

George Chalmers Letters: 1728-1818

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Transcription – Reel 2, Section 2

Planters' responses to standard questions about cotton agriculture in the Bahamas, 1800

**Note: Folio page numbers referenced below are found on the pages to the right, located top right.

Document Folio Page 1

Bahama Islands

Question 1

Are you a Cotton Planter in this colony? How long have you been so? And on what island or islands have you planted/

II. Do you consider the soil and climate of these islands as favorable to the culture of cotton?

III. Have the lands in general produced as good crops during the last five or six years, as they did for five or six years after they were first planted?

IV. Did the planters generally succeed, during the first five years, produced so well as before, to what cause or causes, do you attribute their failure?

VI. Have the lands been injured by too constant cultivation – by cutting down too much of the wood – by laying the country too much open to the winds – or by any other, and what other, means?

VII. Have the late failures proceeded from injudicious planting, or from any natural and original defect in this soil?

VIII. Can the worn out lands, in your opinion, be speedily restored to their original fertility, by manure, or by any other, and what means?

IX. Suppose a plantation to be abandoned, and allowed to grow up into woods, will the lands, in process of time, be covered with a new growth, and be restored to their original fertility?- And if yea, how many years, do you know, or have reason to believe, from the experience you have had, will be sufficient for the purpose?

X. How many years successively, do you believe, the same fields may, with advantage, be planted in cotton, without fallowing or manuring? And how long do you think the cotton lands of these islands will last under judicious culture?

XI. Are you of opinion, that the late failure of the cotton crops ought to be attributed, principally, to the circumstance of the soil's having lost its vegetable qualities, by too continued planting?

XII. In the culture of cotton, has, or has not, experience convinced you, that it is indispensably necessary to plant in small fields (not exceeding, perhaps, three or four acres), with large margins or [?] of wood?

XIII. In laying out a cotton plantation, what proportion of the land ought, in your opinion, to be set apart for provisions, pastures, and margins, and thrown out, as unfit for cultivation?

XIV. From your own knowledge, and from what you have learned from others worthy of credit, are you of opinion, or not, that a considerable proportion of every island in the Bahamas is wholly unfit for almost any kind of culture.

XIV. Does not a great proportion of almost every tract, even those that have been longest settled, still remain uncultivated; having necessarily been left for margins, or having been, from the first, unfit for cultivation?

XIV. From your own knowledge, and from what you have learned from others worthy of credit, are you of opinion, or not, that a considerable proportion of every island in the Bahamas is wholly unfit for almost any kind of culture.

XV. Does not a great proportion of almost every tract, even those that have been longest settled, still remain uncultivated; having necessarily been left for margins, or having been, from the first, unfit for cultivation?

XVI. Before the necessity of small fields was ascertained, and when the culture of cotton was in its infancy in this colony, was not a considerable proportion of the best tracts ruined, or rendered useless, by opening the country too much?

XVII. Have our cotton planters, in general, sunk money, or not, during the last five or six years? – If yea, has this been owing generally to the want of new lands, or to any other, and what, cause?

XVIII. What, in your opinion, will be the consequence, should they persevere in endeavouring to make cotton upon the lands they now have in cultivation?

XIX. Should they be unable to procure new lands, do you, or do you not, believe, that many of them will be compelled to abandon their plantations? And do you, or do you not, know, whether many of them have not already had it in contemplation, to emigrate to other countries?

XX. Do you know of any cotton plantations, and how many, from which the planters have already withdrawn their slaves, or the principal part of them, on account of the exhausted state of their lands?

XXI. Has the value of the cultivated lands, upon the principal cotton islands, increased, or has it sunk, in the course of the last five years? At what price per acre, would they in general have sold, in the years 1793, '94, and '95? And at what rate, do you suppose, they might be sold now?

XXII. In making grants of the crown lands, was not the quantity regulated by the number of "head-rights," as they were termed? And was not twenty acres the quantity allowed for each person?

XXIII. How many acres of our cotton land, is it ascertained, that an able labourer can attend, with ease and convenience?

XXIV. Supposing one half of every plantation to be allotted for provisions, pasture, and margins, or to be thrown out, as unfit for cultivation, do you think the remainder, viz. ten acres for each labourer, will be sufficient to give full employment to the negroes, under a system of tillage adapted to the nature of our lands?

XXV. What is the greatest quantity of cotton which you have known to have been made in any one year, for each working hand, upon any plantation in this government?

Page 2

Answers of The Honbl John Kelsall Esqr.

1st. I am, I own a Plantation on little Exuma which was settled by my father in the year 1784 or 1785. I have resided much on it since the middle of the year 1789, and especially for the last 5 or 6 years during which time I have conducted the management of it. I also Plant on Rum Key, whither I removed the greater part of my Slaves within the last twelve or thirteen months.

2nd. I do on the whole.

3d. By no Means.

4th. Generally they did.

5, 6, 7th. The Principal causes of our failures, for so many successive years, is, in my opinion, unquestionably the exhausted State of our Soil, arising from constant and unintermitted culture; there has doubtless been much injudicious Planting, nor is it, I apprehend to be wondered at, that men, very many, of whom were unused to agriculture, all of them strangers to the soil and climate, and unable to procure from the few Cotton Planters whom they found in the Country, any information that could be relied on, Should, in cultivating Cotton for the first time in their lives, fall into error. The first and most fatal was the indiscriminate cutting down of the Trees thus forming one large field, in as much as exclusive of the physical effect of such a measure, a very great proportion of every tract, and that, in many instances, the most valuable, has been rendered wholly unfit for the Cultivation of Cotton; this Plant, as it is well known requiring Shelter from the winds, which, can only be attained by very small fields; another serious error, which the embarrassed circumstances of the Loyalist unfortunately induced them to commit, -- was clearing and planting more land than they could cultivate well. It is however worthy of remark that notwithstanding these and other errors (which a very few years experience taught most of our Planters to correct) very tolerable crops were made, a circumstance rendered the more striking by some of our recent failures on estates, where the causes now alluded to and every other that care and diligence could prevent or obviate, had little or no effect. It has been most unfortunate that a few such results did not convince us (the Planters) that we ought to look farther for the cause of our Successive disappointments than to the influence of the weather or to the ravages

of Insects. These have all injured us, and injured us most materially, but probably the greatest injury we have received from them has been, the diverting of our attention from the real source of our failures; hence year after year has many an industrious Planter toiled in vain, expecting, that the succeeding one would reward his efforts, whereas it has almost invariably terminated in disappointment and increased embarrassment. The following facts are detailed in order to shew, that to the weak condition of the Plant, occasioned by the impoverished State of our lands, are to be attributed the extreme effects which the other collateral causes now have upon it compared with what was formerly the case; in the Month of November, I think, of 1788 my whole Plantation was eaten down by the Chenille or Cotton Catterpillar, yet notwithstanding, my Crop Produced in the Spring to the best of my recollection, 14 or 16000 weight of Cotton In land equally new in the year 1791 or 1792 when we had a second general attack of this insect. The consequence was similar. In the present year 1800 without any the least injury from the Red Bug or the Chenille with a much greater quantity of land in cultivation than in 1788, I have great reason to fear that its Produce will not exceed 8000 or at most 1000 weight of Cotton. In the year 1799 my Plantation was again universally stripped, or eaten down in the Month of November or December by the same insect, about fifty or sixty acres which were new lands recovered, and in April and May produced an excellent Crop, while the remainder of my land, about 220 or 250 acres gave me, almost literally nothing: I have not my Plantation Books here, but I think the quantity was nearer two than four thousand weight of Cotton. From the year 84 or 85 (with the exceptions of the two years in which the ravages of the Chenille were so destructive) to the year 1793 my Plantation invariably gave good Crops. Notwithstanding the occasional inclemency of our winters and the Droughts of our summers, from that time its Produce has been gradually Diminishing until it is no longer worth Cultivating in its Present State.

8th. Manure must restore fertility to every soil, but I am of opinion, that in these Islands nature has opposed too many obstacles to the general Success of such an attempt: on some few estates I think it may be resorted to and that the most advantageous Consequences would ensue. I am now endeavouring to form and apply manure to my own Plantation.

Page 3

9th. Answered in the affirmative as to the time that will be requisite to effect this Purpose, I apprehend no decisive answer can be given. It depends altogether on the degree of Culture that the land has Previously undergone – in that which has been much or injudiciously cultivated I am inclined to think that 20 or 30 years would be necessary.

10th. Prime lands might be planted without fallowing or manuring six years. I have heard of eight, but this, if founded, could be only on most choice and Rich Spots. I am rather of opinion that in general, even in land considered, as of the first quality, a sensible Diminution of Crops would be felt in the 5th or 6th year.

11th. No culture can be termed judicious when neither manures nor fallows in those very few situations in this colony where the first mode can be adopted (manuring) the land will I Presume with the exception of that time, which experience only can teach us (but which I suppose may be every fourth year) to be necessary to apply and incorporate the manure with the soil. In this mode of tillage three fourths of the Plantation will always be in cultivation and Productive. Where the system of fallowing is

resorted to (which I apprehend must be that generally used) I conceive that no land ought to be cultivated more than three years. The experiment has never been tried and therefore I cannot say what time should elapse, before the land might again be cultivated, Probably 5 or 6 years would be necessary in this mode of tillage it is obvious that not above one third or fourth of the Plantable land of every tract can be cultivated at one time.

12th. Certainly.

13th. To this question put by me to the Deputy Surveyor General the following is the answer. "If the tract be of a square form and is Supposed to contain twenty five fields of four acres each, the margins fifty feet wide crossing the tract in the different directions to divide it regularly will require twenty eight acres and three quarters if the tract be of any other shape the margins will necessarily engross a greater Proportion." One fourth therefore of every tract at least must be devoted to margins, and for the various Purposes mentioned in the question, inclusive of the bad land not above one half, or probably less, can be said to be appropriated to the cultivation of Cotton.

14th. A Very great Proportion of every Island in the Bahamas that I have seen or heard of is unfit for any kind of Culture whatever; from one fourth to one half may be taken as the proportion.

15th. Certainly, for the Patentees had no allowance made in the grant for land of the Description mentioned in the Preceding question and answer, my tract on Little Exuma consisting of nearly 1000 acres and which is Probably as Perfect and as good a one as any in the Bahamas of the same size, may have in it of such land at least 200 acres, or one fifth. I have another tract on the same Island containing by the grant 180 acres in which I cannot appropriate to the Culture of Cotton more than 70 acres, the rest, exclusive of the margins, or woods left for the Protection of the Cotton, must for ever remain in a state of nature.

16th. Many have been most essentially injured, especially those which were settled early, that is Previous to the year 1788 or 1789 these estates have all of them a large quantity of land now unfit for almost every purpose of agriculture.

17th. I believe there are very few Planters indeed who have not sunk money during the last 5 or 6 years, those only who Possessed new or uncleared land have during this Period been exceptions to this almost general rule.

18th. I am most firmly convinced that total ruin must be the consequence of persisting in the endeavour to make Cotton on the lands now generally under Cultivation.

19th. The necessary consequence of the Planters being unable to procure new lands either by grant or lease from the Crown for a Term of Years at a moderate rent will be, I, imagine, that they will be compelled to abandon their present Plantation (the greater number of which I apprehend is under mortgage to their Creditors) it being impossible for the most inattentive observer in existence to continue above one or two years longer unconvinced of the impolicy of folly of cultivating old lands. I know of Several Persons who meditate the removing of their negroes the vicinity of the American States, and the success which has attended the cultivation of Cotton there will doubtless operate with many, and from a recent instance of Permission being given by the Legislative of South Carolina to two individuals of this Colony to remove their negroes into that State, there is no reason to

Page 4

To Doubt, but that the States will adopt the obvious policy of receiving all who may be inclined to go thither.

20th. I know many instances from the small Islands on which I live, on which there are only seven settled Plantations, four Planters have been compelled to remove almost the whole of their slaves, and solely on account of the impoverished state of the land: I am one of the four.

21st The value of cultivated lands has sunk extremely in my opinion – few of this description Possesses at Present any but nominal value – the Buildings erected on them constitute the Chief Value.

22d. Yes, forty acres to the heads of familys, or Proprietors of Slaves and twenty to each individual whether Children or Slaves, military, officers had qauntities Proportioned to their rank.

23d. I am of opinion that no Planter should cultivate more than five acres of Anguilla Cotton for each Prime or taskable negroe he possesses.

24th. I do not, and for this reason, because if fallowing lands in rotation be the system that must be adopted generally, the whole will necessarily be occupied in the fourth year, thus allowing only an interval of three years instead of five or six for it to recover to vegetative qualities.

25th. I always reckoned my Crops by the produce of the acre. I have not my Plantation Books in town, but the greatest Crop I every made was 33 or 35 tons from, I believe, about 300 acres or Possibly 350 acres of Cotton (and some part of the estate were not very Productive) the number of working negroes did not I think exceed Sixty: this was in 1792 or 93 – that part of this very land which is still in Cultivation I really think will not Produce forty or may be 30 weight to the acre in the Present year.

A True Copy.

Signed John Kelsall

Peter Edwards Clerk of the Assembly

Page 5

1st Question. I answer I am a Cotton planter in this Colony and have planted Cotton on Exuma and Long Island upwards of 12 years.

2nd. In general I do.

3rd. I have reason to think they do not.

4. I have understood and believe they did.

5. To a Variety of Causes.

6. They have been injured by all those Causes, as well as by Insects, bad seasons, etc.

7. Answered in the proceeding Question.
8. Not Speedily – but in many instances (where the land is not too much exhausted by laying them fallow and not suffering Stock to range in them).
9. I have experienced that lands laid fallow for five years have been covered with a considerable degree of new growth and have produced moderate crops afterwards.
10. This depends much on the quality of the land but in general not exceeding 5 to 6 years.
11. In a very great degree I am of that opinion.
12. Certainly it has from a Variety of experiments.
13. [In/For?] [?] Tracts full 2/3ds.
14. A great proportion is wholly unfit for culture of any kind being composed of Ponds – [Salinas?] – Plate Rock & Scrubby land.
15. Certainly a great proportion.
16. I have reason to think they were.
17. I believe a great many have sunk money, and particularly those who have not had new land to resort to.
18. Certain failure of Crops and ultimately ruin.
19. Necessity will compel them to it, and I know that Several have meditated a removal to the United States if they cannot obtain new lands.
20. I know of Several who have been obliged to do so, from the exhausted state of their lands.
21. I am of opinion they have sunk. I cannot ascertain at what price lands in general sold for in the Years 93, 94 and 1795. At present after the late failure of Crops the price is mostly nominal.
22. It was 20 acres and to military Men according to their [?]
23. About four acres.
24. I do not.
25. I have heard that half a ton has been made, but I never experience any thing like that quantity.

Nath: [Nathaniel] Hall

Page 6

Answer 1st. I am, I have been one since the year 1789, and have Cotton Plantations on Long Island and New Providence.

2d. Very favourable.

3d. They have not.

4th. They generally, I believe, made a good crops in those years.

5th. I attribute the failures of our Crops to various Causes – viz. – making too large Fields, and laying the Country too much open – burning the lands – exhausting them by too constant tillage and planting more Cotton than we have been able to defend against the Red bug and Chenille – By cutting down the Woods and laying of the lands into Large Fields, our Cotton has not only been exposed to the Violence of the winds (against which it is necessary in this Climate that every plant should be sheltered) but I think it is probable a change has been Produced in the atmosphere, which may have been productive of the frequent Droughts which have prevailed the soil also has been Parched by being too much exposed to the action of the Sun and Winds. In clearing the lands too, I have always been of opinion, that the Planters not only burnt and Destroyed many vegetable substances which might have been converted into excellent mould, but that they have frequently consumed the best part of that which was already formed.

6th. Answered in the foregoing.

7th. Intirely in my opinion from injudicious Planting and the ravages of the red Bug and Chenille which have been a Consequence of one of those errors – viz.-Planting too much, not from any defect in the lands.

8th. Without Doubt, manure will have the same effect on our lands as on those of other Countries. Did this require Proof, our gardens would afford it, But it is impossible for our Planters to manure to any extent at present, owing to the want of Cattle. These Island however are heaps of lime stones and Shells covered (more or less) with a very rich vegetable mould; and the two former of these substances may easily be made to produce a sufficiency of the latter; For I have seen no other Country in which the Progress of Vegetation is more rapid than in those Islands, and that even in situations where it is hardly possible to discover anything like soil. In woods which are so dense as to be scarce penetrable (which is generally the case with us) vegetable mould cannot fail to accumulate very fast, and a mixture of that with calcareous Substances must necessarily form a fertile soil, extremely well adapted to the Production of Cotton.

9th. I believe a great proportion of the Cotton lands now in Cultivation have been in Constant tillage for eight, ten, or Perhaps twelve years, last past. I not long since saw a field at Exuma producing excellent Cotton, which I was assured by the overseer had yielded good crops, for (I think) fourteen or fifteen years successively. I have a Plantation on this Island (the Wilderness) which had formerly been planted in Cotton, and was thrown out in 1782. I took it again into Cultivation early in the last year; when I found it covered with a new growth of wood, from 10 to 15 feet high. The fields were laid out anew, and produced as good and as strong Cotton as ever I saw of the same age. The Plants in general (and it was the Georgia or Peru Cotton, which is by no means so large as the Anguilla) grew from five or six feet high in the space of as many months. I am persuaded that by being thrown out and allowed to grow up into woods, the most exhausted of our lands (if not totally ruined by fire) would recover their original fertility in the space of fifteen or twenty years or perhaps in less time. But when lands are thrown out, they ought never to be pastured for Sheep destroy Plants of almost every Kind, and we have few upon which horned Cattle will not browse.

10th. I do not pretend to the Character of a great Cotton Planter, tho I have paid dearly for the experience which I have had – but as my opinion is desired I will give it, by explaining the treatment under which I have put my own Cotton lands. I have directed them to be arranged into three distinct Divisions, or sets of fields – of these, one Division only (suppose 150 of 450 acres) is now planted, one third of it (50 acres) are thrown out, and as much new lands taken in every year. By this means each field will be planted only three years in nine. By husbanding our lands in this way, --I think it is probable they would last for ages – but it is obvious that to carry a Plan of this sort into effect, our Plantations, must be on a very large Scale.

11th. Answered before.

12th. Dear bought experience has at length convinced us that large fields will not answer for Cotton. I do not think they ought to exceed

Page 7

Three or four acres – and the more substantial the margins the better. Narrow margins are soon Destroyed, by the Negroes, who take shelter in them from the Sun in the heat of the day, who cook their victuals in the edges of them, often set them on fire and cut them down for fuel. The Winds too, soon kill the large trees, unless left in Sufficient Number to Support and defend each other. I think the margins ought to be at least a Chain or 66 feet in width Suppose the quantity of land in Cotton to 120 acres, and the margins one Chain wide, then if these 120 acres be laid out in Squares of two acres each, it will require 60 acres now for margins – if in Squares of three acres each, 48 acres more; and if in squares of 4 acres $40\frac{3}{4}$ acres more, besides which in each Case it will require a quantity more, equal to that of half a Chain wide running round the whole, which will be greater or less in Proportion to its length -- 20 Chains of this will be exactly one acre.

If the 120 acres be laid out in fields of 4 acres each, three in length to one in breadth, the margins will require $43\frac{1}{4}$ acres, if four in length to one in breadth, then $46\frac{3}{4}$ acres, besides the Surrounding quantity.

13th. It is easy to make this Calculation but to give a general answer to the question, I would say one half of every tract.

14th. Salinas, marshy and broken lands, and what is Called Plate rock (all of which are useless) from a very large Portion of every Island I have seen in this Colony.

15th. Perhaps a third yet I am convinced that margins have rarely been Sufficiently substantial.

16th. Not absolutely ruined, but for the Present rendered useless for Cotton planting.

17th. They certainly have, owing in my opinion to the Causes I have endeavoured to explain, and I think it is reasonable to suppose they will do progressively worse every year, unless they can obtain new lands.

18th. I am afraid their Ruin must be completed.

19th. They will have no other alternative that I know, many of them to my Certain Knowledge have had it in Contemplation to emigrate, or at all Events to remove, or get rid of their Negroes.

20th. Many; it would require time to enumerate them.

21st. Cotton lands, sold in the years 1793-94 and '95 at different Prices between two guineas and five. I would not there have sold mine for five guineas an acre found. At present I believe there is very little new lands for sale, on any of the Principal Cotton Islands and as for old lands, I do not believe any man in his Senses would plant them, in their present state, if they were given to him for nothing.

22nd. I believe it was; except to officers on half pay, and Heads of families, who had a larger allowance.

23rd. I believe 4 acres of Georgia or Persia Cotton, and five acres of Anguilla – but it would certainly be advisable to introduce some other of the West India Productions, such as Coffee, Pimento, and perhaps the Sugar Cane.

24th. Were such a system of agriculture generally introduced as I have suggested in my answer to the 10th question (and I am convinced we must either do something of the Kind, or abandon Cotton Planting) 15 acres of Cotton land for each working Hand will be requisite to give full employment to our Slaves. Then, estimating the lands allotted for Provisions, Pasture and Margins, and thrown out as unfit for Cultivation, as one half of each Tract or Plantation; it will follow that the government allowance of 20 acres for each Person will not be sufficient. I think it ought to have been thirty.

25th. One hundred Pounds [wt?] (100 lbs) of Clean Cotton to one acre is but an indifferent Crop --200 lbs is not an extraordinary thing. A labourer then who attends five acres ought to make from 500 to 1000 lbs of Clean Cotton, and I have no Doubt but half a Ton has often been made – but I have never been so fortunate the largest Crop that ever I have made amounted to 591 lbs for each taskable Hand.

Signed Wm [William] Wylly

A True Copy

Peter Edwards, Clerk of the Assembly

Page 8

Answers of Joseph Eve Esq.

Answer 1st. I have Planted Cotton upwards of Seventeen years on St. Salvador, and resided ten years on my own Plantation.

2d. Yes generally, but the soil is not naturally durable, and we are sometimes liable to weather unfavourable to Cotton Planting.

3d. New lands of the same quality and under the same Circumstances have Produced as good Crops as heretofore, but the selection of the Planter in this respect has been more Confined, and he has been more liable to the depredations of Bugs from the vicinity of Neighbours.

4th. Generally they did, the fault was in their want of means and experience when they did not.

5th. To several Causes, Principally from planting the same land too long. The Red Bug has been more troublesome from the reasons explained in the answer to the third question.

6th. The land has been injured by all these Causes. I do not recollect any other but the use of the Hoe in Weeding.

7th. Partly from injudicious Planting and partly from the want of Stability in the land.

8th. Manure Cannot be procured or applied generally, in Sufficient quantities to Produce this effect, and I know of no other means.

9th. Land originally good will recover a considerable degree of fertility in Five years, if it has not been Previously much exhausted or burnt, Under the Circumstances I have known land that has lain Twenty years not Perfectly renovated.

10th. I have said in another occasion that a field ought only to be planted three years without rest, and that it ought then to remain three years covered with Bushes and then be planted again, and by this method good land might be Planted with advantage a great number of years; but in this I do not Speak from experience. In the Common way the best land cannot be Planted more than six years with advantage.

11th. I do Conceive that it ought Principally be attributed to this Cause.

12th. Of this experience has left me no room to Doubt.

13th. I could not expect to plant to advantage unless I had eight acres of the best land to each working hand that I might plant Four Acres alternately, the same quantity of the midling quality for Provisions, and as much more of the indifferent for Pasture and other Purposes to answer this question more directly, at least two thirds.

14th. On many of the Islands there are no lands fit for Cultivation, on some of the Principal Islands that are Cultivated not more than one tenth part and on the best not more than one third. This is a question that none Can decide on with accuracy.

15th. Undoubtedly, from the Causes stated in the answers to the foregoing question.

16th. The greater part of the best land on the tracts first settled have been by long Planting and injudiciously exposing the Fields to the Sun and Wind.

17th. The Planters have generally Sunk Money within these last Seven years and I believe the Cause of it has been Principally from planting on worn out lands, there are no doubt other Causes.

18th. That the same ill success will attend them unless they are able to adopt a new method of Cultivating their worn out lands that may give it vigour, or have new lands remaining to resort to.

19th. I believe that many of the Planters think it vain to plant on their old lands much longer and I am Creditably informed that many of them have it in contemplation to leave the Colony.

20th. I understand there are several but do not know how many.

21st. The Value of lands have decreased in a great Degree, I sold land at St. Salvador under Cultivation at that Period for near Ten Pounds per Acre, land in that Neighbourhood has been lately sold for 3 guineas, in one instance. I can form no Precise Idea at what rate the generality of the located lands in the Bahamas would sell at just now but it would be for very little indeed.

22d. The Principal received Forty Acres and every Person in his or her family Twenty.

23d. Four or five.

24th. I said in the answer to the Thirtieth question that one half is not enough to be thrown out for these Purposes. I think Ten Acres of the best land would be exclusively for Cotton.

25th. I think I can safely answer from 600 to 1000 [?] but I am Creditably informed that much more has been made.

Signed Jos: Eve

A True Copy Peter Edwards, Clerk of the House of Assembly

Page 9

Answers of Archibald Taylor Esqr.

1st. I commenced Cotton Planter on Long Island in the year 1783 where I still Continue planting.

2d. I Conceived the soil and Climate of most of the Islands to the south east of the Island of New Providence, as favourable to the Culture of Cotton; of the other Islands I have no experience.

3d. I know of no lands which have.

4th. The planters in general succeeded to the extent of their expectations.

5th. I attribute the Principal failures of Cotton Crops to the amazing Increase of the Red bug owing in some measure to inattention of the Planters (not being altogether aware of their destructive effects) and to a general error Committed by most of them in over planting themselves, a second Cause of failure must be laid to the frequent and Severe attacks of Chenille; their effects are not severely felt if not more than two attacks take place in one Season (or before the Cotton begins to pod) unless the Cotton be very young and tender. I have known saving crops made after two attacks from Chenille, before the Red bug became so Common and Numerous. A third cause is owing to much of the lands being exhausted by long Cultivation – To – heavy rains at the time the Cotton pods are filling heavy dews which materially effect the Cotton in low lands or in the vicinity of brackish or fresh water Ponds, the other failures may be attributed. It is my opinion that where the lands were originally good, well sheltered and have not been Cultivated longer than 3 or 6 years that nearly as good Crops might be expected as formerly barring the foregoing causes.

6th. A great Proportion of land has been injured by too constant Cultivation, by making too large fields, exposing them too much to the winds and the too frequent and improper use of made of Fire.

7th. The failures have in many instances Proceeded from injudicious management at times to unfavourable seasons and by keeping lands too long under cultivation.

8th. It is my opinion that lands will soon be covered with a new growth and may be restored to their original fertility in the space of 12 years, provided they were at first of a good quality and not injured by fire or kept longer under cultivation than 6 years, no experience I have had enables me to say what

length of time it might require to let lands of an inferior quality and burnt lands remain fallow to render them again fertile. I am unacquainted with any kind of manure the use of which would prove of any general advantage to the lands in this country.

9th. This question fully answered by the Preceding.

10th. Lands well sheltered of the best quality may with judicious culture be planted to advantage for 6 years without fallowing or manuring. I have seen the Cotton Trees appear to flourish well in the same fields for 8, 10 or 12 years, but it never proved so productive as during the first and second planting or for the first 6 or 7 years. Lands of an inferior quality cannot be cultivated to much advantage longer than 3 or 4 years.

11th. The failures are in some measure to be attributed to the soil having lost its vegetable quality – but more generally to the Causes mentioned in my reply to the 5th question for many Planters do not labour under the disadvantage of worn out lands.

12th. Yes, From experience I am convinced that it is necessary to plant in small fields from 3 to 6 acres and well sheltered by leaving belts of the natural growth of woods about a chain in breadth on the more elevated situations about each field on every Plantation.

13th. Plantations differ so often in the quality and situation that it is difficult to say the Proportion necessary for each of these purposes and what proportion may be unfit for Cultivation, but was I to hazard an opinion I think it will take up one half of each Plantation.

14th. I have been on 10 of the largest of these Islands and know that a very considerable part of each is wholly unfit for any species of cultivation that I am acquainted with.

15th. Most of the fields that were first cleared in this colony are now in an uncultivated state, being impoverished by too long culture also the barren lands, and lands reserved as margins.

16th. Some lands have been too much exposed from the inexperience of the first settlers and from accidental fires – but in general the first settler Plantations in this colony – however much opened or injudiciously cleared, were always productive.

17th. From what I have learned of my neighbouring planters, they have in general sunk money during the last 6 or 8 years and so far as the question relates to myself I have sunk considerably. The first five I planted Cotton, which ended with the year 1788, my corps enabled me within a trifle to meet all the expences necessarily attending a new Plantation erecting Buildings etc.

Page 10

And to this charge the debt of 14 negroes which I had contracted; Since then I have only added 10 or 11 to my gang and I am at this time upwards of £ 4000 in Debt, the cause of this difference in my circumstances is wholly to be attributed to the repeated failures of Crops more particularly the last 3 years.

18th. All the Planters who have no new lands to have recourse to, must inevitably be ruined by persevering.

19th. Planters who have no other means excepting their plantations and no situation or new lands to remove to, will be compelled to abandon them and many have it in Contemplation to depart to some other Country.

20th. I know of 8 or 10 Plantations on Long Island from which the negroes have been withdrawn within the last 4 years and 13 others from which a Part of the Negroes have been removed.

21st. Lands have considerably fallen in Value since the years 93, 94 and 95, such as would then have Sold for 3 guineas per acre, were they now set up for sale, would scarcely bring one third of that sum.

22d. Forty Acres were granted to the head of each family and twenty for every other person of which the family consisted.

23d. The average quantity of land an able labourer can attend with Convenience is 6 Acres provided it be the Anguilla kind of Cotton.

24th. I do not. According to a system of tillage in my opinion best adapted to suit the nature of our lands and Climate to employ a negro to advantage it will require 18 acres that is to say 3 sets of Fields of 6 6 acres each or in that Proportion the first set not to be kept longer under cultivation than 6 years and so on until the first set comes round, by which time it would have 12 years rest and I conceive its original fertility would be restored, provided the land is of the best quality in this County.

25th. The largest quantity I every Know made was in the year 1788 when Gibson and Taylor made from the labour of 25 hands, 16 ½ Tons clean cotton or 1320 [?] each, in former years half a ton to each hand was always made, in the year 1795 I made 10 [?] tons from 22 hands.

A True Copy

Signed Archd Taylor

Peter Edwards, Clerk of the Assembly

Page 11

Answers of John Anderson Esq.

1st. I have been eleven years a Planter in this colony and have Planted on Long Island and on this Island.

2d. I do.

3d. They have not.

4th. They in general did.

5th. Principally to the exhausted State of the lands.

6th. By every one of the Causes mentioned, have lands been injured.

7th. The soil when new, I verily believe, is perfectly adapted to the Culture of Cotton. Failures have sometimes been occasioned by the attack of the Chenille, but more often from having open'd the lands

too extensively, to the not having left sufficient Margins, and those very often improperly situated and to the Planting of more land than a Negroe Could well attend.

8th. It appears to me that the most feasible Method of recovering lands, would be, by suffering them to lie fallow but I have my Doubts whether they would during the life of the Planter be restored to their original Fertility. Lands of a certain description I am convinced would not, which are those, that have been frequently injured by fire.

9th. They will, I think, in about ten or twelve years (if not injured by fire) be cover'd with a New growth.

10th. Not more than three, and if the Planter is possess'd of a sufficient body of land, so that one fourth will employ his gang of Negroes in the Cultivation of it, and judiciously treating the lands he throws up, I am of opinion, it will last a very considerable time.

11th. I am.

12th. It has.

13th. One half.

14th. On Long Island I to a Certainty know that a very Considerable quantity of land is unfit for the Culture of any thing, and from what I have heard I believe it to be the cause on every Island.

15th. There does.

16th. There was.

17th. They in general have, and it is certainly in a great degree to be attributed to the want of new lands.

18th. Irretrievable Ruin.

19th. I am of opinion that they will and if new lands cannot be obtained on these Islands, they must be sought after elsewhere. I have heard many express themselves to this effect.

20th. I cannot exactly say, as to the number, but there are several, from which a Proportion of Slaves have been withdrawn, and I know it to be the intention of some to abandon altogether their Plantations.

21st. It has indisputably sunk. To the best of my recollection lands sold in those years from one and a half to two guineas per acre, and at present I have reason to believe they would not sell at all.

22d. Yes.

23d. I believe six if Planted in the Anguilla cotton, but if in the Georgia I would never venture on more than four.

24th. Twenty Acres of good land to each Negroe, would I am of opinion be sufficient for Provisions, Pasture and Margins, and also fully employ him in the Culture of Cotton.

25th. I have known (tho not on my own place) a half a ton of clean Cotton to each hand and I have heard of 1500 lbs.

Signed John Anderson

Page 12

Answers of [Walter Turnbull Esqr.](#)

1st. I am, and for 11 years and for the most on Long Island.

2d. I do in many situations.

3d. No, for there has been a great difference of seasons, as well as in the mode of Planting.

4th. No, in some years they failed – in 88, 90, 1793 a hurricane; in 1795 poor Crops; in 1796 some middling.

5th. In a great measure by opening the land too much.

6th. Perhaps from both, but it is impossible for me to judge.

7th. From no original defect in the soil; I rather think from injudicious planting.

8th. By laying them fallow, if the Planter has lands enough to enable him so to do.

9th. I do believe, that in 7 or 8 years, it will be as good as at first, if fire can be kept from them.

10th. For 7 or 8 years; indeed as long as any cotton land in the West Indies.

11th. No, I do not think so.

12th. I am of the opinion from 4 to 5 acres is large enough, but it depends most upon situation.

13th. This altogether depends upon the quality and quantity of land and negroes on it.

14th. I am Clearly of that opinion, and every person who is acquainted with them must be so too.

15th. Yes, and will be so.

16th. I know it from fatal experience.

17th. We all know this too well, but from what cause I am at a loss to say.

18th. This depends upon the quantity and quality of the land.

19th. I do know, that many have had it in contemplation to remove; but, I cannot say altogether.

20th. I do not know. From other, perhaps, you may.

21st. At Present, no Price, I am of opinion, would be offered. The value, at Present, is only nominal: they have decreased $\frac{3}{4}$ [?] in value, since 1796.

22d. The grants will answer this.

23d. From 5 to 6 acres in Anguilla. From 2 ½ to 3 in Georgia.

24th. This altogether depends upon the lands, where the Planter is settled.

25th. This I cannot, with certainty, answer, at first we were always increasing our negroes, so that we could not be correct, and of late, we have been, in general; unsuccessful.

Singed Walter Turnbull

A True Copy

Peter Edwards, Clerk of the Assembly

Page 13

Answers of Hugh Dean Esquire

1st. A cotton Planter on Long Island for twelve years.

2d. Yes, both soil and Climate in general.

3d. No.

4th. In general the planters did succeed.

5th. Oweing to the lands being too much Cleared and the attacks of the Bugs, Chenille and the Seasons being more severe.

6th. By too long cultivation, cutting down too much wood, and laying the Country too much open to the winds.

7th. Not from the original defect in the soil but from injudicious Planting.

8th. By no other means than by not being Planted, or used at least ten years.

9th. Yes, in about ten years.

10th. Four years without fallowing or Manuring and last four years.

11th. Yes.

12th. Yes, experience has convinced me.

13th. One half at least.

14th. From my own knowledge a considerable proportion of every Island in the Bahamas is wholly unfit for almost any kind of Culture.

15th. Yes.

16th. Yes, to a Certainty.

17th. Many of the Planters in general has sunk for five or six years past and owing to the want of new lands and injudicious Planting.

18th. Must abandon the Country.

19th. Many has already abandoned their Plantations, but cannot say whether any has emigrated to any other Country.

20th. I suppose about ten in number.

21st. Sunk in Value for five years past and sold in 1793, 94 & 95 at about two guineas per acre; at Present would not bring more than two Dollars per acre.

22d. The quantity was regulated by the number and twenty acres for each head right except the head of the family which forty acres were allowed to.

23d. Five acres.

24th. Yes.

25th. One thousand to fifteen Pound [wt?] of Clean Cotton.

Signed Hugh Dean

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Peter Edwards, Clerk of the Assembly

Page 14

Answers of [William Henry Hamilton](#)

1st. Ten or twelve years upon the Island of New Providence and Long Island.

2d. The soil in general is well calculated for the Culture of Cotton, but the Climate of late years has not been so favourable as formerly.

3d. He believes not.

4th. He believes a majority of the Planters did succeed during the first five or six years after the Culture of Cotton became general in this Colony.

5th. The lands have not produced so well for the last five or six years as before for various Causes, first, he attributes it to the lands being impoverished by constant Cultivation, 2d to bad management of the Planters, 3rd to the Chenille, 4th to Bugs, 5th to tales of wind, 6th to heavy rains, 7th to cold dews.

6th. They have.

7th. Answered above.

8th. No.

9th. Where the land is not too much impoverished by constant Cultivation and where the Fibres and Roots of the old trees have not been totally destroyed it may in the course of a few years be covered with a new growth, but where the lands have been completely worn out he thinks they will not be covered with a new growth for a number of years not less than one hundred.

10th. He believes the same fields may with advantage be planted in cotton without fallowing or manuring for three years, but does not know how long the Cotton lands will last under judicious Culture.

11th. He is of that opinion.

12th. Yes.

13th. It depends much upon Circumstances, but in general at least one half.

14th. Yes.

15th. He believes so.

16th. Many.

17th. They have in general sunk money, which has been owing generally to repeated failures in their Crops and to the want of New lands.

18th. Total ruin.

19th. He believes many will be compelled to abandon their Plantations and he has been told that some have it in contemplation to emigrate to other Countries unless they can get new lands.

20th. He knows that several Planters have withdrawn their slaves from their Plantations on account of the exhausted state of their lands.

21st. They have sunk in value and in the years 1793, 94, and 95 sold for one to five guineas per acre. He believes they would in general at this time sell at a very low rate.

22nd. Yes.

23^d. Not more than five acres.

24th. He does not think that less than twenty acres for each labourer will be sufficient.

25th. He has heard that fifteen hundred pounds weight were made on the Plantation adjoining his on Long Island, to the hand.

Signed Wm: H: Hamilton

A True Copy

Peter Edwards, Clerk of the Assembly

Answers of Duncan Taylor

1st. I have been a Planter at Long Island twelve years and upwards.

2^d. I do.

3^d. No.

4th. In many Instances they did, but not generally.

5th. In many situations it is owing to the indifference of the soil and the increase of the Cotton Bugs, and other Causes.

6th. There is not much lands in those Islands that is fit in my opinion to be in Cultivation for more than four or five years from the shallowness and indifference of the soil, and those who Cultivate it longer than that will fail from the exhausted state of the soil alone.

7th. Of late years or since the mode of Planting by the line, has been adopted I think Cotton has in general been Planted too thick and that too free a use of the knife has been made, but I believe the only defect in the soil is the scarcity of the quantity.

8th. I know of no manure in the Country of a Putrid enough quality to render the soil fertile when exhausted by too long use, Salina, or salt Pond marle, may be of use I think, and Rocks dug from underneath the ground Carefully laid round the root of the Cotton Trees may be of service in dry weather as the porous quality of the Rocks will retain moisture for a considerable length of time which must assist the vegetation, but the most effectual way of recovering the soils original fertility is by laying it waste for a number of years.

9th. I Cleared several Fields in the year 1789, and allowed it to run out in the year 1793 which is now very well Covered with a growth of trees seven or eight feet in height, which fields I have now Cleared and am Planting again and by appearance have reason to believe it will Produce very well.

10th. The number of years you keep your soil in use should be regulated by the original quality of the soil, some tracts being of much stronger quality, and much more fertile than others, but in general I would not conceive it my interest to Plant it with Cotton more than 5 years and afterwards it may Produce Corn very well for two or three years, it is also to be observed that the longer you keep it in Cultivation the longer it takes to recover.

11th. I know of many Instances of failures from the exhausted state of the soil, tho in general I think our Failures have arisen from other Causes.

12th. The Smaller the Fields are cleared, I think the Better, and every advantage should be taken of Shelter.

13th. This I would always judge of according to the quality of the lands the best Part I would allot for Cotton and Provisions, and the most indifferent Part for Pasture – which with the benefit of waste fields would always admit of the Planters raising plenty of Stock.

14th. From what I have seen and learnt of the lands in this Country, I think a very large Proportion of it unfit for any other Purpose but Pasture, and in many instances very unfit for that Purpose.

15th. I know of many Plantations on Long Island, that all the land fit for use has been cleared and Planted for years past, and that have no other Part in woods but margins and land that is judged unfit for any profitable Purpose.

16th. Many of the first settlers I mean the Refugees Injured their lands very much by making their clearing too extensive, and a good Deal of valuable lands has been ruined by Fire on Long Island.

17th. Planters have in general I believe sunk money for several years past from various Causes, failure of Crops Paying very high Prices for every article requisite for their Consumption since the commencement of the Present war subject to great risques in having those articles brought them by drogging vessels, to which they are also subject to pay very heavy Freights, some failures have arisen from the want of a sufficient quantity of land, and injudicious management and much evil and injurious Consequences has arisen to the Planters at Long Island by the introduction of the Georgia Cotton which has almost totally defeated the Endeavours of the Anguilla Cotton Planters since ever it has been Introduced on the Island, Particularly the southern District, which quarter of the Island was generally successful in making Crops, while Anguilla Cotton alone was Planted.

18th. In many situations they must unavoidably fail.

19th. Without fresh land to work on many will be obliged to abandon the Islands and

Page 16

Many would no doubt wish to emigrate to a Better Country if they could, and I have heard of a few Individuals that have applied for lands in another Country.

20th. I know of ten, and of many others that will very shortly be obliged to abandon their Plantations likewise.

21st. The value of lands for the last five or six years has depreciated two hundred and fifty per [%] lands in general six years ago sold for three guineas an acre and I do not believe our best lands on the out Islands would sell just now for more than one half guinea per acre.

22d. I was allowed 40 acres as my own Head rights and 20 acres for each person in my Family – Blacks and whites.

23d. Five acres of Cotton and 3 of Corn.

24th. No, to work your hands to advantage you should have as much good land to work on as would admit of your leaving a sufficient quantity waste to revert to every ten or fifteen years, by that means you might always employ them successfully the number of acres requisite for this is explained in the 23d answer.

25th. From 14 to 15 [C wt?].

Singed Duncan Taylor

Page 17

Answers of [Thomas B. Mackinnen](#)

I was a Cotton planter, I undertook the charge of a Plantation in the beginning of the year 1788 and continued the management until 1796 on Long Island.

2d. Tis my opinion that the Climate and soil of that Island is favourable; From the trials I have seen made on New Providence, I do not conceive it so well adapted; of the other Islands I have little knowledge.

3d. The lands have not Produced so well latterly as they did the first years I was engaged in Planting, for the first 5 years I missed but one crop, generally making what would be considered good ones, now a days.

4th. The Planters did at first make better Crops, than they have done latterly.

5th. It is a great measure to be attributed to severe attacks from Catterpillars and Multitudes of Bugs, but more particularly to the generality of the lands being impoverished by long cultivation and injudicious management.

6th. The lands are certainly much impoverished by constant cultivation, and in many instances have been injured by the Practice of burning off the Prunings of the Cotton Trees and all kinds of grass and other trash, that collects in the fields much lands I conceive has been destroyed by permitting it to grow up in grass, which I am of opinion is more Prejudicial and apt to impoverish land than the Constant Culture of Cotton.

7th. The late failures I do not attribute to injudicious Planting – but to the exhausted state of the soil in some Places and to more fortuitous causes in others, such as Worms, Bugs, and in some instances bad weather – not to any natural and original Defect in the quality of the Soil.

8th. I never made any experiments with manure, very few of the Planters have the means in their Power; it is not my opinion that it can generally be carried into sufficient effect to prove very beneficial.

9th. Lands that have not been injured by frequent burning or too much exhausted by long cultivation soon grow up into brush wood and Perhaps might recruit being sufficiently shaded from the rays of the sun, by the fall of leaves from the young growth, and by remaining undisturbed by instruments of Agriculture – it might require 8 or 10 years to remain fallow, and some attention to destroy shrubbery of Particular kinds, likely to Prevent the growth of Trees.

10th. I am of opinion that the best lands provided they never be Permitted to become grassy may yield fair Crops for 7 years – much lands are Cultivated, that will not do so more than 3 years or so long as the first setting of it vegetates.

11th. This question appears to me fully answered by my reply to the 5th.

12th. From experience I cannot say that I think small fields Particularly Productive – I think large Margins of Standing woods proper Fields from 8 to 12 Acres are Sufficiently small, what convinces me that very small fields are not absolutely necessary, is that the largest gatherings are usually made from elevated and oftentimes exposed Situations although the Cotton Trees, (from the locality of such situations) are extremely thin Planted, such Places being very rocky.

13th. This question I must answer by saying as much as each Planter thinks Proper.

14th. A very large Proportion of every Island I have been upon, is wholly unfit for Cultivation and will not Produce a single article that a Man can subsist on, unless it be Prickly pears, these growing without any culture in all situations, suggests the idea that species on which the Cochineal Insects are reared might become an object worth attention.

15th. From observation, I know that much land on almost every Tract on Long Island remains uncultivated owing to its being originally unfit for that Purpose.

16th. Not admitting that every small fields are absolutely necessary – I am rather at a loss to answer this question; in some few instances I have known large Places Cleared and very little shelter of natural woods left against the winds – many situations where the want of Shelter s at present found, have arisen from accidental fires destroying the Margins of woods since the original opening of the Country.

17th. The Planters have not generally made more than barely Sufficient to pay the Current expences of the year for some years past not wholly owing to the want of new lands, but from the greater part cultivated being exhausted and other fortuitous circumstances.

18th. My opinion is that those who have no resourse but exhausted lands, must infallibly be ruined by persisting to Cultivate the same

Page 18

There are many Planters, who are not in this Predicament, and who would most assuredly Prosper as well now as formerly could any means be devised against the pernicious effect of insects, cold rainy weather and heavy rains at a very Critical period.

19th. It would be folly in any Person labouring under the disadvantage of exhausted lands to persist in Cultivating it – There are many Planters I am convinced would remove themselves immediately to some other Country could they do so with a Prospect of bettering themselves or would their finances afford it.

20th. I know of 10 or 12 Plantations entirely deserted, and a part of the negroes removed from others, to endeavour to better themselves elsewhere.

21st. The value of lands have depreciated much within the Periods demanded in the years 93, 94, and 95, lands of an indifferent quality were sold for 3 guineas per Acre – the best I believe may now be Purchased for one half that sum.

22d. The head of a family or person who petitioned for lands, were allowed 40 Acres for him or herself and 20 acres for each other Person in family.

23d. One hand can with ease attend 8 acres of land Provided the lands are new and he is never taken off to execute other work, so as never to permit his lands to get grassy.

24th. Perfectly Sufficient.

25th. I one year made near three Tons of Clean Cotton from the labour of 7 hands that were under my direction from new lands – the same People were unable to gather it a great proportion being Georgia cotton which is tedious to collect.

Singed Thos: B: Mackinnen

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Peter Edwards, Clerk of the Assembly

Page 19

Answers of Donald Fergusson

1st. Upon Long Island, for eleven years.

2d. Yes.

3d. No.

4th. Yes.

5th. To various causes – bad management, bugs, Chenille, unfavourable seasons, and the deficiency in the soil.

6th. From no other cause or causes, except what is mentioned.

7th. From both.

8th. No it will not.

9th. It depends, in a great measure, on the quality of the soil, and the time it was in cultivation. I know as much, if not more, of the quality of the different tracts & Plantations upon Long Island, as any person in this country; and I can say with propriety, that one half of the land, that is under cultivation now in cotton, will not be restored to their original fertility for twenty years to come.

10th. Five or six years.

11th. Yes, I have answered this in the fifth Question above.

12th. Yes, I do.

13th. One half.

14th. Yes, about one fourth is unfit for Cultivation.

15th. Yes.

16th. Yes.

17th. In a great measure, it was owing to that and what I have mentioned in the 5th question above.

18th. My opinion is that those who have nothing to depend upon, besides cotton planting, will be ruined, in case new lands won't be granted.

19th. Yes, the poor unfortunate Cotton planters will be under the necessity to abandon their plantations to go to other Countries.

20th. Nine from the Southern district.

21st. I sold land in 1792 for 3 guineas and 3 quarter, which, I believe, would not sell for one at present – even if it was in the same state as it was in when I sold it.

22d. Yes, except the head of a family, who was allowed 40 acres.

23d. Five of Anguilla, or 3 of Georgia, besides Corn land.

24th. I do not think it would be sufficient.

25th. I have heard gentlemen saying that they made from 12 to 1400 [?] of Clean Cotton to a hand; but I never did so myself, and am afraid, never will.

Singed Donald Fergusson

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Peter Edwards, Clerk of the Assembly

Page 20

Answers of Ancil Fergusson

1st. That he has been a Cotton Planter in this Colony for fifteen years past, and Planted on Cat Island, and Great and little Exuma.

2d. He does.

3d. In some situations they have, and in others they have not.

4th. He believes they did.

5th. From their being kept too long in cultivation and from their being injured by fire from the want of proper attention in burning off the brush.

6th. That they have been injured by their being lain too much open to the winds.

7th. He thinks from both Causes.

8th. He thinks they cannot from the want of Manure.

9th. Lands that have not been injured by Fire, and allowed to grow up into woods for seven years, will produce two or three good Crops, but not more – this the Examinant asserts from Experience.

10th. It depends greatly on the quality of the land – in very good land the same Fields may be successively planted to advantage from three to seven years.

11th. He is of opinion the late failure of Cotton Crops is to be attributed to the soil being worn out by too continued Planting, and by neglecting to destroy the Cotton Bugs.

12th. It has.

13th. He thinks about one half.

14th. From his own knowledge, and information of others he is of that opinion.

15th. It does not within his knowledge.

16th. In some Instances they were.

17th. He believes a number have, owing in a great measure to the want of new lands, and having in the first instance injudiciously cleared their fields.

18th. They must inevitably be ruined.

19th. Yes – and that he knows of Several Planters, who have it in contemplation to emigrate to other Countries.

20th. He knows of several.

21st. It has Sunk – to the latter part of the query he knows not.

22d. They were – forty Acres to the head of a family and twenty to every other White and Black.

23d. From 5 to 6 Acres.

24th. He does not.

25th. He has known half a Ton of Cotton to each working hand to be made, on the first cultivation of new lands.

Signed Ancil Fergusson

A True copy

Peter Edwards, Clerk of the Assembly

Page 21

Answers of James Moss Esq.

1st. I have been concerned in Cotton Planting in this Country since the year 1786 chiefly on the Island of New Providence, Crooked Island, and Acklins Island.

2d. I am of opinion the soil and Climate in some of those Islands are favourable for the Culture of Cotton.

3d. I do not think the lands, on some of the Islands have produced latterly as good crops as they did on their first being Cultivated.

4th. A Few planters was successful in these Islands on their first Commenceing the Culture of Cotton.

5th. I am of opinion the uncertain Seasons we have had in these Islands, unfavourable situations and the frequent attack of the Chenille and Bugs has been the Chief Cause of unfortunate Crops.

6th. I am of opinion that the lands have been greatly injured by too long a cultivation.

7th. I do not think the failures in Crops has been occasioned by Injudicious Planting, but by the disaster mentioned in answer No. 5 and 6.

8th. I think lands fitting for the Culture of Cotton in these Islands may be restored by allowing it to lay fallow for some years the manuring of it would be attended with a heavy Expenche.

9th. Cotton Fields that has not been planted longer than three years, if then allowed to grow up into woods would I believe be fit for Cultivation again in nine years after.

10th. Three successive years I think is long enough to Continue the Culture of Cotton in the same fields.

11th. Answered in No. 5 & 6.

12th. Cotton fields should be well sheltered by Margins, fields of six acres I think are in general approved of.

13th. In laying out a Cotton Plantation I am of opinion that one half the tract will be taken up in Provision Grounds, Margins, Roads, and lands unfit for Cultivation.

14th. I have been informed that there are several Indifferent tracts of land in the Bahamas.

15th. The old tracts of land I have seen in these Islands appear to have been fully Cultivated except the land unfit for Cultivation.

16th. I am of opinion that Several tracts of land in these Islands have been partially injured by opening too large fields but not rendered useless in Consequence thereof.

17th. The Cotton Planters in these Islands have in general sunk money, some from the first settling in the colony originated in my opinion from the Causes Mentioned in Answer No. 5 & 6.

18th. If Planters persevere in Planting Cotton on lands unfit for its Culture, I think they must be ruined.

19th. If Planters have no land to clear fitting for Cotton, its Impossible for me to say what distress they may be reduced to, but I am of opinion there are only a few who wish to emigrate to other Countries.

20th. I believe there are a few Planters who have and are about to withdraw their Slaves in consequence of too frequent failures of Crops occasioned I suppose by the Causes mentioned in answer No. 5 & 6.

21st. Cultivable lands on several of these Islands, has sunk in value for some years past I believe good Plantable lands, would have sold in 1793, 94 & 95 from one guinea to 1 ½ guineas per acre it impossible for me to say how much, lands of that quality would now sell for.

22d. Government allowed, 40 Acres, to the principal and twenty acres to each of the family also 20 for each Slave.

23d. I Believe five acres of Cotton can be attended by an able labourer.

24th. If one half of a tract of land is allotted for Provisions, etc. I do not think ten acres sufficient to employ an able labourer on the present principal of Cultivation.

25th. The Plantations in general that I have been connected with having failed in Cotton Crops, I cannot say for a certainty what quantity of Cotton has been made by each Working hand on any others in these Islands.

Signed James Moss

A True Copy

Certified by Peter Edwards, Clerk of the Assembly

Page 22

Answers of [Alexander Collie](#)

1st. Yes, ten years to my sorrow on Crooked and Acklins Island.

2d. In general, I do not.

3d. By no means.

4th. Some did, but many failed.

5th. To the exhausted state of the soil; and clearing away more lands, than the negroes could attend to, and not keeping down the bugs.

6th. Answered by the preceeding question.

7th. From both causes.

8th. Manure would most certainly restore the lands to their original fertility – but where is it to be found?

9th. If the soil has not been originally too much burnt, and a strong soil at first, it may be restored in 7 years, so as to produce 2 or 3 Crops.

10th. From 3 to 6 years, if the land is good.

11th. Answered by question 5th.

12th. Experience has taught us that small fields are best.

13th. At least one half: in many plantations $\frac{3}{4}$ would not be too much.

14th. A vast proportion of the lands in this colony are utterly unfit for cultivation.

15th. A Considerable proportion of land, on every plantation, remains uncultivated, being unfit for cultivation.

16th. Many of them were.

17th. A great deal of Money has been sunk, I fear, never to rise again, and much precious time.

18th. Utter ruin.

19th. Many would be compelled to abandon their plantations; and the remainder, I presume, would of choice was peace to take place.

20th. I know of none of the planters, as yet, having withdrawn their Slaves; but the Merchants have withdrawn many of them.

21st. In 93, 94, and 95 some lands sold for three guineas; but now would sell for a dollar per acre.

22d. Forty acres were granted to the head of each family, and 20 acres for every head right.

23d. From 5 to 6 acres.

24th. No. every planter ought to have, at least three setts of fields.

25th. The first or second year, 12 negroes will make as much Cotton, as double the number will do the third or fourth when the weeds begin.

Signed Alexr Collie

A True Copy

P: Edwards

Page 23

Answers of John Miles Esq.

1st. That he has planted Cotton, for nine years, on Andros Island.

2d. He does.

3d. They have not.

4th. He is certain they did.

5th. From the uncommon hard weather, and great droughts at the season for planting Cotton.

6th. That they have been injured by the wood cutters, by setting fire to large tracts.

7th. He thinks from both causes.

8th. He thinks the land from the rocky situation, it is impossible to manure it.

9th. Lands that have been injured by fire, it will take ten years.

10th. It depends greatly on the quality of the land and situation: If high and deep soil, 5 years; what is called honeycomb rock, 2 years.

11th. It has.

12th. It has.

13th. He thinks about one half, but Indian corn and Cotton may be planted together with success, and without injuring the soil.

14th. From his own knowledge, and information of others, he is of that opinion.

15th. It does not come within his knowledge.

16th. In some instances they were.

17th. The first five or six years the planters made money: the last 3 years have not, made wages for their slaves.

18th. They must be ruined.

19th. He knows of none, provided they can obtain new land.

20. He knows of none.

21st. It has sunk, To the latter part of the query he knows not.

22d. They were 40 acres to the head of a family, and 20 to every other white and black.

23d. From 5 to 6 acres.

24th. He does not.

25th. The first 3 years from 7 to 800 [?] the last 2 years not above 50 [lb.?).

Signed Jno Miles

A True copy

Peter Edwards, Clerk of the Assembly
