mile Rock a Loan Bank has been established also.

PUBLIC HEALTH.

There were no contagious diseases, and in general the public health has been good.

Several persons suffering from minor ailments were sent to the Bahamas General Hospital for treatment.

Sanitary conditions have improved.

BIRTHS AND DEATHS.

There were 80 births and 41 deaths during the year.

GENERAL REMARKS.

The sudden destruction of the sponge trade at the early part of the year was the cause of much hardship, from a financial point of view, to those who depended on the industry, and on the other hand it might be looked upon as a blessing in disguise.

Idleness and improvidence met with no encouragement, and I feel confident that the district is in better condition, from an agricultural point of view, than it has ever been, and will continue to improve, now that the inhabitants have begun to realize that farming is the Colony's mainstay.

The appointment of Mr. J. T. Wint as Agricultural Instructor to the district during the year, whose qualification needs no comment, was received with much interest, and it is hoped that his service will be of inestimable value.

The importance of the Eight-Mile Rock—West End road, which was opened up several years ago, but since has not been made suitable for travelling over, is based on two aspects, viz., the access to larger acreage of good farming land, which the people in both sections need to convert into profitable farms, and secondly, better advantage in administering the district. It is felt that a revaluation of the possibilities of extensive development in these sections is dependent on the completion of this road, which it is hoped, will be duly considered by the Legislature.

Visitors from West Palm Beach, Florida, interested in deep-sea fishing, were again attracted by the possibilities of good catches in the adjacent waters, and it is hoped that this port may become a more popular resort for cruising parties from the American shores. The number of passengers for the year was 130.

I cannot close this report without recording on behalf of the people of the district, sincere gratitude for the valuable

assistance rendered during the year by the Board of Agriculture. Both the inhabitants and I realize that without such assistance the progress made in farming throughout the district could not have been half so great.

The year marks another great event in the history of the British Empire—the war against Hitlerism. We are conscious of the fact that the conflict is ours as well as that of other countries, also the duty we owe to the Mother Country in its struggle against tyranny to do all that lies in our power to help the great cause, and to hope and pray that victory will be ours. May God defend the right.

APPENDIX A.

METEOROLOGY.

Month.	Highest.	Lowest.	Highest.	Lowest.	Inches.	No. of days.
Jan.	30.04	30.01	88	62	1.65	4
Feb.	30.24	30.08	86	58	Nil	
March	30.28	29.93	87	58	.18	1
April	30.20	29.92	84	62	.92	4
May	30.18	29.90	86	58	2.92	10
June	30.16	29.94	86	68	1.52	5
July	30.16	29.92	98	73	2.16	9
August	30.16	29.92	99	69	3.15	12
Sept.	30.18	29.92	99	73	1.65	8
Oct.	30.20	29.74	85	62	1.60	2
Nov.	30.20	29.90	84	70	Nil	
Dec.	30.12	29.90	86	69	2.18	3
Total					18.21	58

APPENDIX B.

Statement of Revenue and Expenditure for the District of Grand Bahama for the year ended the 31st December, 1939.

Revenue.

Balance Jan. 1st.....	£101	1	0
1. Customs.....	170	12	11
2. Licences.....	15	15	0
3. Fines.....	10	0	0
4. Export Tax.....	114	19	4
5. Other.....	1747	14	11
	£2160	3	2

Expenditure.

1. Public Works.....	£992	1	7
2. Administration.....	77	8	0
3. Judicial.....	3	7	0
4. Police.....	170	3	0
5. Prison.....	6	19	0
6. Agriculture.....	111	8	1
7. Other.....	714	3	7
Balance Dec. 31st.....	84	12	11
	<hr/>		
	£2160	3	2
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Number of Deposits P.O.S. Bank 34, amounting to.....	£146	7	0
Number of withdrawals P.O.S. Bank 32, amounting to.....	92	4	7
Excess of Deposits over withdrawals.....	54	2	5

HARBOUR ISLAND.

W. R. ROBERTS, COMMISSIONER.

REVENUE.

The revenue derived from King's Fines, Justice's Fees, Liquor, Radio and Dog Licences, Telegraphs, Water Rates, Crown Rentals, Remittances from the Treasury in cash and drafts on that department and from other sources, amounted to £3,580 11s. 0d.

EXPENDITURE.

Expenditure on account of salaries to Local Constables, Citrus and Sanitary Inspectors, Midwives, Nurses, Pensions, Public Works and in connection with the administration of the district amounted to £2794 8s. 3d.