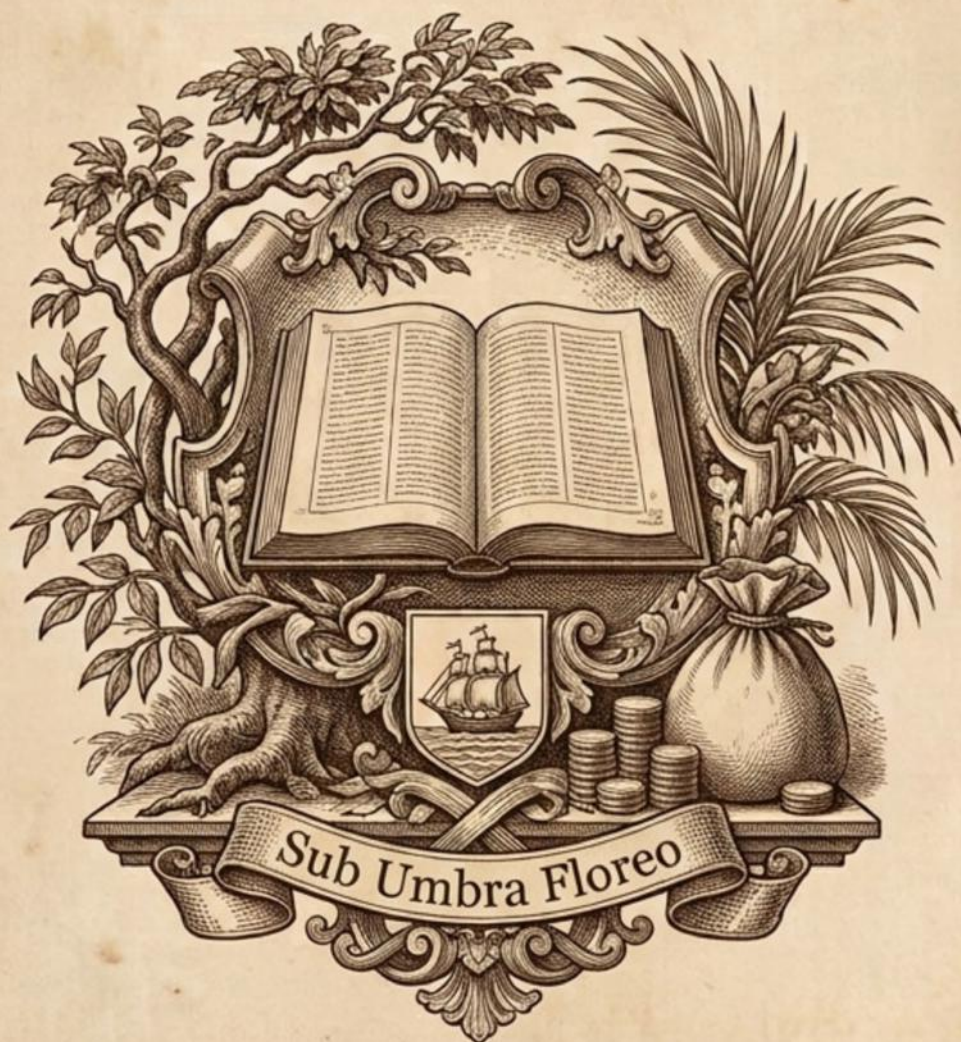


ABOLITION, COMPENSATION
and the
SLAVE REGISTER of 1834

The Belize Archives and Records Service



BELIZE SETTLEMENT

COMMERCE & CONNECTION
TO THE WORLD

Belize was founded on the extraction and export of timber, first logwood and later mahogany. While it differed from the plantation colonies of the British West Indies, its central labour force also consisted of men, women, and children who were captured, stripped of their humanity, loaded onto ships, and reduced to chattel property.

The abolishment of what Granville Sharpe called a “toleration of inhumanity” was the culmination of over half a century of struggle. Initially enacting the 1807 Slave Trade Act to end the shipment of enslaved Africans on British Ships, Britain was later compelled to institute the 1819 Slave Registration Act to curb British colonist who continued the illegal practice.

On 13 June 1833, Secretary Stanley transmitted the resolutions that formed the basis of a Bill for the Abolition of Slavery. The legislative instrument, which comprised 66 clauses, dictated the terms for the emancipation of enslaved persons through a transitional system of apprenticeship and the compensation of owners.

TIMBER & MAHOGANY
THE WEALTH OF THE BAY

POWER & PRIVILEGE
THE FORESTOCRACY

SLAVE LABOUR
THE FOUNDATION

MAHOGANY
LOGWOOD
SHIP SUPPLIES

THE ABOLITION ACT

While the Act provided general stipulations, it was the duty of the individual colonies to refine the provisions and enact the necessary legislation before the commencement of the Act. Clause 44 stated that no colony would be entitled to any portion of the Compensation Fund until adequate provisions had been made and the legislation to be enforced had been approved by Parliament.

CONCERNS OF THE OWNERS

Working Hours

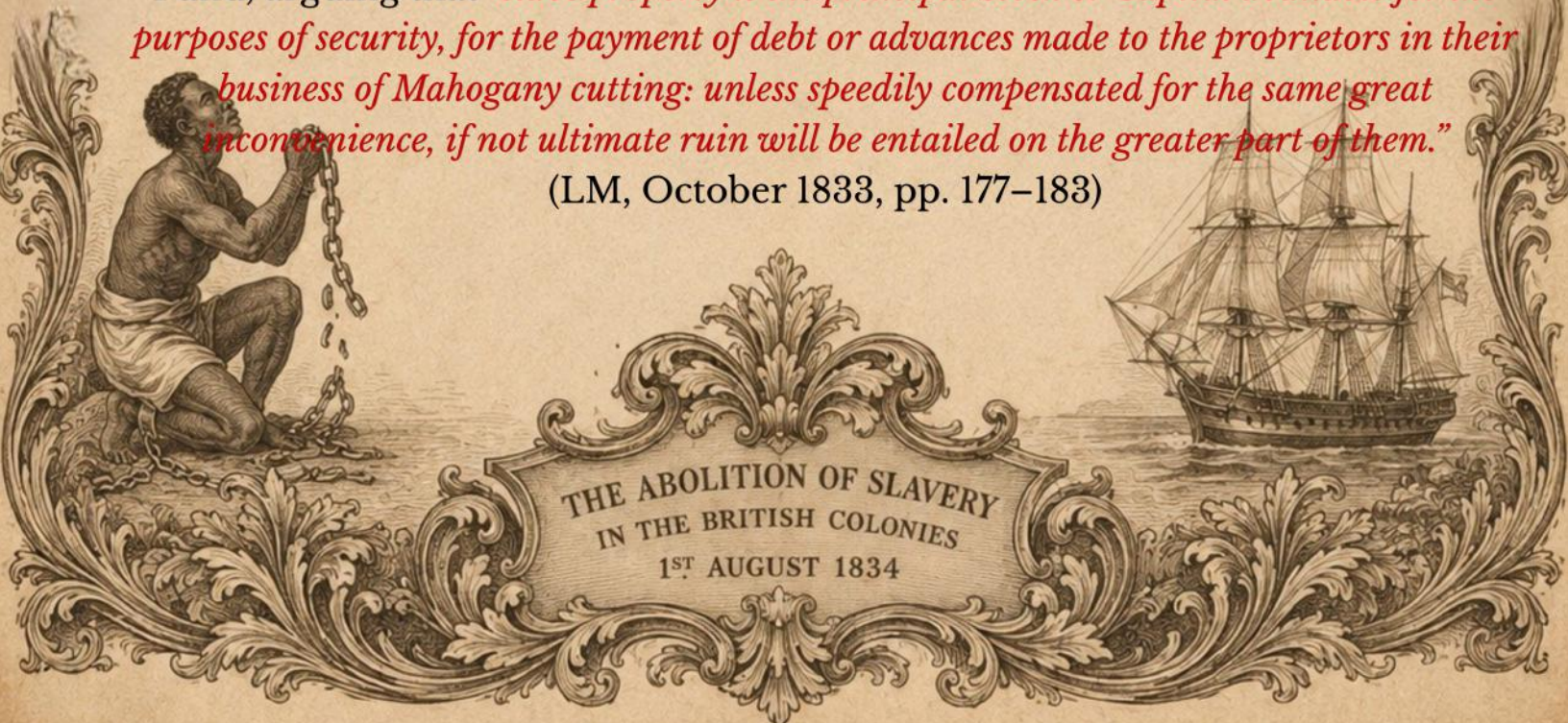
The masters were concerned that the strict seven and half working day could not be easily implemented. Unlike the plantation colonies, the extraction of mahogany was seasonal and required the men to work throughout the night during the trucking season.

Valuation and Disbursement of Funds

The key factor in determining the value of enslaved persons was their designation as either praedial or non-praedial workers. The masters hoped that the committee would consider the high price of labour and the value placed on their enslaved workers, owing to the better conditions in which they were kept.

They also stressed the need for the rapid disbursement of the Compensation Fund, arguing that *“slave property is the principal Stock or Capital available for the purposes of security, for the payment of debt or advances made to the proprietors in their business of Mahogany cutting: unless speedily compensated for the same great inconvenience, if not ultimate ruin will be entailed on the greater part of them.”*

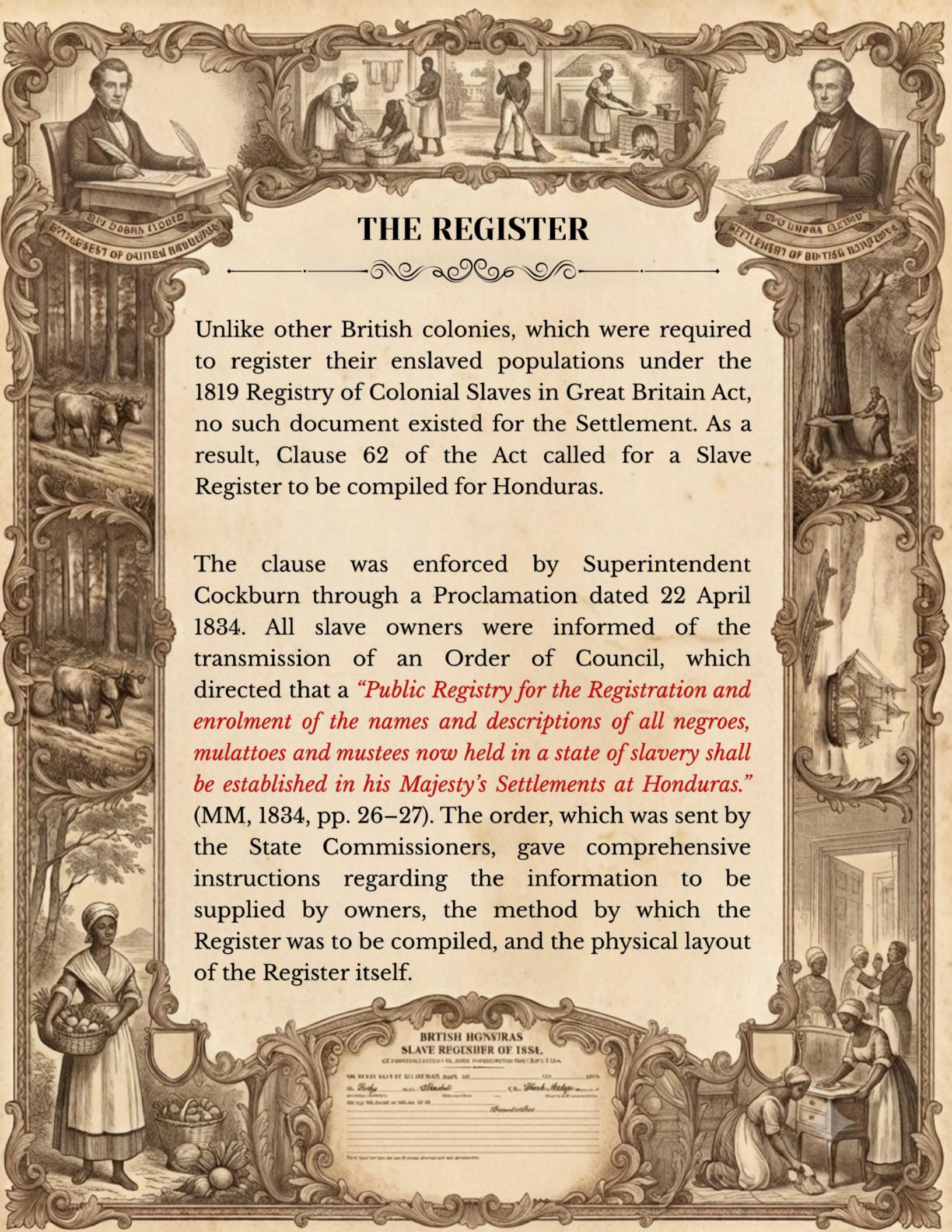
(LM, October 1833, pp. 177–183)



**1834 Letter from Magistrates to James Hyde
who was asked to provide the Secretary of State with a
description of labour in the settlement**

"Slaves, and free hired workmen for about nine months of the year, (during which they are occupied in felling Trees, and opening and clearing temporary Roads through the Woods to convey the Timber to the Rivers,) the labour is very light, and performed usually by Task which does not occupy them above five or six hours daily; but during 5 or 6 Weeks in the Months of April and May, (being the only period of the Year during which the Roads are sufficiently hardened by the continuance of dry weather to bear the weight of the Carriages with their heavy Timber, called the trucking season,) the Sun, during this brief period, is about vertical and produces such a heat during the day as to make it impossible for the Oxen used in the Timber Carriages to work excepting during the night, when the work is carried on with torch light, and of course the Cattle Drivers (who are always, whether free or slaves, the most active Lads in the Gang) are necessarily obliged to drive their Trucks or Carriages. In the course of long experience, I never knew the slaves, or free Labourers, to complain of the necessary duty, they having the day for rest, with intervals in the night, while the Labourers encamp, among the Trees, to be on -- to lead the Trucks in the night. It appears necessary for me to explain further, that after the Mahogany is carted, as already stated, into the bed of the Rivers or Creeks the Workmen have to wait for the flooding of the Rivers by periodical rains, in June or July, and by which the Cutters are enabled to float the Timber down to the Sea; but as those Floods are sudden, and impetuous, it requires great attention and address on the part of the Gang in following the Logs upon the River by night, as well as by day, to prevent any impediments in the River stopping the logs & keep them from drifting to Sea by the violence of the Floods; so that it will be evident that occasional Labourer and watching by night is as necessary to the Honduras Woodcutter as to the Mariner at Sea. Therefore any interference with the necessary labour of Apprenticed Labourers by night, in place of day, during the short period of Trucking out the Timber and floating it down the Rivers established by usage arising from the indispensable necessity of the case, and which has never been complained of by the Labourers themselves, will be alike uncalled for, and ruinous to the cutter; as it must, when first enforced, leave the property on which he has expended his Labour, his capital, and on which he depended for support, ad for the payment of his Debts, to rot in the Woods; for it is not removed by night there us no possibility of geting out by day."

CO 123-44



THE REGISTER

Unlike other British colonies, which were required to register their enslaved populations under the 1819 Registry of Colonial Slaves in Great Britain Act, no such document existed for the Settlement. As a result, Clause 62 of the Act called for a Slave Register to be compiled for Honduras.

The clause was enforced by Superintendent Cockburn through a Proclamation dated 22 April 1834. All slave owners were informed of the transmission of an Order of Council, which directed that a *“Public Registry for the Registration and enrolment of the names and descriptions of all negroes, mulattoes and mustees now held in a state of slavery shall be established in his Majesty’s Settlements at Honduras.”* (MM, 1834, pp. 26–27). The order, which was sent by the State Commissioners, gave comprehensive instructions regarding the information to be supplied by owners, the method by which the Register was to be compiled, and the physical layout of the Register itself.

BRITISH HONDURAS SLAVE REGISTER OF 1834.

OF THE SETTLEMENTS OF BRITISH HONDURAS.

THE FIRST PART OF THE REGISTER, SHOWING THE NAMES, AGES, SEXES, AND COLOURS OF THE SLAVES, AND THE NAMES OF THEIR OWNERS, AS AT THE 1ST JANUARY 1834.

By Order of the Superintendent, J. Cockburn.

Printed and Sold by J. Cockburn, Superintendent, at the Office of the Superintendent, in the Town of Belize.

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The Compilation Process

- Establishment of a Registry Office and Appointment of a Registrar. James McDonald was appointed to the post of Registrar.
- **First Month:** All persons in the Settlement were required to compile and return their forms. These were to include their names, the rights they held over each enslaved person, whether the enslaved person had been purchased within the previous seven years, and the name of the previous owner.
- **Second Month:** All returns were to be entered into the Registry Book. The entries were collected during the period between 12 May and 31 July 1834.
- **Third Month:** Owners were required to verify the information entered and swear an oath validating it. This period also provided an opportunity for missing information to be entered. At the end of the period, the Registrar was to close and authenticate the Book.
- Certified copies of the Register and the owners' return forms were to be dispatched to the Secretary of State under the seal of the Superintendent. On 1 September 1834, the completed Register was certified by both Superintendent Cockburn and Registrar McDonald.

During this submission period, the Commissioners were instructed to continuously publish lists of claims in all available newspapers for the benefit of any persons who claimed an interest in enslaved persons through mortgages, bills, trusts, liens, and other such instruments. All counterclaims were to be submitted to the Assistant Commissioners by 1 February 1835, or to the Commissioners in London by 1 April 1835.



SAMPLE FORM

RETURNED TO THE REGISTRAR

OF THE PROPERTY OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF THE C.J.A. 1834

ON THIS DATE I HAVE BEEN INSTRUCTED BY THE REGISTRAR TO

IN THE NAME OF THE REGISTRAR TO SIGN THIS FORM, AND TO

IN THE NAME OF THE REGISTRAR TO SIGN THIS FORM, AND TO

IN THE NAME OF THE REGISTRAR TO SIGN THIS FORM, AND TO

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- Enslaved persons were to be inventoried beginning with members of the same family unit, who were all to take the surname of the head of the household. This was done to avoid the separation of families during the apprenticeship period. Families were followed by single men and then single women.
- Any enslaved person without a last name was to take the surname of the current owner.
- The description of each enslaved person was to include their name, surname, colour, occupation, and age.

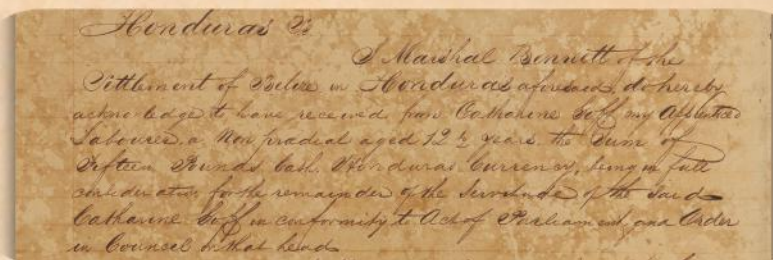
Sarah.				Keefe.			
Names	Surname	Colour	Condition	age	Remarks		
<i>Head of the Family</i>							
Peter	Humphreys	Black	Labourer	32	Years	Head	£ 12
Phoebe	Wife	---	Mahogany Cutter	28	---	Wife	£ 10
Allen	Son	---	---	9	---	Son of Peter	£ 6
<i>The Family</i>				<i>of Quashie</i>			
Dacker	Humphreys	Black	Labourer	47	Years		£ 12
Jemima	Wife	---	Kitchenmaid	37	---	Daughter of Quashie	£ 10
Jampson	Son	---	Mahogany Cutter	36	---	Son of Quashie	£ 8
Kannah	Daughter	---	Kitchenmaid	13	---	Daughter of Quashie	£ 6
Andrew	Son	---	---	10	---	Son of Quashie	£ 5
William	Son	---	Labourer	29	---	Daughter of Quashie	£ 6
James	Son	---	Mahogany Cutter	25	---	Daughter of Quashie and Samuel daughter of Quashie	£ 5
Dinah	Wife	---	Housemaid	18	---	Son of Quashie and Samuel son of Quashie	£ 5
Elizabeth	Grand. Wife	---	Field Negro	15	---	Daughter of Quashie and Samuel daughter of Quashie	£ 4
May	Wife	---	Cook	12	---	Daughter of Quashie and Samuel daughter of Quashie	£ 4
Phoebe	Grand. Wife	---	Cook	9	---		£ 3
Mary	Wife	---	House maid	7	---	Son of Quashie and Samuel son of Quashie	£ 3
George	Wife	---	Field Negro	4	---		£ 2
Euffee	Wife	---	Girl	2	---		£ 2
Dinah	Wife	---	Milk	3	---		£ 2
Francis	Wife	Black	---	3	---	Son of James and Samuel son of Quashie	£ 2
<i>Two Family</i>				<i>of Cophias</i>			
Cophias	Humphreys	Black	Sawyer	32	Years		£ 12
Sophy	Wife	---	Kitchenmaid	29	---		£ 10
Sally	Wife	---	Kitchenmaid	23	---	Daughter of Cophias	£ 6
Mary	Wife	---	---	10	---		£ 4
<i>General List</i>				<i>Male Slaves</i>			
Nancy	Servant	Black	Labourer	66	Years	Purchased from the Spanish within these Lines	
Eliza	Servant	---	Mahogany Cutter	50	---	Do.	Do. Do.
Delora	Wife	---	---	48	---	Do.	Do. Do.
Samuel	Wife	---	---	13	---	Do.	Do. Do.
				15	---	Do.	Do. Do.

*As Recorded
Regis. Exgr.*

*James W. Williams
Magistrate.*

Measures Taken to Dispel Fraud

- Not one word was to be erased from the Book. Errors were to be crossed out with a line of red ink to ensure that the original information remained legible, with the correction placed in the page margins.
- No correction could be made to an entry following the swearing of oaths by the respective owners.



- Any member of the Registrar's Office found guilty of illegal activities or fraudulent behaviour would be stripped of their post, prohibited from holding another public office, and liable to civil suits from anyone who sustained damage as a result of their actions.
- Any inhabitant convicted of altering information in the Register would forfeit all estates, rights, titles, properties, and interests to the Crown.
- Any person who falsified their slave return was to forfeit £100 sterling for each name illegally listed on the form.
- Any enslaved person not listed at the completion of the Registry would become the property of the Crown.

~~Mongo Jack~~

CLAIM
FOR
COMPENSATION

AWARD
PAID BY
THE COLONIAL
TREASURY

FREEDOM
1838

IN ACCORDANCE WITH
SLAVE COMPENSATION ACT

THE CLAIMS COMMISSION

Compensation Award Disbursement



If no counterclaims were submitted, a report containing all claims and the total amount of compensation payable to owners was to be transmitted to the London Office for approval and disbursement. In the event that counterclaims were submitted, claimants had three months in which to respond, after which the evidence submitted by both parties would be investigated to determine who had the right to receive the compensation. If the claimant did not respond to the counterclaim, the Commissioners had the power to issue the compensation award to the counterclaimant.

- The name appearing on the Register would identify the person considered entitled to the award.
- Awards would be placed in the account of an appointed and approved Trustee for any person deemed unfit to manage their own finances or who was not resident in the Settlement.
- Money awarded would be assigned to the natural heirs or beneficiaries of owners who died intestate before the disbursement of the fund.
- Any claims to enslaved persons, apart from those made by the listed owner, would be handled according to a succession of transactions, beginning with the first transaction made.
- The Court would determine the disbursement of any legal claims pending before it. The money would be placed in an account at the Bank of Exchequer, where it would earn interest until the Court delivered its ruling.

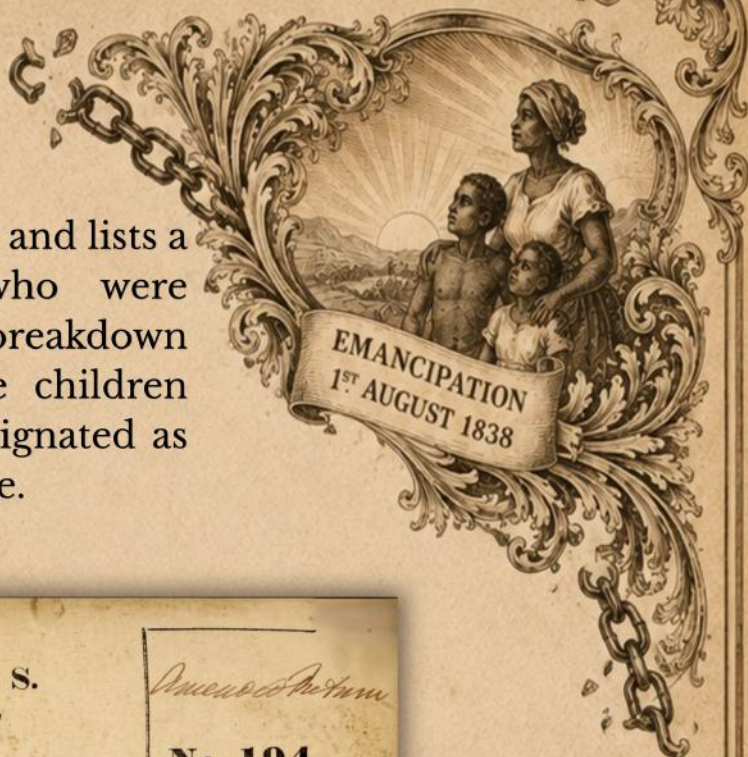


And it having been made known to us by the Commissioners for Compensation in this Settlement, that a Woman named Rose Sprout of Belize in Honduras aforesaid is entitled to certain Compensation but is a decided Simah having no natural Guardians.



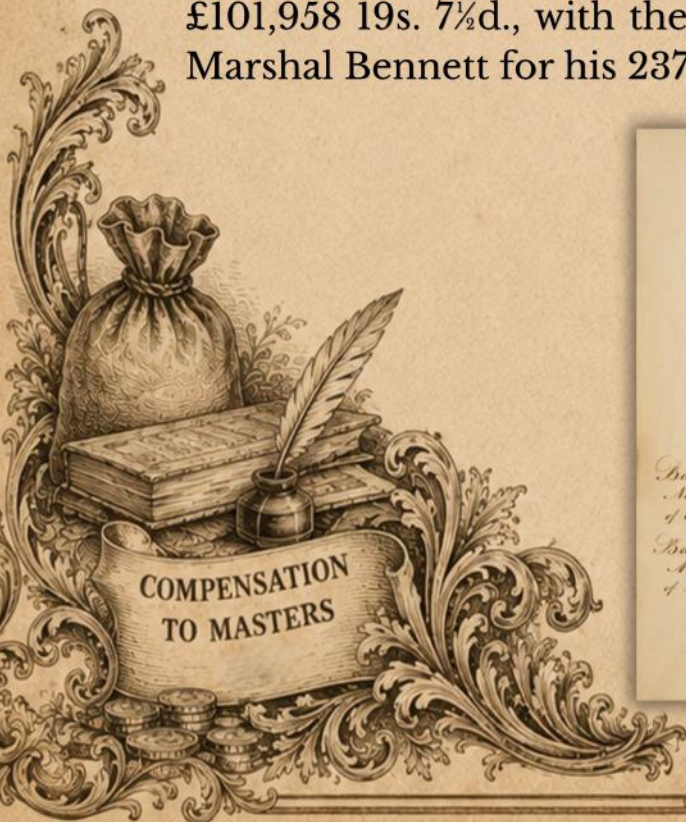
Claims & Awards

The 1834 Register consists of 305 returns and lists a total of 1,897 enslaved persons, who were collectively valued at £236,218 10s. The breakdown shows that, of this number, 219 were children under the age of six, while 90 were designated as aged, diseased, or otherwise non-effective.



NAME OF ESTATE, OR DOMICILE OF SLAVES. <i>North Belize</i>	HONDURAS. RETURN Of the Number of Slaves and Estimated value thereof, in each Class, in possession of <i>Marshal Bennett</i> on the 1st day of August, 1834.	<i>Amended Return</i> No. 194
TOTAL NUMBER OF SLAVES		<i>Two hundred and Thirty Six</i>

The total amount awarded for claims from British Honduras was £101,958 19s. 7½d., with the largest sum, £11,453 5s. 3d., being paid to Marshal Bennett for his 237 enslaved persons.



<i>Summary for Honduras</i>			
Amount of Debt	£	100,261. 16. 11	
do " " " " " " " " " " " "	0 Nil.	" " "	
do " " " " " " " " " " " "	0 Nil.	" " "	
do " " " " " " " " " " " "	0 Nil.	" " "	
Balance remaining at the National debt office on account of Unliquidated Claims.	£	858. 10. 9½	
Balance remaining with the Accountant General on account of Liquidated Claims.	£	838. 11. 11	
Account	£	1,697. 2. 8½	
Appropriation	£	101,958. 19. 7½	

[illegible]

NAME OF ESTATE, OR DOMICILE OF SLAVES.		HONDURAS.		No. 105		
RETURN Of the Number of Slaves and Estimated value thereof, in each Class, in possession of <i>Santh Koff</i> on the 1st day of August, 1834.						
TOTAL NUMBER OF SLAVES				<i>Thirty One</i>		
DIVISIONS	No.	CLASSES	Male	Female	Number	Value in Sterling
Prædial Attached	1	Head People				
	2	Tradesmen				
	3	Inferior Tradesmen				
	4	Field Labourers				
	5	Inferior Field Labourers				
Prædial Unattached	1	Head People				
	2	Tradesmen				
	3	Inferior Tradesmen				
	4	Field Labourers	6		6	134. 0
	5	Inferior Field Labourers	2		2	92. 0
Non-Prædial	1	Head Tradesmen				
	2	Inferior Tradesmen				
	3	Head People employed } on Wharfs, Shipping, } or other avocations				
	4	Inferior People of the } same description				
	5	Head Domestic Servants				
	6	Inferior Domestic	3	9	8	1450. 0 680. 0
Children under Six Years of Age on the 1st of August 1834			4		4	198. 0
Aged, Disenced, or otherwise Non-effective			2		2	3718. 0

A.) 1834 Register Entry
B.) Claim for Enslaved
C.) Valuation of Enslaved
D.) Amount Awarded