



PLANS SHOWING
PROPERTY OWNERSHIP IN
THE BAHAMA ISLANDS
(Includes an Appendix showing Land Grants
1789 - 1858)

by Sherrine Thompson
Assistant Archivist

How finding aid is organized

The finding aid is arranged in two parts:

- a. Plans showing property ownership in the Bahama Islands listed alphabetically
- b. Land Grant 1791 - 1831 listed chronologically

Plans : *The plans have been transcribed exactly as they appeared. In cases where letters or words were not easily discerned, a question mark (?), asterisk (*) or line (_____) was used.*

The entries contain the following components, REF. REFERENCE NUMBER/LOT NUMBER, NAME, ACRES AND GRANT BOOK REFERENCE NUMBER.

REF	REFERENCE NUMBER	NAME	ACRES	GRANT BOOK REFERENCE
	129	George Brown	20	C1

Refers to the Reference Number which appears on the map.
NOTE: NOT ALL MAPS CONTAIN REFERENCE NUMBERS. SOME HAVE LOT NUMBERS, OR THERE MAY BE NO NUMBER AT ALL.

Refers the user to the **GRANT BOOK** in which the reference to the property is found.

Land Grant Book: *These have been transcribed from the microfilm copies which are available in the Department of Archives and contain the following components: NAME, ISLAND, ACRES, DATE AND GRANT BOOK REFERENCE.*

NAME	ISLAND	ACRES	DATE	GRANT BOOK REF.
George Brown	Inagua	20	17 December 1854	p. 48

Refers to page number of the Land Grant which appears in the Grant Book.

The Bahama Islands were formally annexed in 1629 by Britain when they, along with the Carolinas were granted to Sir Robert Heath. Later in 1647 Captain William Sayle and seventy others from Bermuda, established the first permanent European settlement on the island of Eleuthera. In 1670 the islands were granted to six Lord Proprietors who concentrated more on economic exploits rather than establishing settlements. However, when land was granted, it was made "by virtue of the Lords Proprietors lease and in the lessees name, and the quit-rent reserved to themselves." It was not until the appointment and arrival of Captain Woodes Rogers in 1718 that settlement began in earnest. Land ownership began to take on importance and a system to regulate the granting of land had to be put in place.

In 1720 The Bahamas and the Carolinas shared one Surveyor General, but he was ineffective in providing proper service. By 1727 complaints mounted for a "person to reside in the colony to survey and grant patents of land".² Despite these complaints and the existence of a Surveyor's Office there was no qualified Surveyor. With the arrival of large numbers of Loyalist settlers in 1783, the need for proper documentation and dispensation of land grants became increasingly important. Finally, in 1793 the Surveyor General of Lands was made a civil establishment.

¹ Calendar of State Papers Series 35 p. 17

² Calendar of State Papers Series 35 p.

One form of document generated from this office is the map or plan. The words map and plan are used interchangeably, although connotatively the word map is used mostly for general reference while plan is used to describe landline references and ownership in a property-boundary sense.

The Department of Archives houses several original photostat and traced copies of maps which illustrate landline references demarcating ownership of property throughout the Bahama Islands. They span the period 1788 to 1969, beginning with a Plan of the Town of Nassau and the Environs of New Providence and ending with the Settlement of St. George's Cay, Spanish Wells. These compilations include all of the islands except Bimini, Grand Bahama and Mayaguana.

Apart from showing ownership most of the plans indicate the size of the property in acres, the reference book and page number in which the grant can be found as well as the change in ownership over the years. When using these plans one should pay strict attention to accuracy because ownership may have changed but the land may still be in the name of the previous or original owner. This may be the case especially in later maps. Another factor that affects or influences accuracy is the condition of the map. Portions may have been destroyed or damaged in some way or tracings may be incomplete. Although the standards and procedures involved in land surveys and map

production have improved tremendously in recent times, in earlier times the production or reproduction was less reliable.

These maps are a font of information because they are substantiated by supplementary documents such as the Land Grants, Wills and Sales Books (sale of lots by the Land Board). When the maps are used in conjunction with these supplementary documents, an ancestor's property can often be identified. Whenever possible, it is wise to use these documents rather than relying solely on the map or plan.

Land is an essential criteria in indicating status in a community. Not only is it important because of its monetary value, but it is also important as a source of food through farming. In earlier years not many black Bahamians owned property. In the post-emancipation period the Crown only granted or leased land to those who could afford to develop it. Many people squatted land and built houses on small portions of it without legal tenure. Others farmed on "commonages", that is, land held by inhabitants in common, or "generation" lands - land handed down through the family. Many Bahamians claimed legal rights to land believing that it belonged to them because their family had lived on it for a long time.

The majority of the maps housed at the Department of Archives were deposited by the Department of Lands and Surveys, the Department of Local Government, Private Depositors and a few can be found in the Bahamas

Original Correspondence (CO23). Other maps such as these which show property ownership can be found at the Department of Lands and Surveys and Bahamas Title and Research.

Generally speaking most of the maps are in fair condition. A few are fairly small and manageable but the majority are quite large, averaging 3 ft by 3 ft in size, making them quite difficult to handle.

For further information on properties see

Bethel, A. Talbot: *The Early Settlers of The Bahamas and Colonist of North America*

James, W. H.: *Exuma: The Loyalist Years 1783 - 1834*

McAleer and McAleer: *The Wyannie Malone Genealogy vol. 1 - Six Generations*

Riley, Sandra: *Homeward Bound A History of the Bahama Islands to 1850 with a Definitive Study of Abaco in the American Loyalist Plantation Period*

Photostat copy Hope Town, Little Guana Cay, Abaco 1927
 (reading left to right)

REF	NAME	ACRES	REFERENCE NUMBER	REFERENCE GRANT
	Richard Sawyer	1		
	Rollin Adams	2		
	Lord William Kee	3		
	Benjamin Malone	4		
	Methodist Chapel	5		
	Edward Russell	6		
	Donald Russell	7		
	Richard Russell	8		
	John Roberts	9		
	Benjamin Bethel	10		
	John Roberts	11		
	Government Property	12		
	David Russel	13		
	Hilton Russell / John Albury	14		
	Board of Education (school residence)	15		
	Clifton Russell	16		
	John Roberts	17		
	Thomas Adams	18		
	Goal and Commissioners Office	19		
	Ephraim Malone	20		
	Charles Sand	21		
	Joseph Thompson	22		
	Alex Weather	23		
	William Thompson	24		
	John and Joseph Thompson	25		
	William Thompson	26		
	John Russel	27		
	John Albury	28		
	Henry Albury	29		
	Old School	30		
	Nathaniel Kee now Thomas Johnson	31		
	Elijah Malone	32		
	B. Bethel	33		
	John Roberts	34		
	John Cash	35		
	Edward Russell	36		

Photostat copy Hope Town, Little Guana Cay, Abaco 1927
 (reading left to right)

REF	NAME	ACRES	REFERENCE NUMBER	REFERENCE GRANT
	J. Weatherford	37		
	J. Bethel	37a		
	sold by Provost Marshall to J. S. Johnson	38		
	(now) Captain M. Malone			
		39		
	Hecher Bethel	40		
	John Russell/Bewman Roberts	41		
	Hilton Russell	42		
	William Russell	43		
		44		
	V.C.L.	45		
	V.C.L.	46		
	Henry Kee	47		
	Jacob R. Adam	48		
	Nathaniel Sawyer	49		
		50		
	Basil McDonald and Flecher Bethel	51		
	Malone	52		
	Pinder	52a		
	Clarence Pinder	53		
	George Russell	54		
	John Malone	55		
	Lavenus Russell	56		
	Charles Russell	57		
	Sidney Carey	58		
	Maurice Thompson	59		
	Clarence Malone	60		
	Incorporated Trustees of The Church of England	61		
	Anthony Carey	62		
	Frances and Mary Russell	a		
	Dr. Dolly et al	b		
	Tedder and Dr. Dolly	c		
	Maurice Thompson	d		
	Dr.Dolly	63		
	Richard Roberts	64		
	Thos. N. Malone	65		

