

THE ANNUAL REPORT
OF
THE DISTRICT OF GRAND BAHAMA ISLAND
(WEST END)
THE YEAR 1968.

BY

COMMISSIONER C. N. SIMS

DISTRICT OF WEST END GRAND BAHAMA

ANNUAL REPORT 1968

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CHAPTER 1.

GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

GOVERNMENT

The District of West End, Grand Bahama, which comprises and includes the main island of Grand Bahama with the exception of the area covered by the Freeport District and the adjacent Cays, including Water Cay, Sweetings Cay and others, lies on the Southern edge of the Little Bahama Bank, one hundred and forty miles West North West of New Providence and sixty miles East South East of West Palm Beach, Florida. The District is represented in the House of Assembly by the Honourable Warren J. Levarity, M.H.A., who regained his seat as a Progressive Liberal Party member in April, 1968. Interest in this election was keen and a high percentage of the electorate exercised their right to vote.

ADMINISTRATION

From November, 1963 administrative duties of the District were performed by Commissioner C.M. Macdonald, assisted by the usual number of subordinate Officers including two Clerks, Customs and Immigration Officers at West End, three members of the Nassau Constabulary also at West End and three local Constables at various parts of the island.

CHAPTER 11

POPULATION

The population taken at the census at the end of 1963 showed the total population from the whole of Grand Bahama to 8490. The figure now falls short of the actual population which I feel has reached approximately 30,000. This figure is arbitrary and very approximate and included a large number of non-Bahamians.

The death rate among this large population is remarkably low, being a mere 3.7 per thousand head of population. There were 12 deaths in 1968, 7 of them males and 5 of them females. Also included are deaths of 2 children under the age of one year.

A breakdown of the causes of death is shown hereunder:

Cardio-vascular	2	Diarrhoea	1
Gastro-enteritis	2	Cancer	1
Premature birth	2	Asthma	4

These figures apply only to the District of West End which is comprised of the settlements of West End and Holme's Rock. It is of considerable interest to note that in more than 2,000 births over the last 4 years, there were no maternal deaths.

The birth rate continues to increase in pace with the population trend and in 1968 the number of births was 792 of whom 463 were males and 329 were females. The rate of illegitimacy maintains the high level of former years.

CHAPTER III
HEALTH AND SANITATION
HEALTH

Although an assistant Medical Officer has been stationed in the District, Doctor Richter, the Medical Officer, has advised me that his work is still a heavy and increasing burden despite the fact that his travelling time has been cut down; this is undoubtedly due to the rapidly increasing population.

At the Elmslie Memorial Health Centre 271 admission for child's birth which total 268 deliveries. The other 3 being sent to the Princess Margaret hospital in Nassau.

Fifty seven patients were admitted suffering from alcoholism and asthma. During the year, 11,591 consultations were made and of this number 52 patients were either transferred to Nassau or Freeport for treatment. When one considers the sharp population rise, the control of these diseases can only be considered a remarkable achievement on the part of the Medical Department. The incidence of these diseases is not confined to any particular ethnic group but is spread evenly throughout the various sections of the community. The incidence of the diseases among males is much higher than among females.

The rising pattern of alcoholism continues and an important factor is, paradoxically, the economic prosperity in the area.

Excessive drinking is no longer a luxury afforded to the financially secure members of this society; such is the prosperity in the area that this vice is now common place. This represents the District's most serious medico-social problem and has resulted in a sharp increase in mental diseases.

The rate of illegitimacy is declining; this problem is, however, a matter of normal acceptance in much of the community and where formerly this misfortune was much frowned on, very little stigma now attaches itself to the unwed mother of Grand Bahama. A great deal of the cause of this is unquestionably due to the excessive drinking now prevalent among young people and another factor is on account of the influx of new people from the more worldly areas of the Colony. Despite the decrease in the rate however, this problem causes considerable hardship to some unfortunates.

A successful programme of vaccination and immunisation was conducted as a preventative measure against diptheria, polio, tetanus, whooping cough, measles and small pox and the usefulness of this was again shown in the drop in incidence of those diseases which are now almost eliminated.

In 1968 more than 1,500 children received innoculations against diptheria, more than 1,300 against polio and 577 received antitetanus injections.

Ante-natal care is accepted now largely as an integral part of child bearing with a corresponding drop in loss of life in these maternity cases and the production of healthier babies on the island. This is also illustrated in the figures showing the small death rate among babies.

A growing interest in family planning is now in evidence and this is in sharp contrast to the attitude of former years; there is no obvious religious disapproval of birth control on the island; the successful handling of this problem can be attributed only to the realistic and practical attitude evinced by the District Medical Officer.

SANITATION

There has been an improvement in the water supply systems in the Eight Mile Rock area during the year. Conditions remain the same in the West End District - a serious hazard to health.

The water supply systems on the Island are outmoded and inadequate. Spring water wells and roof-fed cisterns are the rule and toilet facilities have not increased to meet the requirements of the mushrooming population. An ever increasing danger of fecal contamination in drinking water is present with the ever present threat of disease.

Overcrowding to meet the press of the population explosion on the island also lends itself to the danger of diseases such as tuberculosis. So far there has been no outbreak but the danger is increasing daily with the increase in population.

A sanitary inspector has been appointed to Freeport and he spent a little time in this area. He is an excellent man well qualified for the task ahead of him and he is endeavouring to spend more time in this District.

CHAPTER IV

HOUSING.

Despite the number of new houses going up, the housing problem is critical. A number of jerry-built barracks blocks have been run up in Eight Mile Rock area and exorbitant rents all over the island are the rule. The population influx is still presenting a housing problem, but this has eased considerably in the last year. It is pleasing to report, however, that many of the new houses are well built edifices on concrete block construction and that more imaginative and ambitious designs are being used.

Town planning provisions have been a failure to some degree and the necessary action to alleviate this situation has been inexcusably dilatory.

CHAPTER V.

PRODUCTION

FOREST

Large acreage of the vast pine forest covering most of the island's surface has been sold for various Commercial Developments, and forest products of all kinds have been discontinued.

MARINE

The principal marine products are fish, conchs and crawfish. Sea-shells, coral and starfish used to be gathered and sold to markets in the United States, but this has largely discontinued.

Edible and sport fish of numerous varieties and quantities abound in the waters of this District. Thousands of visitors come by every means of transportation to take part in the sport of game fishing.

All the edible fish are sold to the local market where the demand is much greater than the supply in spite of the continued increase in the price. A number of smacks and dinghy boats are continuously engaged in this fishing business.

The export of the Conch meat was prohibited for many years and now the banks have been closed to the export of the shells.

To some this been quite a blow, but this had to be done sooner or later in spite of the seemingly inexhaustible supply spread over the many miles of banks, North and East of this island. Like fish, the price of this food had increased considerably over the last two years and there is yet shortage in the supply.

It is my opinion that the present ban on the exportation of Conch could now be raised and that much of our present shortage is caused by the ever increasing demand locally.

The season for the Crawfish fishing opened on 1st. August, 1967 but the season was not good except in the Eastern part of the Island where they were abundant for a short time but as maybe expected, the demand still greatly exceeds the supply.

It is more profitable and less troublesome for the fisherman to sell their catches on the island rather to send their fish to the United States as in former years.

Very few turtles are caught in Grand Bahama now; this is largely due to the stricter control upon the capture of this marine animal.

Stone-Crabs are now in abundance in many areas around Grand Bahama; however, the taking of these crabs is still prohibited by law, and it is hoped, that this ban will soon be lifted.

The people of this District are not agriculturally minded and this industry has steadily decreased until, with the exception of one small agricultural enterprise, it is no longer of any consequence.

Poultry raising is carried on commercially to a limited degree; demand still outpaces production and most of this produce is imported.

CHAPTER VI

COMMERCE

The number of crawfish exported to the United States in 1967 was even less than 1966. As has been previously stated, local demand easily absorbs the local supply.

Customs Duties collected on imports at West End amounted to \$980,818.00.

This figure was made up by the following items :

<u>DUTY</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
Alcoholic Liquors	\$ 4,062.96
Other Imports	610,984.54
Emergency Tax	191,093.46
Export Duty	1,434.49
Inland Tax Radio & T.V.	664.16
Inland Tax Cigarettes	6,847.20
Stamp Duty	14,779.84
Fines & Forfeitures	9,556.00
Departure Tax	112,719.00
TOTAL:	\$ 951,941.65

CHAPTER VII

WAGES & COST OF LIVING

Wages on the island are quite out of proportion to the scale laid down by Government and this leaves me in a poor bargaining position when competing with private employers. Although common labour and artisan rates of pay are largely determined by the exigencies of the moment, note that they have increased in the last year.

The following is the scale of wages which prevailed, generally, in the District during the year under review:

Common Labourers (men)	-----	\$1.25	to	\$1.50	per hour
Common Labourers (women)	-----	\$. 80	to	\$.90	per hour
Semi-skilled Labourers	-----	\$1.25	to	\$1.65	per hour
Carpenters & Masons	-----	\$2.50	to	\$4.00	per hour
Plumbers & Electricians	-----	\$2.75	to	\$4.00	per hour
Painters & Chauffeurs	-----	\$1.50	to	\$2.75	per hour
Domestic Workers	-----	\$.70	to	\$1.10	per hour

Hours for work are generally from 7.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. with one hour off for lunch, but this varies under certain circumstances.

The cost of living in West End continues to rise and this presents a hardship to the elderly people in the community. Whenever possible, the West End residents shop in Freeport as this is financially advantageous.

CHAPTER VIII

EDUCATION AND WELFARE INSTITUTIONS

In all the largest settlements of the District, schools are established and conducted under the supervision of the Board of Education. There are seven Board Schools and one Grant-in-Aid School within the District. They are located as follows:

West End.....	Board	T. Albury
Eight Mile Rock	Board	S. Gibbs
Holmes Rock.....	Board	W.P. Parker
Water Cay	Grant-in-Aid	H. Thomas
McLean's Town.....	Board	W. Farrington
High Rock	Board	T. Gobson
Pelican Point.....	Board	A. Laing
Sweetings Cay.....	Board	

All of these schools are reported to have been conducted fairly satisfactorily and regularly during the year.

WELFARE INSTITUTIONS

Friendly and Burial Societies, including a few Branches of several Secret Orders, are operating throughout the District, and comprise a total membership of several thousand men and women. They are established in just about every settlement of the District in one form or another, for the primary purpose of aiding the sick and burying the dead of their members. Assistance is also rendered to the families of the deceased members whenever the needs warrant it.

The funds of these Institutions are deposited, except in very few cases of very small groups, in one of the local Banks or in the Post Office Savings Bank. Some of these accounts are quite substantial.

CHAPTER IX

COMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSPORT

The regular weekly mail service was performed by the motor vessel, Church Bay, and substitutes, during the year under review. This service is not good and freight handling is poor. The Settlement of Sweetings Cay is now serviced by a separate mail boat which extends its route from Sandy Point Abaco.

Bahama Airways Limited provided a good daily service to Nassau from West End until the latter part of 1966 when this service was withdrawn. This necessitated the routing of all mail through Freeport via a bus carrier from West End. By this means, the mail service has been maintained; this method has, however, its shortcomings.

Service to West Palm Beach and Fort Lauderdale via Bahama Airways and Eastern Airlines has been good and many thousand of tourists and residents have been shuttled to and from by this means. Departure Tax of \$101,662.00 was collected during the year at West End airport; this figure was an increase over last year of approximately Eighty per cent.

ROAD TRAFFIC

Licensing of vehicles of all types was carried out throughout the year ending April 1967. In this period 11,770 vehicles were registered, a difference of only one from the year before.

The revenue set out hereunder was less than \$35.00 different from the year before.

REVENUE COLLECTED IN 1967.

1. Motor Vehicles.....	\$ 112,221.60
2. Drivers.....	\$ 14,426.51
3. Provisional Drivers.....	\$ 1,276.95
4. Public Service Vehicle Drivers.....	\$ 391.62
5. Public Service Vehicle Drivers.....	\$ 855.12
6. Miscellaneous	\$ 1,572.12
(Duplicates, Franchises, etc.,)	\$ 296.40

131,019.32

POST OFFICES

There are four Sub-Post Offices in the District, located at Eight Mile Rock, High Rock, Sweetings Cay and Smith Point. The Sub-Post Offices handle only mail and parcels. Each of the Sub-Postmasters holds an imprest of stamps from the District Postmaster of West End. Money orders, Post Office Savings Bank Accounts and all post office transactions are handled at West End.

The following table set out under postal revenue and postal expenditure, illustrates the business at West End during 1968.

REVENUE

Post Office Savings Bank Deposits	\$ 3416.34
Sale of Telegraph Money Orders	70465.93
Domestic Money Orders	15224.43
Sale of British Money Orders	247.96
Sale of U.S. & Canadian Money Orders	4926.16
Sale of Postage Stamps	22701.00
Sale of Jamaican Money Orders	2713.37
Parcel Postage Duty	28594.64
Short paid Postage Collected	N I L
P.O. Box Rentals	216.32

TOTAL REVENUE \$ 140,506.17

EXPENDITURE

Withdrawals Post Office Savings Bank	\$2,876.59
Telegraph & Domestic Money Orders Paid,	8,290.50
U. S. Money Orders Paid (x Canadian)	180.52
British Postal Orders Paid	68.32
Total Expenditure	<u>\$11,432.73</u>

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Telecommunications at West End are good owing to improvement in equipment some three years ago. Much has still to be done for the station at Sweetings Cay and Water Cay and it is hoped that the Telecommunications system be extended into the Eight Mile Rock area. This project has been under discussion now for about three years but the project is no closer now than then.

Telegraph and Telephone revenue for 1968 was \$26,475.83.

CHAPTER X

PUBLIC WORKS

Public Works in 1968 were carried out solely by the Ministry of Works department at Freeport, Grand Bahama. The principal work carried out were the completion of a new high-way between Freeport and West End, and the completion of a seawall on the entire coast of the settlement of West End. Eighty Five per cent of the Government complex at Eight Mile Rock was completed during the year under review.

A new Post Office building at Eight Mile Rock was started during the year and about 65% of the work was completed at the end December. The following table shows approximately the amount of expenditure on major Public Works carried out during the year under review:

1. Seawall, West End	-	\$174,704.00
2. Main Highway between Freeport & West End	-	\$404,341.00
3. Government Complex, E. M. R.	-	107,856.26
4. Junior School, E. M. R.	-	243,631.34
5. Renovation of Teacher's Cottage, E. M. R.	-	5,000.00
6. Fire Wells, West End	-	9,000.00
7. Straw Market, West End	-	16,928.06
8. School Toilet, Lewis Yard	-	4,000.00
9. Customs Shed, West End	-	2,114.87
10. Settlement Roads, West End.	-	15,000.00
11. Water Supply, E. M. R.	-	10,830.00

12. Drainage of Road to Government Complex, Eight Mile Rock.	-	\$ 49,313.62
13. Reconstruct road and water works, Lewis Yard - Pinder's Point.	-	14,784.88
14. Extension of Water main Eight Mile Rock to Sea Grape	-	27,000.00
15. Fire Station, Eight Mile Rock	-	8,000.00
16. Police Station & Quarters, Eight Mile Rock.	-	7,448.24
17. Furnishing Teacher's Cottages, Eight Mile Rock.	-	9,112.24
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		<u>\$1,109,064.51</u>

CHAPTER XI
POLICE JUSTICE AND PRISONS

POLICE

The complement of Bahamas Police at West End still remains at three, despite former assurances that this would be increased. They are however, supplemented by an excellent police reserve and the District Constables Force which is set out hereunder. In spite of difficulties low enforcement throughout the year was good.

In addition to the regular police there is a Grade I local constable at West End and two Grand II local constables at the Eastern end of the island.

DISTRICT CONSTABLES

<u>West End</u>	<u>Eight Mile Rock</u>	<u>HIGH ROCK</u>	<u>McLean's Town</u>
Clifford Davis	Albert Rolle	Isaac Smith	Bertram Davis
Bernard Hanna	Alfred Johnson	Henry Smith	Garvey Henry Jr.,
Alexander Rolle	Willard Martin	Willis Kemp	William Pinder
George Forbes			
Ivan Russell	<u>SEA GRAPE</u>	<u>HANNA HILL</u>	<u>WATER CAY</u>
Wilbert Roberts	Robert Bain	Ural Smith	Walter Hield
Charles Grant	Alfred Jones	Percy Barr	Locksley Hield
			Bernice Rolls
<u>HOLMES ROCK</u>	<u>BRADIE POINT</u>		
John Rolle Jr.,	Elmore Stuart		
Horatio Stuart	Arnold Martin		
	Harris Russell.		

JUSTICE

Throughout 1968, there was a substantial increase in summary crime in the area and a slight increase in traffic offences; the figures on civil and matrimonial matters were almost the same as the previous year.

Summary Criminal - Total 214 : Fines - 92 : Prison - 6
Withdrawn - 48 : caution - 33 : Dismissed 13 : Bound over 17 :
Probation - 1 : Corporal Punishment - 3.

The various types of offences are detailed hereunder:

Trespassing	- 3	Threat of Harm	- 4
Obscene Language	38	Causing Harm	-11
Wounding	-12	Carrying Arms	- 6
Assault	-37	Resisting Arrest	-17
Drunk & Disorderly	-15	Damage to Property	- 2
Uncontrollable Child	- 5	Fighting	- 6
Br. Immigration Act	-19	Throwing Missiles	- 4
Br. Liquor Licences Act	- 3	Gambling	- 1
Br. Dog Licences Act	- 1	Deceit of Public Officer	- 5
Disorderly Behaviour	-26		

Traffic - There were 208 traffic offences which were dealt with as follows:- Fines - 123 : Withdrawn - 14 :
Dismissed - 4 : Cautioned - 67 : Corporal Punishment 0:

There were 41 Civil cases and 3 Matrimonial cases heard at West End during the year. A number of Indictable cases were dealt with but figures cannot be given on these as this information is not forthcoming from the Police

Department in Freeport; the method of recording this information covers the whole island of Grand Bahama and it is too extensive a task to separate the two Districts.

On the Civil side, 41 claims were filed for settlement of debts and of these 36 were heard and judgement given according to findings. The other 5 were settled between defendants and plaintiffs before the day set for hearing. Orders were made in favour of the Plaintiff with respect to the three matrimonial claims.

It was long discussed that a prison on Grand Bahama was of paramount importance. This has not, however, been proceeded with.

The three cell prison at West End is literally escape proof but no escape occurred in 1968. The two-cell lock up in Eight Mile Rock is no longer in use owing to the proximity of the accommodation in Freeport.

LEGISLATION AND TAXATION

CHAPTER XII

There were no noteworthy changes in legislation which had a particular effect in this District. The Town Planning Act, the Maritime Act and the Prohibition Act were enforced with ease as the general Public gave their full co-operation in the impelmentation thereof.

New Legislation should be introduced to enable Commissioners to prosecute breaches of the Acts, in the case of infringements.

It is encouraging to note that legislation with respect to Real Property Tax is being revised whereby all property owners will be required to comply on a more equitable basis than heretofore.

Revenue deriving from this source can be used for the maintenance of side roads and the general upkeep of the Settlements in the District.

The only form of direct taxation in the district is the Departure Tax levied on passengers leaving the Colony for foreign ports.

CHAPTER XIII

MISCELLANEOUS

PAUPERS

Pauper rations were issued by Government via Relieving Officer of the Princess Margaret Hospital. The rations consisted of grits, flour, sugar and canned milk. These rations were distributed to approximately 63 paupers throughout the District.

RELIGION

The majority of the Islands population are Baptists which accounts for approximately 50% of the people. The Anglin Church accounts for about 30%, Roman Catholics, Methodists, Brethren, Church of God, Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehovah Witnesses and a few other unidentified religions make up the remaining 20%.

COMMISSIONER'S VISITS

Regular visits were made throughout the District on an average of very two months.

GENERAL OBSERVATION

It would appear that the unique nature of Grand Bahama is now appreciated and forward steps are being taken by Government to attempt to catch up with the mushrooming economy. Most important of all is the new highway between Freeport and West End.

There appears to be no end in sight for the development and expansion of this island and the day is foreseeable when New Providence itself might find that it occupies a secondary place to this sophisticated area of growth. The trend for generation of revenue is without precedent and my prediction of continued expansion is founded in proven fact and experience and not in ethereal optimism.

C. N. Simms,
Commissioner,
District of West End.