

A history of belize in 13 chapters essay sample

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During the first two centuries of British settlement Belize was not used a contributor of agricultural produce as little agricultural activity took place. However, in the 1850s things changed and Belize started exporting agricultural produce. Belize first formal constitution was formed in 1853. It was noted that the colonies and settlements were controlled by men only. By mid 19th century Belize was recognized as a colony in 1862 and then a Crown Colony. Belize under the metropolitan control of Britain mahogany trade boomed and then went through a depression. Later the Sugar cane production commenced with the Yucatan refugees.

By 1857 sugar was supplied local and then by 1862 extensive exports were made. The first sugar cane operations was made in Corozal Town and controlled by Mestizo families which grew to ten estates with steam machinery by 1868. However, the sugar industry did not boom for long. There were many factors that contributed to its decline. In 1823 after Spain lost most of its colonies in the Americas US government ruled much of Belize affairs. US sent many black slaves to help with labor. However the colony was more successful in appealing to whites to set up agricultural roots in Belize.

US influence escalated as a result of the banana export. The banana industry escalated so much that even mahogany labors and captains invested their earnings on banana plantations. However, the banana industry was badly affected by floods, storms and “ Panama disease” in 1914. As a result of the collapse in the banana industry many local labors had to look elsewhere for employment especially the full-time labors. Some planted survival crops

while others went to timber camps to gain an earning. Later a few peasants became successful small sugar and banana planters.

The end of the 19th century the timber estates started to extract chicly from the sapodilla trees to make chewing gum to be exported to the US market. There were also attempts made to export agriculture but it did not pay off well because of lack of proper infrastructure. Roads were not suitable to traverse to transport produce. Each ethnic group of workers had their work cut out for them the Maya “ Indians” engaged in milpa farming as well as fishing cutting logwoods. While the Garfuna engaged in domestic service, cutting logwood and mahogany, planting crops and selling it at the market.

The “ West Indian creole” as well as the Creoles worked the fields. The labor conditions were hard and toilsome with very low wages. Most times the employers trapped them in type of debt known as “ advance” and “ truck” systems. These only systems prove an advantage for the employers rather than the workers. Half of their wage was given in goods and the other half in cash so most times the workers were in debt to their employers. The laws reinforced many repressive systems. One of which was if a worker was not able perform his work based on the contract after receiving an advance he could be imprisoned with hard labor for three months.

These exploitive measures remained in the land until 1943. By the later part of the 19th century the British Honduras colony was established despite its challenges. New elites started to come to Belize, European to do administrative work and businesses as well as merchants. However, they came not to reside but to enrich their native land. Most of them wanted to

get rich quick and started to trade guns and whisky. This started to corrupt the culture and soon the workers started to retaliate against such activity.