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*Small sugar farmer agency in the tropics 1872—
1914 and the anomalous Herbert River Farmers’
Association*

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For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (History)
In the College of Arts, Society and Education
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The completion of this thesis has only been possible because of the encouragement and support of a number of people.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the belief in me shown many years ago by Dr Janice Wegner and Dr Diane Menghetti.¹ At the time I was living on a sugar farm at Stone River, west of Ingham, raising a large family. Jan and Di encouraged my ambition to reenrol at James Cook University and complete a PhD thesis. They saw value in my proposed topic. Unfortunately, the demands of life, family and farm intervened and I did not enrol as a PhD candidate until 2014, forty years after first enrolling at James Cook University as an undergraduate.

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¹ Dr Diane Menghetti, now deceased, was then Associate Professor of History at James Cook University.

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ABSTRACT

One hundred and thirty-six years ago six immigrant small selectors formed the Herbert River Farmers' Association (HRFA). On the Herbert a plantation mode of sugar production began in 1872. The selectors there used the HRFA to actively participate in the transition of the tropical Australian sugar industry from plantation to small, family farms by 1914. Associations such as theirs formed the cornerstone of the institutional foundations of a globally unique and successful industry farmed by small, family farmers.

Principal exponents of sugar industry organization history have consistently dismissed the small sugar cane farmers' associations. Broader sugar industry scholarship however, identified them as having contributed to the demise of plantation production and the development of farm-based central milling. This assessment recognized that the HRFA and fellow small associations promoted small farming and that their members proved that white, small sugar farmers could farm in a tropical environment without detriment to their health and could provide a reliable supply of high-quality cane.

Agricultural associations in sugar growing regions in the period 1872 to 1914 were dominated by elite white planters, practising an exploitative mode of production that used unfree or indentured coloured labour. Furthermore, land was not distributed equally to planters and small farmers alike, denying the small farmers, white or otherwise, the type of independence that came to characterise Australian white, small, sugar farmers. Land ownership and the freedom to form associations allowed the small selectors of the Herbert River Valley in tropical north Queensland in the late nineteenth century to negotiate with the planters in a way that the tenant farmers and share-croppers in other sugar growing regions could not.

Accounts of the origins and nature of the sugar industry agricultural association movement focus exclusively on the planter associations while small sugar farmer associations are virtually invisible in the scholarship. Agricultural associations were vehicles both planters and farmers used to access rural extension, promote agricultural skills and innovation, and lobby with one voice. A top-down approach has made for a void in the understanding and appreciation of the development and role of small sugar industry agricultural associations in Australia. The Australian small sugar farmers' association was unique in the global sugar industry association movement and the HRFA was the first of its kind in the plantation era in tropical Australia.

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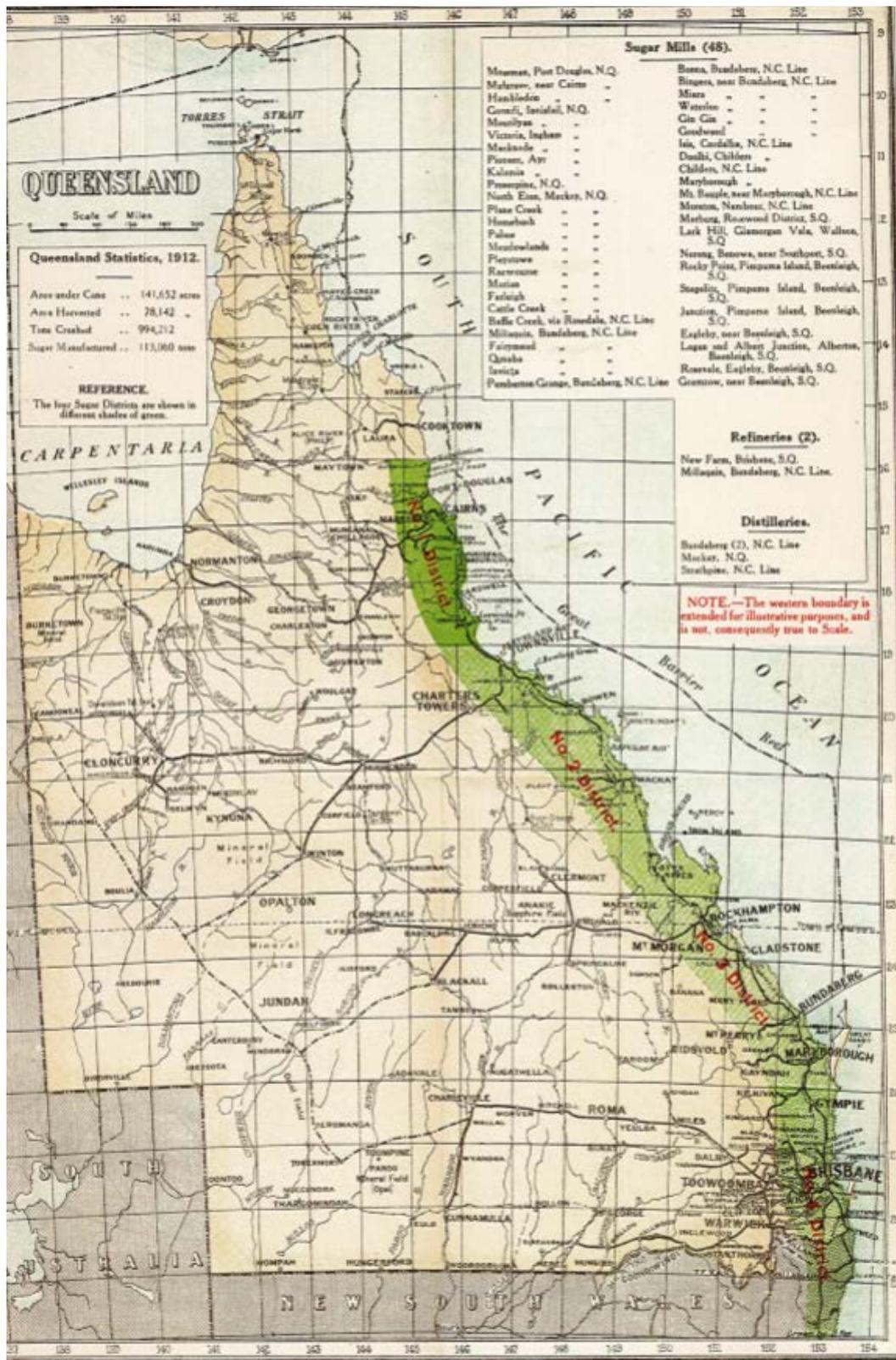
ABBREVIATIONS

ABSPA	Ascension Branch Sugar Planters' Association
ACA	Agricultural Commercial Association
ACFA	Australian Cane Farmers' Association
ASGA	American Sugar Growers' Association
ASMC	Australian Sugar Manufacturers' Council
ASPA	Australian Sugar Producers Association ²
BAS	Barbados Agricultural Society
BPA	Bundaberg Planters' Association
BPFA	Bundaberg Planters' and Farmers' Association
BSES	Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations
CCS	Commercial cane-sugar content
COFCO	Cereals, Oils and Foodstuffs Corporation
CSR	Colonial Sugar Refining Company
HARC	Hawaii Agriculture Research Center
HPC	Halifax Planters' Club
HRP&AA	Herbert River Pastoral and Agricultural Association
HRCGA	Herbert River Cane Growers' Association
HRFA	Herbert River Farmers' Association
HSPA	Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association
HRFL	Herbert River Farmers' League

² The apostrophe was omitted in the Memorandum of Association of the Company. Majorie Pagani, *T.W Crawford: Politics and the Queensland Sugar Industry* (Townsville: James Cook University, 1989), 45.

IIPA	Imperial Institute of Agriculture of Pernambuco
LSAS	Louisiana State Agricultural Society
LSPA	Louisiana Sugar Planters' Association
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
MPA	Mackay Planters' Association
MPFA	Mackay Planters and Farmers' Association
NSW	New South Wales
PEM	Plantation Economy Model
PL&S Co	Planters' Labour and Supply Company
PRFA	Pioneer River Farmers' Association
PRF&G	Pioneer River Farmers and Graziers' Association
QCGA	Queensland Cane Growers' Association
QCGC	Queensland Cane Growers' Council
RACAP	Royal Central Association of Portuguese Agriculture
RHAS	Royal Hawaiian Agricultural Society
SAAP	Pernambuco Agriculture Auxiliary Society
SRA	Sugar Research Australia
SRDC	Sugar Research and Development Corporation
SRL	Sugar Research Limited
SWU	Sugar Workers' Union
USAP	União dos Sindicatos Agrícolas de Pernambuco
UCGA	United Cane Growers' Association

MAP



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GLOSSARY

Adherent planters	(Hawai'i) a co-operative or share-system of small farming
Arawaks	first people indigenous to Barbados (followed by the Caribs)
Archimedian screw	an ancient water-lifting device adapted in milling to direct sugar into a trough from where it was conveyed by a conveyor belt to the sugar room
Associações distritais	(Portugal) regional associations
Association	an organization formed by people for mutual benefit. Alternative words are club, society or league. The choice of word by the formation group may have been determined by size, sphere of influence, funds and emphasis of activities, but was more likely to have been arbitrary or determined by custom.
Bagasse/megass	the fibre remaining after the juice has been extracted from the stalks of cane. Dries and used to fuel the mill
Barracks	accommodation provided by farmer for a cane cutting gang for the duration of the harvest season
Billet	the short lengths of cane into which cane stalks are cut by a mechanical harvester
Black-birding	a euphemism for enticement and kidnapping of indentured labourers from Melanesia for work on Queensland cane fields
Butty gang system	a method of work where each member of a team of cane cutters shares equally in the joint earnings derived from their work as a group under contract to the farmer
Cane carrier	a conveyor in a sugar mill that carries the cane from where it is unloaded and weighed to the shredder where it is cut into fine pieces
Cane cutter	person who manually harvests sugar cane with a cane knife

Cane cutter/harvester

a mechanical means to harvest cane. The cane is either cut into lengths or billets and loaded onto trucks or into bins

Cane grubs/cane beetles

cane grub or larvae of the cane beetle which feeds on the roots of the cane plant; decimated whole fields of cane in the late 1880s. The most destructive cane pest, found in all the sugar producing districts from Mackay to Mossman was the *Dermolepida albohirtum* Waterhouse, a greyback species. Another species, *lepidiota albohirta* (white cockchafers) was also found on the Herbert

Caribs

people indigenous to Barbados. Followed the Arawaks

Carpetbaggers

(Louisiana) speculative northerners who took advantage of the chaotic conditions after the Civil War and bought up sugar lands and derelict mills

Celestials

a derogatory term used particularly in the press in the nineteenth century to refer to people of Chinese origin

Central mill

a mill to which small farmers send their cane for crushing

Centrifugal

a milling term for a perforated vessel inside a casing which spins raw sugar crystals in order to remove any remaining syrup

Clarifier/clarification

a milling term for the vessel/process in which the removal of the impurities from the cane sugar juice takes place. The clarified sugar juice runs off and the impurities remain behind to be reclarified with alternative processes

Cocky

from the word cockatoo. Small farmers as distinguished from squatters or large landowners. Cane cocky signified a cane farmer

Commodity associations

formed by farmers growing or producing a single product, for example wool or sugar or dairy products. In contrast to the generalist farmer associations

Contractors CSR referred to small farmers who supplied cane to their mills as contractors

Cooperatives agricultural cooperatives were designed to enable farmers to process and market their produce and buy farm and household goods at cost price. Credit cooperatives were another variant

Co-operative mill a central mill owned by a group of small farmers who receive some share of any diversification revenue and of the mill surplus production distributed as a bonus on the cane price

Creole (**Louisiana**) those of French and Spanish origins who had settled Louisiana before the Louisiana Purchase

Cross ploughing to plough across an earlier ploughing

Crushing/crush the cane harvesting season

Degibreur a device in a sugar mill, designed to tear the cane into pieces before it passed through the mill crushing rollers

Dispersed system alternative systems to the vertically integrated mode of production

Drilling/drill out mark out the paddock with furrows for planting

Effet cylindrical steel vessel or evaporator in a sugar mill, in which clear sugar juice coming from the clarifiers is concentrated by boiling under vacuum

Engenho (**Brazil**) mill. Engenho translates as engine and refers to the mill in particular, but could also mean the main house as well all structures and land that made up the sugar-producing unit

Engenho central	(Brazil) central mill
Estate	a large sugar cultivation unit without mill
Evaporator/evaporation	vessel in the milling process where the clear sugar juice is concentrated to a syrup by boiling it under vacuum
Exhibition	gatherings of farmers to discuss and observe agricultural methods. Also offered incentives for the improvement of farming technique and innovation. Also called shows or fairs, sheep shearings, cattle shows or ploughing competitions
Factors	(Hawai'i) agencies originally employed to purchase equipment and supplies, secure finance and insurance and market and ship the sugar on behalf of the planter. Later business units which consolidated all phases of production: cultivation, milling, refining and marketing business interests spanning both Hawaii and mainland America
Farmers Unions/Farmers and Settlers' Associations	distinct from agricultural associations. Farmers Unions and Farmers and Settlers' Associations had strong political agendas and fed the groundswell of the country party movement
Fornecedores	(Brazil) suppliers to a usina
Gang	group of cane cutters contracted to a farmer to cut his cane
Ganger	leader of the gang
Gumming	or gummosis. A bacterial disease affecting sugar cane which destroys the stalk cells in sugar cane by filling them with a gummy fluid causing death of the stalk
Haole	(Hawai'i) residents who are not indigenous Hawaiian
Horse-line	Tramline upon which trucks of harvested cane were drawn by

horse rather than locomotive

Improver The efforts to advance agriculture are described as improving and the person effecting the improvement, an 'improver'. The word 'improver' was in use in the English language with this agricultural connotation by the mid-seventeenth century

Indenture/indentured labour

a system of bonded labour. Workers worked under contract for a determined number of years with the agreement that they could return home at the end of the indenture or in some areas, remain and become landowners

Interest group group that is separate from government but tries to influence government policy by discreet lobbying techniques. Usually avoids public campaigns

Juice mill a mill that only produces sugar juice which is conveyed elsewhere to be converted to crystallized sugar

Kanaka Melanesian indentured labourers were called kanakas, the word deriving from the Polynesian word, tangata, pronounced with a k in Hawai'i. Originally referring to indigenous Hawai'ians, as the labour trade expanded the word came to be used to mean 'native'. Now considered derogatory by the South Sea Islander community in Australia

Krajewski crusher a device in a sugar mill which crushes the cane into pieces before it proceeds to the rollers. Located between the carrier and the first mill

Latifúndios **(Portugal)** large landed estates

Lavradores de cana **(Brazil)** Landowning farmers ranked below the senhores de engenho

Megass dryer the fibrous residue from crushing cane contains not only fibre but water and some sugar. Megass can be used as a fuel. A megass

dryer removes moisture and improves the efficiency of steam generation systems using the dried megass

Melanesians Popularly, and at the time, indentured labourers recruited for the Queensland cane fields were inaccurately referred to as Polynesian though the labour was actually recruited in the main from the islands of Melanesia. Also referred to as Pacific Islanders and South Sea Islanders

Metropole one of the words used for the metropolitan centres from where the demand for sugar originated. Other words used include heartlands, centres or core regions

Miller the owner of a sugar mill

Molasses a black syrup remaining after the sugar syrup has been boiled and passed through the centrifugals (a device that spins off the syrup) for the last possible time

Moradores (**Brazil**) literal meaning ‘dwellers’; was an arrangement of tenancy and labour provision

Mill (v) the process of transforming harvested cane into raw sugar

Mill train crushing plant that crushes the harvested cane in the milling process. Each train is comprised of a number of ‘mills’ which are each made up of three rollers. The sets of mills or crushing rollers could be arranged as double, treble, quadruple or quintuple crushing

Muscovado sugar unrefined sugar with a high molasses content

Multiple effet evaporation

Evaporation of cane juice in a mill, occurring in a series of connected effets: double, triple, quadruple or quintuple

Periphery the words used for the colonial possessions which produced the products demanded by the metropole. An alternative word was hinterland

Petits habitants (**Louisiana**) smallholders

Pressure groups organized groups, formal associations or institutions which take overt political action to influence public policy

Open-kettle system method of sugar syrup and sugar crystal making in a mill, using a series of open kettles through which the sugar liquid was passed

Pastoral and Agricultural Associations

in Australia these rural associations came to conduct ‘shows’, which though promoting agricultural innovation, skill and agricultural products also incorporated ‘side-show alley’ which became the dominant attraction

Plantation An agricultural enterprise which combined both cultivation and processing stages i.e. was vertically integrated. Plantations in the colonial era were usually located in the tropics, grew crops that thrived in the tropics and were embarked on in order to satisfy imperial markets. They were invariably large in size and used slave or indentured labour under strict control

Planter owner or manager of a vertically integrated plantation

Plantation complex/socio-economic complex

The nature of the vertically integrated plantation demanded a large, supervised labour force and needed all aspects of production to be carried out on the plantation site in a fixed production cycle with degrees of specialization. Every aspect of the labour forces’ life and work was controlled by a strict social and managerial hierarchy giving rise to a particular socio-economic construct

Proprietary mill	CSR was an example of a proprietary mill. The shareholders are awarded the benefit of the profits of a proprietary mill rather than the farmer suppliers
Queenslander	(Australia) A type of domestic house construction that was constructed on stumps, and featured a central hallway and wrap around verandahs accessed through French doors. Typically found in Queensland
Raw sugar	the end product of the milling process. The unrefined sugar crystals that are separated from the syrup in the centrifugal
Refined sugar	white sugar crystals. The product with all impurities removed resulting from the refining process
Rollers	shredded cane is passed through rollers in a mill to separate the sugar juice from the bagasse. By 1880 there were usually three steel rollers in one set, arranged in a horizontal triangular formation
Rural extension	agricultural knowledge, education and innovation accessed via experimental farms, experiment stations, acclimatization societies, rural schools and colleges, agricultural literature, agricultural experts, government agricultural departments and facilities and membership of agricultural associations
Rust	rust disease (so-called) affecting cane crops in the 1870s. A disease of sugar cane caused by a mite which allows infection by the fungus red rot
Senhor de engenho	(Brazil) miller
Setts	a cane stalk was cut into setts. In the late nineteenth century setts were hand planted in the drills. New stools of cane bud from eyes on the setts

Share-croppers	a tenant farmer who pays part of the value of each season's crop as rent to the landowner. In share-cropping the landowner and the sharecropper shared the risks of production
Sidar	indentured Indian given the position of privileged overseer because his personal disposition, physical appearance and language skills lent them authority in their own communities
Slack	the months between harvest seasons
Squatter/squattocracy	both free settlers and ex-convicts, who occupied large tracts of Crown land as pastoral runs, without title. They became a squattocracy (a play on 'aristocracy') of substantial means and political influence in Australia
Statutory association	an association established by order of government legislation
Stool	the cluster of cane stalks that grow from a planted cane sett, or the regrowth of cane coming from the buds remaining on the stubble of cane left after harvesting
Sugar beet	A root vegetable whose root contains a high concentration of sucrose and which is grown for commercial sugar production
Sugar boiler	the person in a sugar mill who controls the process at the vacuum pan stage which produces the raw sugar crystals
Tenant	a farmer who pays rent to a planter or estate owner for the use of his land. In tenancy the tenant bears all the risks of cultivation
Tenantry System	(Barbados) apprenticeship arrangement. Freed slaves were given rent free accommodation with a small plot of land in return for their labour
Tramway	the original term for the 600mm or 2ft (610mm) railway used to haul sugar cane either by animals or steam locomotives

Trash	dry cane leaves removed by burning or by use of the hook on the end of the cane knife
Trashing	cleaning the cane of the lower leaves and the drills of weeds so the plant puts more energy into producing the stalk. A job done by hand prior to burning of cane before cane cutting
Trucks	wheeled receptacle with four stanchions onto which cane was loaded to be hauled by locomotive to the mill. Later called 'bin', a cage on wheels, with mechanization of the harvest
Usina	(Brazil) technologically advanced mill which operated as a central mill but replicated the vertically integrated plantation, owning their own lands and so reducing their dependency on outside suppliers
Vacuum pan	the vessel used in the milling process to boil the sugar syrup until raw sugar crystals are formed. This is done under greater vacuum than in the preceding evaporator stage
Vertically integrated plantation/vertical integration	a unit of production on which both cultivation and crushing of cane is conducted
Yeoman farmer	possible entomological origins: Old English. A farmer of small capital means, landowning and not labouring for others. Historically, refers to white, male farmers.

INTRODUCTION

By 1914 sugar cane growing in Australia had transformed the tropical and subtropical landscape, replacing forest trees with a seemingly endless vista of stands of sugar cane. That cane was not produced on plantations but by independent, white, small farmers supplying their cane for milling to a central mill. A significant impetus to this industrial arrangement in tropical north Queensland in the late nineteenth century was small farmers and their associations. This thesis argues that the Herbert River Farmers' Association was a leader of change. That association, with its yeoman ideals of land ownership and independence, challenged the hegemony of the planters while proving beyond doubt that white, small, sugar cane farmers, farming in a tropical environment, could provide a reliable supply of high-quality cane.

INTRODUCTION

The HRFA was formed in 1882 by six European small selectors to negotiate with the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR), proprietors of the Victoria plantation on the Herbert River. CSR was a large single-product company. As a cultivator, miller and refiner of sugar it had a reputation for sound practices both in the field and in the mills. Sugar cultivation on the Herbert was then conducted by planters who did not offer reliable contracts to small growers. The small selectors aspired to grow cane on their own land to supply to the CSR mill for crushing. In 1882 there were three mills though one would cease production in that year, and three more would begin crushing in 1883, including Victoria. In 1884, the selectors were advised by CSR that Victoria would contract with them to take their cane. From 1882 until 1976 the HRFA (with a name change to the Herbert River Farmers' League (HRFL) in 1896) served the small farmers giving them both a lobbying voice and a means to access rural extension.

"a clique of insignificant 'cockies', with a soul a little above sweet potatoes and pumpkins."¹ Such was the indictment of the farmers who formed the HRFA. One hundred and twenty years later the farmers and the association they formed, the HRFA, were

¹ John Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District being "The Memoirs of the Early Settlement of the Lower Herbert and the Start and Progress of the Sugar Industry in the District, 1932/33/35"* (Aitkenvale: Terry Lyons, 2002), 39. Original edition published in *Herbert River Express*, 11th October 1932 to 20th January 1934.

described by twenty-first century scholar Fredrik Lund as “agents of change.”² This assessment comes as rather a surprise given that the preceding principal exponents of sugar industry organisation history either critiqued the farmers’ associations of the Herbert, and local associations like them, as wielding no significant influence or dismissed them as “parochial and ephemeral.”³ Even so, in broader sugar industry scholarship “farmer pressure groups” were recognised as having contributed to the demise of plantation production and the development of farm-based central milling.⁴

Why are the opinions so contradictory? Formed in a district where the sugar industry was monopolised by plantations, and at a time when associations in the sugar growing world were those conducted by planters, the HRFA, at inception, was clearly regarded by some planters as presumptuous. When its roles were later replaced by statutory associations it suffered the ignominy of becoming invisible. In another instance of history being written from the top down, Australian sugar industry organisational history has focussed on the statutory associations created by government, while the dismissive tones used for the small farmers’ associations were shaped by the long arm of the planters and their class snobbery. This thesis asserts that rather than having souls “a little above sweet potatoes and pumpkins” the farmers of the HRFA were visionaries. Their association and others like it were agencies for change and occupy a unique space in sugar industry history. This thesis takes a bottom up view to explore the proposition that the HRFA and by extension, other farmers’ associations, were indeed agents of change contributing to the demise of the plantation and the restructure of the sugar industry.

THE BEGINNINGS

I am a cane cutter’s daughter and the wife of a former sugar cane farmer. As the ganger of a cane gang my father was responsible for negotiating on behalf of the gang with the farmer, and with the mill through the cane inspectors. He required an Australian Workers’ Union ticket to work as a cane cutter. From an early age I understood what avenues were

² Fredrik Larsen Lund, “A Norwegian Waltz: Norwegian Immigration and Settlement in Queensland 1879-1914” (Master’s thesis, University of Oslo, 2012), 92.

³ A.V. Ford, “Operations of the Queensland Cane Growers’ Association in the Herbert River District, 1927-1965” (B. Arts Hons. thesis, James Cook University, 1970), 9; Diana Shogren, “The Politics and Administration of the Queensland Sugar Industry to 1930” (PhD diss., University of Queensland, 1980), 384.

⁴ Adrian A. Graves, “The Abolition of the Queensland Labour Trade: Politics or Profits” in *Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism*, ed. E.L. Wheelwright and K.D. Buckley, vol. 4 (Sydney: Australia & New Zealand Book Company, 1980), 48.

available for the cane cutter to shape his “industrial landscape.”⁵ I learnt of farmer representational bodies when I married into a farming family. My husband is a member of the Herbert River Farmers’ League (HRFL) as his father was before him. His father was also an elected member, and then chairman, of the Victoria Mill suppliers’ committee of the CANEGROWERS Herbert River, a branch of CANEGROWERS, Australia. I have also since encountered the representational organisations that negotiated on behalf of farmers in my professional capacity as scholar and consultant historian.

During earlier research I found the history of the statutory organisation CANEGROWERS, Australia and its predecessors well documented in the secondary literature while I noticed a paucity of reference to their predecessors. The Herbert River farmers’ associations were occasionally mentioned by name, but the differing nomenclature intrigued me, varying between ‘association’, ‘league’ and ‘club,’ with one calling itself a Planters’ Club when it clearly was a farmers’ club. Adding to the confusion were overlapping memberships and years of operation. Further reading solved some of the mystery: the league’s predecessor was the HRFA and its beginnings in 1882 came at a critical point in the history of the sugar industry in tropical north Queensland, as it transformed from one that was conducted in vertically integrated plantation mode — where both cultivation and milling were carried out onsite — to one conducted by independent small farmers supplying cane to a central mill. Further inspection of contemporary newspapers revealed that Herbert River growers were vocal and far from parochial, instead keen to establish connections and secure support for issues from farmer associations in other sugar growing districts.

The questions that required answering immediately became apparent: were the HRFA and its successor the HRFL just local manifestations, or did they have precedents elsewhere? If so, what was the nature of those precedents? Would it be possible that what was happening in Queensland between 1872 and 1914 in relation to farmer organisations reflected a wider movement happening elsewhere in Australia and for that matter the wider sugar growing world?

⁵ Robert Mason, “Cane Fields and Solidarity in the Multiethnic North,” Queensland Historical Atlas, accessed April 7, 2016, <https://eprints.usq.edu.au/22761/>.

THESIS CONTEXT

The division of the sugar districts continues to be a moveable feast. This thesis uses a division that approximates that accepted during the period up to 1914, with the tropical sugar growing area making up No.1 district in which Ingham is located, and No. 2 district in which Mackay is situated.⁶ Within those two districts economic geographer Percy P. Courtenay identified three tropical sugar growing districts corresponding to three distinctive physical environments: Mackay, Lower Burdekin and Northern, which includes Ingham.⁷

This thesis's examination of the Herbert River Valley focuses on the years 1872 to 1914. Sugar had been grown in Australia since it was brought in with the First Fleet, and a sugar industry proper in Queensland dates from 1862 when the first successful plantation was established near Brisbane. The first sugar grown in the tropics was in Mackay, from 1867. However, in the northern tropical region the first viable sugar plantation and mill was not established until 1872 in the Herbert River Valley, with the plantation era ending by 1914. The Australian industry was able to draw on more than a century of experience from other sugar-growing colonies, though Queensland offered new challenges that organisations like the HRFA were set up to tackle.

This thesis seeks to place the Australian sugar industry in its larger context. The areas chosen for comparison are three old industries, Brazil, Louisiana and Barbados, and three new industries, Hawai'i, Fiji and Australia. Three hundred years separate the oldest industry—Brazil—from the newest. The Portuguese established the industry in Brazil; French, Spanish, Haitian refugees and Anglo-Americans the Louisianan industry; the British the Barbadian with the help of the Dutch; Anglo-Americans the Hawai'ian industry; the English (through the agency of Australian and New Zealander adventurers) the Fijian; and the English that of Australia. The sugar industry associations in those countries are examined within the timeframe of 1872 to 1914.

The choice of areas to use for comparison was not arbitrary. Australia shares a knowledge exchange of evolving technology and processes with Brazil and Louisiana. The British

⁶ *Queensland Sugar Industry* (Brisbane: The Government Intelligence and Tourist Bureau, 1913), Map insert. See Map 1.

⁷ Percy .P. Courtenay, *Northern Australia: Patterns & Problems of Tropical Development in an Advanced Country* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1982), 133-40.

settled both Barbados and Australia and therefore shared a common associative tradition. Hawai'i, like Louisiana, had strong sugar planters' associations which the Australian industry sought to emulate. The dominant miller in Fiji and tropical north Queensland was the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR) and in Fiji small farmers did farm sugar, even though they were former indentured labourer turned tenant farmers rather than the free selectors which made up Australian small farmers.

This thesis examines the period 1872 to 1914. In 1872 the first sugar plantation was established and the first cane crushed in the Herbert River Valley in tropical north Queensland. Historical geographer and authority on the Australian sugar industry Peter Griggs has identified three chronological periods in Australian sugar history with the third, the modern period, beginning in 1915.⁸ From 1915 onwards plantations had largely disappeared and sugar was grown on small farms with the harvested cane being sent to central mills for milling. State and federal governments controlled the industry through regulation and legislation. The fieldwork was done by unionised, white labour and Melanesian labourers had been deported or excluded from the industry. In that period the sugar industries of Brazil, Hawai'i, Louisiana, Barbados and Fiji were also adjusting to free labour and exploring central milling.

LITERATURE REVIEW - SECONDARY RESOURCES

Origins and nature of global sugar industries

Each sugar growing country of the world has a large, old, respected body of sugar industry research. For a survey of the origins and nature of sugar industries, J.H. Galloway, Helmut Blume and Noel Deerr are useful first ports of call.⁹ However, recent works note discrepancies in Deerr's record and he cannot be quoted without reservation. Bill Albert and A.A. Graves' collected work *Crisis and Change in the International Sugar Economy, 1860–1914* covers the timespan of this thesis.¹⁰ Reliable twentieth century scholars include, for Brazil, Peter Eisenberg, Robert M. Levine and Stuart B. Schwartz; for Hawai'i, Edward D. Beechert, Ralph S. Kuykendall, Ronald Takaki, and

⁸ Peter Griggs, *Global Industry, Local Innovation: The History of Cane Sugar Production in Australia, 1825-1995* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011), 1-3.

⁹ J.H. Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry: An Historical Geography from its Origins to 1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Helmut Blume, *The Geography of Sugarcane: Environmental, Structural and Economical Aspects of Cane Sugar Production* (Berlin: Verlag Dr. Albert Bartens, 1985); Noel Deerr, *The History of Sugar*, vols. 1, 2 (London: Chapman and Hall, 1949-50).

¹⁰ Bill Albert and A.A. Graves, eds., *Crisis and Change in the International Sugar Economy, 1860-1914* (Norwich: University of East Anglia, 1984).

Carol Ann MacLennan; for Louisiana, John Alfred Heitman, John Carlyle Sitterson, and Glen R. Conrad and Ray F. Lucas; for Barbados, Richard B. Sheridan, R.W. Beachey, and Gary Puckrein; and for Fiji, Brij V. Lal, J.C. Potts and Michael Moynagh.¹¹

This scholarship confirms that the vertically integrated plantation was a pervasive phenomenon across the sugar cane growing areas of the world. It demonstrates that local conditions in Brazil, Hawai'i, Louisiana, Barbados and Fiji determined that the plantations in each area were distinct iterations even if they shared a global pattern. The scholarship shows that the plantation positioned land ownership and political, social and economic power firmly in the hands of a white planter elite. It also proves that 'whiteness' did not guarantee land ownership if planters, governments and land legislation colluded to exclude small cultivators. Conspicuously missing from these accounts is the way that agricultural associations in those sugar growing areas were conduits for agricultural extension and channels used to lobby government. Nor do they identify that these were networked into a global associative movement.

The histories of the sugar growing areas of Brazil, Hawai'i, Louisiana, Barbados and Fiji corroborate Australian scholars' claims that Australia was an exceptional iteration of the global pattern. These Australian sugar industry authorities include Peter Griggs, Clive

¹¹ Peter L. Eisenberg, *The Sugar Industry in Pernambuco: Modernization without Change, 1840-1912* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974); Robert M. Levine, *The History of Brazil* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999); Stuart B. Schwartz, *Sovereignty and Society in Colonial Brazil: The High Court of Bahia and its Judges, 1609-1751* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); Stuart B. Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society Bahia: 1850-1835* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Edward D. Beechert, "Patterns of Resistance and the Social Relations of Production in Hawaii," in *Plantations Workers: Resistance and Accommodation*, ed. Brij V. Lal, Doug Munro, and Edward D. Beechert (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1993), 45-68; Ralph S. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, vols. 1, 3 (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1968); Ronald Takaki, *Pau Bana: Plantation Life and Labor in Hawaii, 1835-1920* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1983); Carol Ann MacLennan, "Plantation Capitalism and Social Policy in Hawaii" (PhD diss., University of California, 1979); Carol Ann MacLennan, *Sovereign Sugar: Industry and Environment in Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014); John Alfred Heitman, *The Modernization of the Louisiana Sugar Industry, 1830-1910*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987); John Carlyle Sitterson, *Sugar Country: The Cane Sugar Industry in the South 1753-1950* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1953); Glen R. Conrad and Ray F. Lucas, *White Gold: A Brief History of the Louisiana Sugar Industry 1795-1995* (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1995); Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies 1623-1775* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); R.W. Beachey, *The British West Indies Sugar Industry in the Late 19th Century* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957); Gary A. Puckrein, *Little England: Plantation Society and Anglo-Barbadian Politics, 1627-1700* (New York: New York University Press, 1984); Brij V. Lal, "'Nonresistance' on Fiji Plantations: The Fiji Indian Experience, 1879-1920," in *Plantations Workers: Resistance and Accommodation*, ed. Brij V. Lal, Doug Munro, and Edward D. Beechert (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1993), 190-93; J.C. Potts, "An Outline of the Successful Development of the Small Farm System in the Fiji Sugar Industry," *Fiji Society Transactions & Proceedings* April (1963); Michael Moynagh, *Brown or White? A History of the Fiji Sugar Industry, 1873-1973* (Canberra: The Australian National University, 1981).

Moore, Ralph Shlomowitz, Percy P. Courtenay, and Kay Saunders.¹² Others are Adrian A. Graves and B.W. Higman. Griggs wrote multiple works on the sugar industry culminating in the authoritative tome *Global Industry, Local Innovation: The History of Cane Sugar Production in Australia, 1820-1995*. His descriptions of both the plantation and small farming systems in Australia and his research on crop disease and pests have been particularly helpful. Historian Clive Moore's scholarship on the sugar industry has also been extensive and began with the valuable "Transformation of the Mackay Sugar Industry, 1883-1900." Like Griggs, he identified the planters' and small farmers' origins and characteristics. It was also possible to glean from the works of Griggs and Moore some idea of the issues addressed by sugar industry associations in the sugar districts. Moore also expounded on the Melanesian experience and his monograph *Whips and Rum Swizzles* is a particularly evocative piece on the planter and indentured labourer dynamic. Economic historian Ralph Shlomowitz has written widely on the Australian sugar industry with particular reference to labour. His comparative works have been particularly useful to this thesis. Scholars have suggested many valid reasons why the use of indentured labour was abandoned and why a transition was made to central milling in Australia. Shlomowitz argued that labour issues provided the most critical impetus.¹³ His writings on the economics of Melanesian labour complement historian Kay Saunders'

¹² Their works include: Griggs, *Global Industry, Local Innovation*, "'Rust' Disease Outbreaks and Their Impact on the Queensland Sugar Industry, 1870-1880," *Agricultural History* 69 (1995): 413-37, "Sugar Plantations in Queensland, 1864-1912: Origins, Characteristics, Distribution, and Decline," *Agricultural History* 74 (2000), 609-47 and "The Origins and Early Development of the Small Cane Farming System in Queensland, 1870-1915," *Journal of Historical Geography* 23 (1997): 46-61; Clive Moore, "The Transformation of the Mackay Sugar Industry, 1883-1900," (B. Arts Hons. thesis, James Cook University, 1974), "Whips and Rum Swizzles," in, second series (Townsville: James Cook University, 1975), 119-34 and "Queensland Sugar Industry from 1860 to 1900," in *Lectures on North Queensland History* (Townsville: James Cook University, 1974), 29-46; Ralph Shlomowitz, "The Fiji Labour Trade in Comparative Perspective, 1866-1914," *Pacific Studies* 9 (1986): 107-52 and "Plantations and Smallholdings: Comparative Perspectives from the World Cotton and Sugar Cane Economies, 1865-1939," *Agricultural History* 58 (1984): 1-16; Percy P. Courtenay, "Agriculture in North Queensland," *Australian Geographical Studies* 16 (1978): 29-42; *Plantation Agriculture*, rev. ed. (London: Bell & Hyman, 1980) and *Northern Australia*; Kay Saunders, *Workers in Bondage: The Origins and Bases of Unfree Labour in Queensland 1824-1916* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1982) and "The Workers' Paradox: Indentured Labour in the Queensland Sugar Industry to 1920," in *Indentured Labour in the British Empire 1834-1920*, ed. Kay Saunders, 213-49 (London: Croom Helm, 1984); Adrian A. Graves, *Cane and Labour: The Political Economy of the Queensland Sugar Industry, 1862-1906* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993) and "The Abolition of the Queensland Labour Trade"; B.W. Higman, "Sugar Plantations and Yeoman Farming in New South Wales," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 58 (1968): 697-719, accessed February 22, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2561714>.

¹³ Ralph Shlomowitz, "The Search for Institutional Equilibrium in Queensland's Sugar Industry 1884-1913," *Australian Economic History Review* 19 (1979): 91-122; Ralph Shlomowitz, "Melanesian Labor and the Development of the Queensland Sugar Industry, 1863-1906," *Research in Economic History* 7 (1982): 327-61.

work and her insights on the indentured labour movement. Saunders' analysis and classification of the developmental stages of the sugar industry together with Griggs' identification of three chronological periods in Australian sugar history have been very useful in locating the Herbert River planters and farmers within the chronology of the Australian sugar industry. Economic historian Adrian A. Graves' work was remarkable for its acknowledgment of the agency of small farmers and their associations in the transformative events that took the Queensland sugar industry from plantation to small farming. Economic geographer Percy P. Courtenay's writings on the plantation provided important insights on the old and modern plantation phenomena and his identification of its characteristics within a global context was a useful aid in appreciating the ways that the plantation manifested in areas other than Australia. His work *Plantation Agriculture* directed the reader to the significant theories of plantation theory and those theories' chief proponents. Historian B.W. Higman's significant article "Sugar Plantations and Yeoman Farming in New South Wales" detailed the social and environmental factors which determined why the plantation system did not prevail in New South Wales (NSW) as it did in Queensland.

The thesis concludes with the dilemma facing small farmers and their associations, not only on the Herbert but globally in the twenty-first century. Ian Drummond and Terry Marsden in their sobering work *The Condition of Sustainability* stressed the forces and events that threaten to make the Barbadian sugar industry unsustainable and the small family cane farm "an endangered species" in Australia.¹⁴

Sugar biology and the means devised to satisfy the human taste for white sugar

The plantation is a global phenomenon and the extent of that mode of production can be attributed to the botanical nature of sugar cane, the demand for crystallised white sugar, and sugar cane's peculiar cultivation and processing requirements.

Sugar cane technologist Noel Deerr, author of the comprehensive *History of Sugar*, is still the single most frequently referred to authority on the historical origins, nature and distribution of the sugar cane plant. Sugar cane research conducted by scientists M.K. Butterfield, A. D'Hont and N. Berding, and the sophisticated cytogenetic methods now

¹⁴ Ian Drummond and Terry Marsden, *The Condition of Sustainability* (London: Routledge, 1999), 191.

available, confirm his understandings and many of the taxonomic theories put forward from the 1930s.¹⁵

Scholarly disagreement reigns over whether the human taste for sugar is a natural predisposition or a learned response. Anthropologist Sidney Mintz and social scientist Claude Fischler are just two of those who wrestle with the power of the human taste for sugar. Mintz's seminal work *Sweetness and Power* is a particularly potent example of the scholarship on the topic.¹⁶ Regardless of how humans came by their taste, historian James Walvin's opinion that sugar was largely a taste "concocted" by imperial powers to further economic and colonial power in the periphery reflected a strong consensus of opinion.¹⁷

In order to cultivate sugar in the quantities demanded by the voracious appetite in the metropolises of Europe, and in a way that suited the biological nature of the sugar cane plant, sugar industries on the periphery developed a particular mode of production identified as the vertically integrated plantation. The trajectory of the plantation is disputed with economic and social historian Russel R. Menard suggesting that the plantation originated in Barbados.¹⁸ That theory was also proposed by archaeologist Chuck Meide who stated that the vertically integrated model was to be found in English, Dutch and French colonies.¹⁹ Conversely, historian Michael Craton referred to an account of a Barbadian planters' visit to Pernambuco in Brazil where he witnessed in action the vertically integrated plantation, or 'Pernambuco System,' which he consequently replicated in Barbados.²⁰

¹⁵ M.K. Butterfield, A. D'Hont and N. Berding, "The Sugarcane Genome: A Synthesis of Current Understanding, and Lessons for Breeding and Biotechnology," *Conference Proceedings, South African Sugar Technologists Association 75* (2001): 1-5, accessed February 2, 2015, doi:10.1.1.381.7670; Deerr, *History of Sugar*.

¹⁶ Sidney W. Mintz, "Pleasure, Profit, and Satiation," in *Seeds of Change. Five Hundred Years since Columbus*, ed. Herman J. Viola et.al. (Washington: Smithsonian Books, 1991), 112-29; Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985); Claude Fischler, "Is Sugar Really an Opium of the People?" *Food and Foodways 2* (1987): 141-50, accessed February 2, 2015, doi: 10.1080/07409710.1987.9961914.

¹⁷ James Walvin, "Sugar and the Shaping of Western Culture" in *White and Deadly: Sugar and Colonialism*, ed. Pal Ahluwalia, Bill Ashcroft, and Roger Knight (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 1999), 21-31.

¹⁸ Russel R. Menard, *Sweet Negotiations: Sugar, Slavery, and Plantation Agriculture in Early Barbados* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006).

¹⁹ Chuck Meide, "The Sugar Factory in the Colonial West Indies: An Archaeological and Historical Comparative Analysis," *Academia.edu*, December (2003): 1-71, accessed April 4, 2015, http://www.academia.edu/3258102/The_Sugar_Factory_in_the_Colonial_West_Indies_an_Archaeological_and_Historical_Comparative_Analysis.

²⁰ Michael Craton, "Reluctant Creoles: The Planters' World in the British West Indies," in *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire*, ed. Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 314-62.

The global pattern of the plantation

The plantation was a response to the peculiar cultivation and processing requirements of sugar cane. Two distinct modes of agricultural production, the small farm and the plantation, occupy a large space in agricultural scholarship and debate.²¹ Graves and co-author Peter Richardson commented that the theory of plantation economy has had “a long and rich intellectual pedigree, drawing upon classical and Marxist economic traditions.”²² Attempts to reach a consensus of opinion on a definition and theory of ‘plantation’ remain elusive into the twenty-first century. Perversely, the industrial, social, political and economic characteristics which provide a commonly accepted definition of plantation are the key discourses which shape a divisive plantation debate. Courtenay reviewed the numerous definitions of plantations in his examination of the Queensland plantation. He identified the key discourses as location, size, crop, purpose, labour and market orientation.²³

Amy Clukey, whose research interests are global modernism and Southern studies, asserted that there can be observed “iterations” of a global pattern of plantations refracted through local conditions.²⁴ This thesis identifies the global pattern as geographic locality, imperial motive, product, size, labour use, control and management, and industrial organisation. Iterations of that global pattern refracted through local conditions are to be observed in Brazil, Hawai’i, Louisiana, Barbados, Fiji and Australia. However, in identifying this pattern, the caution offered by Edgar Tristram Thompson, an expert on the anthropology of race and plantation society, must be acknowledged: that those characteristics should be understood as arising from forces working within the plantation system rather than being an explanation of it.²⁵ Gary A. Puckrein made a similar

²¹ Examples of different views debated can be found in writings such as: Courtenay, *Plantation Agriculture*; Howard F. Gregor, “The Changing Plantation,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 55 (1965): 221-38; C.C. Goldthorpe, “A Definition and Typology of Plantation Agriculture,” *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 8 (1988): 26-43, accessed March 11, 2015, doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9493.1987.tb00183.x; Paul S. Taylor, “Plantation Agriculture in the United States: Seventeenth to Twentieth Centuries,” *Land Economics* 30 (1954): 141-52; Higman, “Sugar Plantations and Yeoman Farming.”

²² Adrian A. Graves and Peter Richardson, “Plantations in the Political Economy of Colonial Sugar Production: Natal and Queensland, 1860-1914,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 6 (1980): 214-29.

²³ Percy P. Courtenay, “An Approach to the Definition of the Plantation,” *Geographia Polonica* 19 (1970): 81-90; Courtenay, *Plantation Agriculture*.

²⁴ Amy Clukey, “Plantation Modernity: Gone with the Wind and Irish Southern Culture,” *American Literature* 85 (2013): 505-30, accessed March 20, 2015, doi: 10.1215/00029831-2079305.

²⁵ Edgar T. Thompson, “The Climatic Theory of the Plantation,” *Agricultural History* 15 (1941): 60; Courtenay, *Plantation Agriculture*, 12-13; Graves and Richardson, “Plantations in the Political Economy.”

observation about plantation society noting that it was “a distinct social system that fostered forces peculiar to its internal structure.”²⁶

Historian Philip D. Curtin referred to a ‘plantation complex.’²⁷ Cuban historian Manuel Moreno Fraginals identified it as a socio-economic complex.²⁸ Russell R. Menard was another who spoke of the plantation as a complex.²⁹ Curtin’s opinion that it was an “utterly wasteful and irrational” system is shared across the scholarship.³⁰ Exponent of post-colonial theory Bill Ashcroft described the plantation as “socially, materially, economically and ecologically totalitarian” and emphasised that wherever the plantation took hold it introduced a monoculture and its planters became the socially dominant class.³¹ Walvin accused it of being “instrumental in some of the most grotesque and inhuman exchanges between Europeans and colonial peoples.”³² Academic economists such as George L. Beckford and Lloyd Best generated a model—the Plantation Economy Model (PEM)—to explain the legacy of that exchange in former plantation colonies.³³ Ashcroft and Walvin agreed that both former sugar growing areas and areas still growing sugar evidence the historical legacies of the colonial plantation’s industrial dynamic. A particular historical legacy of the plantation was its constraint on associative behaviour, and what types of agricultural associations were formed; not only before 1914 but after, by whom, and what changes they hoped to effect.

Twenty-first century perspectives

In each sugar growing country of the world in the twenty-first century there has been a burst of new scholarship inviting consideration of hitherto ignored perspectives such as race relations (including the place of women within the race dialogue), ‘whiteness,’ sugar cane plant taxonomy, sugar technology, and the persistence of the plantation

²⁶ Puckrein, *Little England*, 74.

²⁷ Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

²⁸ Manuel Moreno Fraginals, *The Sugarmill: The Socioeconomic Complex of Sugar in Cuba 1760-1860* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976).

²⁹ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*.

³⁰ Curtin, *Rise and Fall*, 13.

³¹ Bill Ashcroft, “A Fatal Sweetness: Sugar and Post-Colonial Cultures,” in *White and Deadly*, ed. Pal Ahluwalia, et al., 36-37, 43.

³² James Walvin, *Fruits of Empire: Exotic Produce and British Taste, 1600-1800* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 150-51.

³³ George L. Beckford, *Persistent Poverty: Underdevelopment in Plantation Economies of the Third World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); Lloyd Best, “The Mechanism of Plantation-Type Economies. Outlines of a Model of Pure Plantation Economy,” *Social & Economic Studies* 17 (1968): 283-349.

phenomenon. Yet there is a clear gap in the scholarship, past and present, in robust comparative work on sugar agricultural associations, particularly those which include the Australian sugar industry.

Examples of new perspectives are those who revisit the vertically integrated plantation and its associated mill technology. Historian John E. Crowley suggested that while Barbados may not be the first manifestation of the vertically integrated mode of production it certainly reached a distinguishing level of “refinement” there.³⁴ Meanwhile, historians Ulbe Bosma and Roger Knight investigated the adoption of new mill technology in a comparative perspective, locating Queensland’s late nineteenth-century mill technology within the gamut of the “global factory.”³⁵ In the twenty-first century Lloyd Best revisited the PEM, a model which he had proposed several decades earlier.³⁶ His scholarship is particularly pertinent as a modern version of the plantation takes hold across the tropical world and as former plantation areas struggle with the legacy of the colonial plantation era.

There has been a particular new surge of research in plant genetics, especially those of significant commercial value like sugar. Plant geneticist Nathalia de Setta et al. and French sugar cane genomician Angelique D’Hont et al. are among those exploring this evolving field.³⁷ Popular writer Sanjida O’Connell’s *Sugar: The Grass that Changed the World* is a readable work complementing Walvin’s *Sugar and the Shaping of Western Culture*.³⁸ O’Connell provides a succinct account of the physical trajectory of the sugar

³⁴ John E. Crowley, “Sugar Machines: Picturing Industrialized Slavery,” *American Historical Review* 121 (2016): 405, accessed April 4, 2017, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/121.2.403>.

³⁵ Stuart B. Schwartz, “A Commonwealth within Itself: The Early Brazilian Sugar Industry,” in *Tropical Babylons: Sugar and the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450-1680*, ed. Stuart B. Schwartz (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 158-201; Crowley, “Sugar Machines: Picturing Industrialized Slavery,” 403-06; Ulbe Bosma and Roger Knight, ““Global Factory and Local Field: Convergence and Divergence in the International Cane-Sugar Industry, 1850-1940,” *International Review of Social History* 49 (2004): 1-25.

³⁶ Lloyd Best and Kari Polanyi Levitt, *Essays on the Theory of Plantation Economy: A Historical and Institutional Approach to Caribbean Economic Development* (Jamaica, Barbados, and Trinidad and Tobago: University of the West Indies Press, 2009).

³⁷ Nathalia de Setta et al., “Building the Sugarcane Genome for Biotechnology and Identifying Evolutionary Trends,” *BMC Genomics*, 15:540 (2014): unpaginated, accessed February 6, 2015, doi: :10.1186/1471-2164-15-540; Angelique D’Hont, Florence Paulet, and Jean Christophe Glaszmann, “Oligoclonal Interspecific Origin of ‘North Indian’ and ‘Chinese’ Sugarcanes,” *Chromosome Research* 10 (2002): 253-62.

³⁸ Sanjida O’Connell, *Sugar: The Grass that Changed the World* (London: Virgin Books, 2004); Walvin, “Sugar and the Shaping of Western Culture”.

cane plant in its spread around the globe and the groups of peoples who were the agents of that trajectory.

The colonising behaviours of the imperial powers and the role of sugar within those behaviours have also attracted renewed scholarly interest. Sociologist Julian Go has compared the colonising behaviours of Britain and America, illustrating that America was just as imperialistic though its approach may have been more informal than Britain's imperial activities. Economic historian John Schultz reappraised post-bellum Brazil and the economic policies that consolidated rather than challenged the status quo of the plantocracy.³⁹ Historian Lawrence H. Kessler shook up previously held perceptions about sugar in Hawai'i, particularly the role of the missionaries in advancing the progress of an industry which conformed to their principles.⁴⁰ As recently as 2018 historian Gregory Rosenthal turned the lens on the ways that indigenous Pacific Islanders were used as labour with European colonisation and their hitherto neglected multifarious contributions to the economy and environment of the Pacific world.⁴¹ Historian Judith Kelleher Schafer re-examined antebellum Louisiana. Reputed for her apt turn of phrase, her description of sugar as a "forced crop" in Louisiana was particularly fitting.⁴²

The profitability of slavery is open to renewed contention with political scientist David B. Ryden and historians Peter A. Coclanis and Stanley L. Engerman coming to differing conclusions.⁴³ Menard argued against former understandings of the plantation in Barbados as being introduced on the back of sugar, conjecturing that rather it was cotton that introduced elements of the industrial model of the vertically integrated plantation that allowed sugar to flourish.⁴⁴ Historian Peter Thompson critiqued the Barbadian planter, his attitude to his slaves and the environmental impact of his plantation through

³⁹ John Schultz, *The Financial Crisis of Abolition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

⁴⁰ Lawrence H. Kessler, "A Plantation upon a Hill: Or, Sugar without Rum: Hawai'i's Missionaries and the Founding of the Sugarcane Plantation System," *Pacific Historical Review* 84 (2015): 129-62, accessed May 7, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/phr/2015.84.2.129>.

⁴¹ Gregory Rosenthal, *Beyond Hawai'i: Native Labor in the Pacific World* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018).

⁴² Judith Kelleher Schafer, "Life and Labour in Antebellum Louisiana," in *Louisiana: A History*, ed. Bennett H. Wall and John C. Rodrigue (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 156-96.

⁴³ David Beck Ryden, "Does Decline Make Sense? The West Indian Economy and the Abolition of the British Slave Trade," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 31 (2001): 347-74, accessed March 31, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org.elibrary.jcu.edu.au/stable/207086>; Peter A. Coclanis and Stanley L. Engerman, "Would Slavery Have Survived Without the Civil War? Economic Factors in the American South During the Antebellum and Postbellum Eras," *Southern Cultures* 19 (2013): 66-90 and 119, accessed March 31, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com.elibrary.jcu.edu.au/docview/1448439107?accountid=16285>.

⁴⁴ Julian Go, *Patterns of Empire: The British and American Empires, 1688 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

the lens of a meticulously kept planter's book of instructions.⁴⁵ Nalini Mohabir has reevaluated the slave and indenture experience and suggests that they were not a sequential phenomenon.⁴⁶ Educational specialist Umesh Sharma and co-author Helen Irvine took a new critical look at the disparity between CSR's sophisticated milling concerns and their treatment of Fijian indentured labour.⁴⁷ The clock and bell as instruments of control have long held interest for plantation scholars. As recently as 2014 Theresa A. Singleton discussed the use of bells and clocks in plantation life as a tool of coercion.⁴⁸

The theme of the conference organised by the Eleventh International Congress on the Enlightenment, held in August 2003, in Los Angeles, was "Agriculture and Sciences in the XVIIIth Century." The conference organisers said that the agricultural science movement, and its foundational influences which included the agricultural societies, was a "relatively unstudied topic."⁴⁹ While true then, the associative movement is now receiving renewed scrutiny, though this scholarship is scattered and uncoordinated. Urban historian Peter Clark only made small reference to agricultural associations in his 516 page tome *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800*.⁵⁰ Economist and social historian Amélia Branco and sociologist Ester Gomez da Silva commented on agricultural associations in Portugal between 1820 and 1930 and the often effective role they played in rural education and influencing government for the provision of extension services.⁵¹ A collection of essays edited by Koen Stapelbroek and Jani Marjanen confirms the tendency of the historiography to focus on associations formed by the elite with the high-

⁴⁵ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*; Peter Thompson, "Henry Drax's Instructions on the Management of a Seventeenth-Century Barbadian Sugar Plantation," *William and Mary Quarterly* 66 (2009): 565-604, accessed January 27, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org.elibrary.jcu.edu.au/stable/40467523>.

⁴⁶ Nalini Mohabir, "Servitude in the Shadow of Slavery," in *Human Bondage in the Cultural Contact Zone: Transdisciplinary Perspectives on Slavery and Its Discourses*, ed. Raphael Hörmann and Gesa Mackenthun. (Münster: Waxmann, 2010), 237.

⁴⁷ Umesh Sharma and Helen Irvine, "The Governance and Accounting for Indentured Labour on Fijian Sugar Plantations 1879-1920" (presentation, 6th Annual New Zealand Management Accounting Conference, 2012, Asia Pacific Interdisciplinary Research in Accounting Conference, 2013).

⁴⁸ Theresa S. Singleton, "Nineteenth Century Built Landscape of Plantation Slavery in Comparative Perspective," in *The Archaeology of Slavery: A Comparative Approach to Captivity and Coercion*, ed. Lydia Wilson Marshall (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2014), 93-115.

⁴⁹ "Agriculture and Sciences in the XVIIIth Century" (conference organised by the Eleventh International Congress on the Enlightenment, August 3-10, 2003, Los Angeles).

⁵⁰ Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800: The Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000).

⁵¹ Amélia Branco and Ester Gomez da Silva, "Growth, Institutional Change and Innovation, 1820-1930," in *An Agrarian History of Portugal, 1000-2000: Economic Development on the European Frontier*, ed. Dulcie Freire and Pedro Lains (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2017).

minded precept of improving the masses and progressing the nation.⁵² Meanwhile, historian Celso Thomas Castilho made some tantalising references to sugar planters' associations and clubs in Brazil, regrettably with little elaboration. He in fact refers to that paucity of detail saying that the smaller agricultural 'clubs' in the sugar districts of Brazil "need further study."⁵³ There are also some scholars who, like the writer of this thesis, are endeavouring to either site the histories of agricultural associations within broader contexts or validate agricultural associations within the time periods they operated by drawing upon regional examples. Scholar in cultural geography and race historiography Kay Anderson implicated all Australian agricultural associations when she contended that "few organizations were as intimately implicated in effecting the surfaces and spatialities of white 'settlement' as the colony's [New South Wales] agricultural society."⁵⁴ Historian of British history Sarah Holland made detailed case studies of agricultural associations, including farmers' clubs in the Doncaster district in South Yorkshire, Britain, and concluded that those case studies confirmed the "integral role that agricultural societies performed as practical forums to stimulate and sustain the development and exchange of ideas."⁵⁵

Twenty-first century perspectives on 'Whiteness'

A particular new area of scholarship has been 'whiteness' though 'whiteness' overlaps with old arguments about acclimatisation, plantations and the tropics.⁵⁶ The nineteenth century perception was that whites could not work in the tropics, and that the race would degenerate over time. Various scholars including German geographer Leo Waibel, Cuban historian and economist Ramiro Guerra y Sanchez and American anthropologist John D. Kelly have shared perspectives on the contentious theory of acclimatisation which, as Thompson said, seems go hand in glove with "white settlement in equatorial regions."⁵⁷

⁵² Koen Stapelbroek and Jani Marjanen, eds., *The Rise of Economic Societies in the Eighteenth Century: Patriotic Reform in Europe and North America* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

⁵³ Celso Thomas Castilho, *Slave Emancipation and Transformations in Brazilian Political Citizenship* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016), 100.

⁵⁴ Kay Anderson, "White Natures: Sydney's Royal Agricultural Show in Post-Humanist Perspective," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 28 (2003): 422-41.

⁵⁵ Sarah Holland, "Knowledge Networks in the Mid Nineteenth Century England: A Case Study of Agricultural Societies in the Doncaster District," (presentation, Knowledge Networks Conference, Leuven, 2014).

⁵⁶ See Appendix 1.

⁵⁷ Leo Waibel, "The Climatic Theory of the Plantation: A Critique," *Geographical Review* 32 (1942): 307-10; Ramiro Guerra y Sanchez, *Sugar and Society in the Caribbean: An Economic History of Cuban Agriculture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1964); John D. Kelly, "The Other

Courtenay has previously examined the racial theories and misconceptions that shaped attitudes to ‘whiteness’ in tropical Australia.⁵⁸

The farming of sugar by white, small farmers in tropical north Queensland in the period 1872-1914 was an industrial exception in the sugar growing world. This was a triumph, given that the independent, landowning, small farmers of the Herbert River Valley were waging what was essentially a class battle with the planters, one that was not won universally by small farmers elsewhere, whether they were indigenous, former indentured workers or white. To be noted though, is that amongst the first small sugar farmers in the Herbert River Valley were non-white farmers, though few owned land. Griggs and Patricia Mercer both examined the contributions of alien agriculturalists in north Queensland in earlier studies.⁵⁹ Historians Janice Wegner and Sandi Robb made the first examination of the Chinese presence on the Herbert as recently as 2014.⁶⁰

Indigenous Australians, Melanesians and Chinese all farmed in defiance of the fact that there was no official vision for them, nor for others of non-European origins, to farm sugar cane. After federation, and with the White Australia Policy, they became increasingly marginalized by discriminatory legislation and consequently the number of non-European farmers diminished. Colonial and post-colonialism historian Tracey Banivanua-Mar articulated that settlement and economic development of tropical north Queensland by Europeans was rationalized by racial theories and attitudes that sanctioned violence, social segregation and ultimately forced repatriation.⁶¹ While this writer does not assert that the independent, white farmer is superior because of his *whiteness*, in the years 1872 to 1914 that certainly was the perception.

Leviathans: Corporate Investment and the Construction of a Sugar Colony,” in *White and Deadly*, ed. Pal Ahluwalia et al., 95-134; Thompson, “The Climatic Theory of the Plantation,” 49-60.

⁵⁸ Percy P. Courtenay, “The White Man and the Australian Tropics: A Review of Some Opinions and Prejudices of the Pre-War Years,” *Lectures on North Queensland History*, second series (Townsville: James Cook University, 1975), 57-66.

⁵⁹ Peter Griggs, “Alien Agriculturalists: Non-European Small Farmers in the Australian Sugar Industry, 1880-1920,” in *White and Deadly*, ed. Pal Ahluwalia et al., 135-56; Patricia Mary Mercer, “The Survival of a Pacific Islander Population in North Queensland, 1900-1940” (PhD diss., Australian National University, 1981).

⁶⁰ Jan Wegner and Sandi Robb, “Chinese in the Sugar: A Case Study of Ingham and Halifax in the Lower Herbert District,” in *Rediscovered Past: Chinese Tropical Australia*, ed. Sandi Robb and Kevin Rains (East Ipswich: Chinese Heritage in North Australia Incorporated, 2014).

⁶¹ Tracey Banivanua-Mar, “Stabilising Violence in Colonial Rule: Settlement and the Indentured Labour Trade in Queensland in the 1870s,” *Labour History* 113 (2017): 9–29; and Tracey Banivanua-Mar, *Violence and Colour: The Australian-Pacific Indentured Labour Trade* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2007).

Social theorist Colin Salter articulated the problematic nature of the terms ‘white’ and ‘whiteness’. He determined that ‘whiteness’ was a “socially constructed and constituted” phenomenon which stood contrary to the other construct, the “racialized non-white *other*.”⁶² Historian Warwick Anderson wrote that whiteness in the Australian colonial and post-colonial era was “both a sovereign category and a flexible one.”⁶³ Anderson observed that during most of the nineteenth century being white meant having British ancestry but that by the turn of the century whiteness had diffused into referring to anybody of European origin.

Italians were swarthy enough to be a suitable replacement labour for the indentured labourers in the tropics, yet later could be lauded as worthy white small farmers. Given that Italians occupied a dichotomous space in the attribution of whiteness, twenty-first scholarship has explored that contradiction. How the successive waves of Italian migration to Australia conformed to the prevailing ideals of whiteness; how they were officially condoned as a replacement for indentured labour, even as the wider public feared that they would become another form of cheap labour; and their similarly fraught position as cane farmers in north Queensland, have all been themes developed by a number of scholars including Lara Palombo and Catherine Dewhirst.⁶⁴ Historians Jane Carey, Leigh Boucher and Katherine Ellinghaus suggested that whiteness studies have received little critical attention and that the way whiteness is looked at needs revisiting. Echoing Anderson’s opinion that whiteness was a flexible category, they observed that the Italian presence on the tropical Queensland sugar frontier indicated that “whiteness did not function in the same ways in all times and places.”⁶⁵

⁶² Colin Salter, *Whiteness and Social Change* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 31, accessed April 18, 2017, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com.elibrary.jcu.edu.au/lib/jcu/detail.action?docID=1165736>.

⁶³ Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health and Racial Destiny in Australia* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2002), 255.

⁶⁴ Lara Palombo, “Whose Turn Is It? White Diasporic and Transnational Practices and the Necropolitics of the Plantation and Internment Camps,” *Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Association, e-journal*, 3 (2007): 1-20, accessed June 2, 2017, <http://www.acrawsa.org.au/files/ejournalfiles/66LaraPalombo.pdf>; Catherine Dewhirst, “Collaborating on Whiteness: Representing Italians in Early White Australia,” *Journal of Australian Studies*, 32 (2008): 33-49, accessed June 26, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org.elibrary.jcu.edu.au/10.1080/14443050801993800>.

⁶⁵ Jane Carey, Leigh Boucher and Katherine Ellinghaus, “Historicising Whiteness: Towards a New Research Agenda,” in *Historicising Whiteness: Transnational Perspectives on the Construction of an Identity*, ed. Leigh Boucher, Jane Carey and Katherine Ellinghaus (Melbourne: RMIT Publishing in association with the School of Historical Studies, University of Melbourne, 2007), xi.

Historian Lyndon Megarrity invited a rethinking on attitudes to race and labour in colonial Queensland prior to 1901, in contrast to those prevailing attitudes that shaped the White Australia Policy. In the same way that Anderson and Carey et al. indicated that whiteness was a shifting category, Megarrity wrote that a ‘White Queensland’ could accommodate non-white workers but a ‘White Australia’ was a different matter, elucidating the reasons in his article “‘White Queensland’: The Queensland Government’s Ideological Position on the Use of Pacific Island Labourers in the Sugar Sector 1880-1901.”⁶⁶ More recently historian Russell McGregor in his 2016 book *Environment, Race, and Nationhood in Australia: Revisiting the Empty North* discussed the colonial government’s quandary of keeping the northern latitude white, juxtaposed against the pressing need to not only settle and develop but also garrison it.⁶⁷

Whiteness as a global construct

Whiteness was a valued construct across the sugar growing world. In Australia being white meant that small farmers could own land while non-whites were largely prohibited. Elsewhere in the sugar growing world, the monopolisation of landownership by the dominant white planter class meant that those of lesser means, whether white or non-white, were unable to acquire land. Being non-white however, presented the most significant barrier in most cases.

Eminent Brazilian historian Stuart B. Schwartz noted that the landowning sugar cane farmers, *lavradores de cana*, who held a relatively high social position compared to farmers of other crops, lost social prestige as a class when an increasing number of coloured *lavradores* took up cane planting.⁶⁸ Anthropologist Carol MacLennan, writing of Hawai’i, noted that there the unsuccessful idea of establishing a Caucasian small farmer class drawn from mainland USA was motivated by concerns of the growing Asian demographic.⁶⁹ Nowhere was the racial divide more explicit than in Louisiana. Twenty-first century historian Sarah Paradise Russell remarked on Afro-American planters as occupying an “anomalous space in the social structure,” sharing the economy with whites

⁶⁶ Lyndon Megarrity, “‘White Queensland’: The Queensland Government’s Ideological Position on the Use of Pacific Island Labourers in the Sugar Sector 1880-1901,” *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 52 (2006), 1-12.

⁶⁷ Russell McGregor, *Environment, Race, and Nationhood in Australia: Revisiting the Empty North* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

⁶⁸ Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations*, 448.

⁶⁹ MacLennan, “Plantation Capitalism,” 270.

but, regardless of their wealth and planter status, excluded from white social and familial networks.⁷⁰ In Australia central mills enabled independent, white farmers to assume control of some of the factors of production. Similarly, American historian Rebecca Scott noted that, in Louisiana, the new industrial modes opened the way for some small white farmers as tenants or share-croppers, while for former slaves it simply replicated “the longstanding racial divide.”⁷¹ In Barbados white settlers aspired to landownership just as immigrants to Australia did. Pioneer of biogeography David Watts observed that British settlers in the West Indies exhibited a discernible resistance to tenant farming.⁷² But as plantation agriculture consumed the arable land, settlers’ opportunities for landownership were limited. Neither were they, like their white counterparts in tropical north Queensland, inclined to work alongside slaves who, as non-whites and a disposable entity, were pressed into what Peter Thompson, drawing on rare first-hand accounts, described as a “toxic combination of demeaning work and oppressive discipline.”⁷³ Accounts of the Fijian sugar industry tend to overlook the first white settler hopefuls, their lifestyle and the reasons for their quick abandonment of colonial life in Fiji. Historian John Young filled in that gap with his *Evanescent Ascendancy: The Planter Community in Fiji*. There he described the efforts of the first white settlers in Fiji to create for themselves an enclave of white society with all its cultural practices.⁷⁴ Like Young, historian Claudia Knapman pointed out that in Fiji European settlement was never achieved. Her book *White Women in Fiji: 1835-1930* gives a critical and nuanced evaluation of the space women occupied in the racial tensions between the white minority elite, the Fijian landowners and the Indian labourers. It also gives a rare insight into CSR’s practice of imposing values of whiteness and otherness which coloured their business and social practices both in Fiji and Australia.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Sarah Paradise Russell, “Cultural Conflicts and Common Interests: The Making of the Sugar Planter Class in Louisiana, 1795-1853” (PhD diss., University of Maryland, 2000), 15.

⁷¹ Rebecca J. Scott, “Defining the Boundaries of Freedom in the World of Cane: Cuba, Brazil, and Louisiana after Emancipation,” *The American Historical Review* 99 (1994): 78, accessed September 2, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2166163>.

⁷² David Watts, *The West Indies: Patterns of Development, Culture and Environmental Change Since 1492* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 184.

⁷³ Thompson, “Henry Drax’s Instructions,” 575, 580.

⁷⁴ John Young, “Evanescent Ascendancy: The Planter Community in Fiji,” in *Pacific Island Portraits*, ed. J.W. Davidson and Deryck Scarr (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1970).

⁷⁵ Claudia Knapman, *White Women in Fiji: 1835-1930* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986).

The global agricultural association movement

A reading of secondary literature leads to the conclusion that, in the sugar industry world between 1872 and 1914, associations formed by white or former slave or indigenous small farmers in areas where planters were socially, politically and economically dominant either did not exist or if they did, their activities were not documented. That the HRFA was formed by independent, white, small sugar cane farmers in a tropical area where sugar cane was being cultivated by planters would seem to have been unique. Nevertheless, in another instance of history being written from the top down, neither it nor its fellow Australian small sugar cane farmer associations have received serious scrutiny. Donald McGauchie, who was president of the National Farmers' Federation in 1996, observed that "The history of farm organisations is the history of Australia." He emphasised the varied ways that farmers through their organisations shaped Australian society.⁷⁶ That should be equally true of other agricultural areas across the globe. The absence or presence of small farmers' organisations in sugar growing areas should say something about who was shaping society, politics and the economy there.

Planter and small sugar cane farmer associations were a manifestation of a worldwide agricultural association movement which originated in Great Britain and continental Europe and spread to the colonies. The movement gave farmers a means to access rural extension, encouraged agricultural skills and innovation, and provided them with a means to lobby governments with a united voice. The associations that were formed in the sugar growing areas of Hawai'i and Louisiana did so within the context of a strong propensity for association in the American colonies. Barbadian and Australian sugar growers' associations reflected the agricultural traditions and associative behaviours of the British Isles. Fiji illustrated the determining role of historical constraints imposed by CSR and its relationship with tenant farmers, while Brazil, as a Portuguese colony, offered a conspicuous contrast to the associative impulse to be witnessed in other American colonies.

Authority on English agrarian history H.S.A. Fox, industrial archaeologist Kenneth Hudson, and historian Nicholas Goddard were useful starting points for an understanding

⁷⁶ Tom Connors, *To Speak with One Voice: The Quest by Australian Farmers for Federal Unity* (Barton: National Farmers' Federation, 1996), v.

of the agricultural association movement in the British Isles.⁷⁷ Fox observed the historians' neglect of the farmers' clubs of nineteenth-century England.⁷⁸ Botanist and founder of the Agricultural History Society Rodney H. True chronicled the origins of the agricultural association in America.⁷⁹ French sociologist and political theorist Alexis de Tocqueville observed a strong propensity for associative behavior in his travels in America, though social scientist Mancur Olson, writing over a century later, offered a moderating perspective in regards to farmer associations there.⁸⁰ Sociologist Jeffrey M. Paige suggested reasons why associations formed or failed to form, and why they tended to be ephemeral. Those reasons can be translated to the Australian context.⁸¹ The dearth of association in the rural areas of Portugal amongst small farmers suggests why there was a similar lack of development of small farmer associations in Brazil. Agronomist Ana Novais and scholar Joana Dias Pereira both identified the key factors that inhibited the formation of associations of any kind, particularly rural ones, in Portugal. Those factors were historical constraints which in turn were all reflected in the Portuguese colony of Brazil.⁸² Those conclusions were substantiated by the writings of political scientist Anthony W. Periera and economist Fabian Scholtes who both offered reasons why associations in the sugar districts of Brazil were not as evident or as powerful as those in other parts of the sugar growing world in the late nineteenth century. They attributed those reasons to the Brazilian character.⁸³ Periera asserted that "Compared to

⁷⁷ H.S.A. Fox "Local Farmers' Associations and the Circulation of Agricultural Information in Nineteenth-Century England," in *Change in the Countryside: Essays on Rural England, 1500-1900*, ed. H.S.A. Fox and R.A. Butlin (London: Institute of British Geographers, 1979), 43-64; Kenneth Hudson, *Patriotism with Profit: British Agricultural Societies in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (London: Hugh Evelyn, 1972); Nicholas Goddard, "Agricultural Societies," in *The Victorian Countryside*, ed. G.E. Mingay, vol. 1 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 245-59.

⁷⁸ Fox, "Local Farmers' Associations," 44.

⁷⁹ Rodney H. True, "The Early Development of Agricultural Societies in the United States," *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1920* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1925).

⁸⁰ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America and Two Essays on America*, trans. Gerald E. Bevan (London: Penguin, 2003), 596; Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 148.

⁸¹ Jeffrey M. Paige, *Social Movements and Export Agriculture in the Underdeveloped World* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), 46.

⁸² Ana Novais, "Profit, Rent, Patrimony, and Risk on the Large Landed Estates in Southern Portugal toward the End of the Nineteenth Century," *Análise Social* 46 (2011): 6, 9, accessed October 26, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41330814>; Joana Dias Pereira, "Cooperation Facing Liberalism, Crisis and War: One Hundred Years of Portuguese Cooperative Experiences (1834-1934)" (presentation, Commons Amidst Complexity and Change, the Fifteenth Biennial Conference of the International Association for the Study of the Commons, Edmonton, Alberta, May 25-29, 2015).

⁸³ Anthony W. Periera, *The End of the Peasantry: The Rural Labor Movement in Northeast Brazil, 1961-1988* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), 81; Fabian Scholtes, *Status Quo and Prospects of*

Anglo-Saxons, Brazilians are just not good at voluntarily associating with one another.”⁸⁴ Unlike Brazil, a singular characteristic of the Hawai’ian sugar industry was a tradition of cooperative activity. In Hawai’i was to be found the embodiment of de Tocqueville’s Americans and their highly developed art of association. Larry K. Fukunaga, historian Edward D. Beechert, and MacLennan all recorded the details of the formation of planters’ associations and their branches, and the crises and needs that they were responding to.⁸⁵ The scholarship confirmed that the Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association (HSPA) became, as Beechert described it, “a monolithic, efficient, and ruthless organisation that was able to manipulate the full power of local, territorial, and, to a lesser extent, national, government.”⁸⁶ As in Hawai’i, in Louisiana there were long lasting planter associations. Historian John Alfred Heitman’s *The Modernization of the Louisiana Sugar Industry, 1830-1910* detailed the contribution of the Louisiana Sugar Planters’ Association (LSPA) to that modernisation. Historian John Carlyle Sitterson agreed with Heitman that the key to the modernisation of the Louisiana sugar industry was the LSPA.⁸⁷ Opinions about the small farmer agricultural movement in Louisiana are contrary. Historian John V. Baiamonte, Jr. and fellow historian William Ivy Hair drew very different conclusions.⁸⁸ Hair, in contrast to Baiamonte, described a significant bourgeoning of farmers’ clubs. Rural sociologist Carl C. Taylor was particularly useful for his opinions on the reasons agricultural associations were formed and by whom, and why they were more active in the sugar belt after the early 1890s.⁸⁹ The Barbadian expression of the agricultural association followed a very different path to that in Hawai’i and Louisiana. Historian F.A. Hoyos described the planters there as a “close knit group” who formed agricultural

Smallholders in the Brazilian Sugarcane and Ethanol Sector: Lessons for Development and Poverty Reduction, working paper 43 (Bonn: Centre for Development Research, 2009), accessed April 13, 2015, http://www.zef.de/uploads/tx_zefportal/Publications/wp43.pdf.

⁸⁴ Periera, *The End of the Peasantry*, 81.

⁸⁵ Larry K. Fukunaga, *A History of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association* (Manoa: College of Education, University of Hawai’i, 1978); Edward D. Beechert, *Working in Hawaii: A Local History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1985); MacLennan, “Plantation Capitalism”; MacLennan, *Sovereign Sugar*.

⁸⁶ Beechert, *Working in Hawaii*, 290.

⁸⁷ Heitman, *Modernization*, 3; Sitterson, *Sugar Country*, 253.

⁸⁸ John V. Baiamonte, Jr., “The Louisiana Farmers’ Protective Union: A Study in Ethnic Power and the Rise of the Political Career of James H. ‘Jimmy’ Morrison,” *Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 44 (2003), 75-98, accessed January 11, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org.elibrary.jcu.edu.au/stable/4233903>; William Ivy Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest: Louisiana Politics, 1877-1900* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008).

⁸⁹ Carl C. Taylor, “Farmers’ Organizations,” in *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. Edwin Robert Anderson Seligman and Alvin Saunders Johnson (New York: Macmillan, 1937), 129.

societies that promoted research and experiment.⁹⁰ Ryden and academic historian Andrew J. O’Shaughnessy offered constructive perspectives on the associative behaviour of West Indian planters in general.⁹¹ Though sugar grower associations were not formed by Indian sugar growers in Fiji until 1919 this does not mean that there was not associative behaviour. Sociologist Adrian C. Mayer identified the types of associations formed by Indian settlers.⁹² Indo-Fijian historian Brij V. Lal, in analysing the reasons why the occasions of collective resistance taken by Indian indentured workers in Fiji were so infrequent, made pertinent observations about the Indian migrant’s associative behaviour that are transferable to the Fijian Indian farmer.⁹³ Lal’s observations substantiate the thesis of Gilbert Etienne, the authority on development economics, that the poor “are not easily ‘clubbable’.”⁹⁴

The Australian agricultural association movement

There are numerous histories written of many communities’ agricultural show societies otherwise known as agricultural and pastoral associations. A comprehensive list of those can be found in the select bibliography of Kate Darian-Smith and Sara Wills’ short but pivotal work *Agricultural Shows in Australia: A Survey*.⁹⁵ In an example of history being written from the top down, royal agricultural societies have received some academic attention, as exemplified by the work of Kay Anderson mentioned before, but small farmers’ associations have not received the same scrutiny. Notable exceptions include the research conducted by two West Australian historians Michael White and Brian K. de Garis. They examined generalist agricultural associations there. White opined that they were at the centre of nearly every controversy in the developing colonies; de Garis went

⁹⁰ F.A. Hoyos, *Barbados: A History from Amerindians to Independence* (London: Macmillan Education, 1978), 137.

⁹¹ David Beck Ryden, “The Society of West India Planters and Merchants in the Age of Emancipation, c.1816-35,” (presentation, Annual Conference of the Economic History Society, Houston, March 27-29, 2015); Andrew J. O’Shaughnessy, “The Formation of a Commercial Lobby: The West India Interest, British Colonial Policy and the American Revolution,” *Historical Journal* 40 (1997): 71-95, accessed October 14, 2106, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3020953>.

⁹² Adrian C. Mayer, “Associations in Fiji Indian Rural Society,” *American Anthropologist* 58 (1956): 97-108.

⁹³ Lal, “‘Nonresistance’.”

⁹⁴ Gilbert Etienne as quoted in Guy Hunter, ed., *Enlisting the Small Farmer: The Range of Requirements* (London: Overseas Development Institute, 1983), 16.

⁹⁵ Kate Darian-Smith and Sara Wills, *Agricultural Shows in Australia: A Survey* (Victoria: The Australian Centre, University of Melbourne, 1999).

so far as to suggest that of all the voluntary organisations in colonial Western Australia, the agricultural associations were the most important “politically.”⁹⁶

Economist Geoff Raby, sociologist Alan W. Black and business scholar Russell A. Craig provide isolated examples of efforts to overview agricultural associations in Australia.⁹⁷ Raby helpfully contextualised the Australian experience within that of the British Isles and continental Europe. Black and Craig were critical of the small associations’ efforts at providing rural extension. In contrast Raby identified one of the fundamental roles of the agricultural association in Australia as rural extension. Raby argued that whatever the individual association’s purpose for forming in the first place, the most fundamental reason was that it was responding to a general lack of technical information for farmers, unavailable before the provision of such information was formalised in centralised, publicly funded institutions.⁹⁸ He argued that agricultural associations were important as an intermediate stage between “decentralized, individual innovative effort” and “centralized agricultural research” achieved with public funding.⁹⁹

Before 1901 Australia was a collection of British colonies administered by governors or lieutenant governors on behalf of the British Parliament. By 1860 all the colonies, except Western Australia, had been granted partial self-government. Though they had their own constitutions, parliaments and laws they were still bound by British colonial statutes while laws passed by the colonial parliaments could be overruled. Each of the colonies also passed municipal or rural local government legislation. With federation of the Australian colonies in 1901 the self-governing colonies became states of the Commonwealth of Australia. Research organisations, created both before and after Federation in 1901, depended on the co-operation of small farmers and their associations.

Political writer Bruce D. Graham identified the other fundamental role of the agricultural association in Australia: political lobbying. His observation was that the local clubs or associations were the manifestation of the farmers’ search for a political response to their

⁹⁶ Michael White, “Agricultural Societies in Colonial Western Australia 1831-70,” *History of Education* 29 (2000): 4, accessed November 8, 2016, doi: 10.1080/004676000284463; B.K. De Garis, “Political Tutelage, 1829-1870 in Western Australia,” in *A New History of Western Australia*, ed. C.T. Stannage (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1981), 313.

⁹⁷ Geoff Raby, *Making Rural Australia: An Economic History of Technical and Institutional Creativity, 1788-1860* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996); Alan W. Black and Russell A. Craig, *The Agricultural Bureau: A Sociological Study* (Armidale: University of New England, 1978).

⁹⁸ Raby, *Making Rural Australia*, 132.

⁹⁹ Raby, *Making Rural Australia*, 136.

problems.¹⁰⁰ His observation that agricultural communities saw themselves as separate to the wider Australian society and regarded “politics as a system of group warfare” offered a useful context for why sugar industry agricultural associations tended to assume a political role only after an initial reluctance.¹⁰¹ Political scientist Leslie F. Crisp commented that the small farmer associations, as pressure groups, served as intermediaries between the individual and the processes of government, helping to develop a collective consciousness.¹⁰²

Missing from the generalist discussions is mention of the Australian sugar industry, and the extension role played by its associations. Even in sugar industry scholarship there has been no cohesive attempt to make a connection between agricultural associations and extension. Neither has there been anything but a passing examination of the expressions of political and social associative behavior in the sugar districts in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Political scientist Diana Shogren, in her thesis on the politics of the Queensland sugar industry, acknowledged that the small sugar farmers’ associations of the late nineteenth century spoke for sugar farmers but as noted earlier, dismissed them as “parochial and ephemeral.”¹⁰³ Similarly, Annette Veree Ford, in a thesis on the Queensland Cane Growers’ Association (QCGA) of the Herbert River district, dismissed the farmers’ associations there, claiming that because of their limited membership they did not wield any significant influence.¹⁰⁴ Yet historian Janice Wegner, in her thesis on the Hinchinbrook Shire (Herbert River), observed that farmers’ associations “were multifaceted organisations, with educational, experimental, political and industrial roles.”¹⁰⁵ Graves, as mentioned earlier, even went so far as to argue that the political role played by farmers as members of their associations (or ‘farmer pressure groups’) contributed to the demise of plantation production and the development of farm-based central milling.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ B.D. Graham, *The Formation of the Australian Country Parties* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1966), 46.

¹⁰¹ Graham, *The Formation of the Australian Country Parties*, 31.

¹⁰² L.F. Crisp, *Australian National Government*, 2nd ed. (Croydon: Longman, 1970), 159.

¹⁰³ Shogren, 362.

¹⁰⁴ Ford, 9.

¹⁰⁵ Janice Wegner, “Hinchinbrook: The Hinchinbrook Shire Council 1879-1979” (Master’s thesis, James Cook University, 1984), 167.

¹⁰⁶ Graves, “The Abolition of the Queensland Labour Trade,” 48.

Moore, Griggs and Saunders have made passing though illuminating references to planters and small farmers' collective impulses in many of their works. Norwegian academic Fredrik Larsen Lund described Scandinavian migration to Queensland, including to the Herbert River Valley and the Scandinavian collective impulse, while European scholars Anders Nilsson, Lars Pettersson and Patrick Svensson as well as Joel Mokyr offered insights on that same collective impulse.¹⁰⁷ Like Shogren, Andrea Rebecca Howell and Majorie Pagani provided valuable understandings of sugar industry politics and of the evolution of the sugar cane farmers' association movement in Australia.¹⁰⁸ Not only Pagani, but Australian historian Geoffrey Bolton; social anthropologist William Douglass; academic of both accounting history and the sugar industry Geoff Burrows and co-author Clive Morton; and renowned Queensland historian John Kerr all mentioned specific small grower associations in tropical north and far north Queensland.¹⁰⁹

The explorations of 'whiteness' made by the aforementioned writers Salter, Carey et. al, Megarrity, Anderson and McGregor made it patently clear why, in tropical north Queensland, small farmers and those who formed both planter and small farmer agricultural associations were white and particularly of Anglo-Celtic origins. Mercer's study of the Pacific Islander community in north Queensland, and Wegner and Robb's of the Chinese on the Herbert, prompt similar conclusions as to why those communities of farmers were excluded from the associative movement.

Local content

North Queensland has a substantial written history and the lower Herbert has its fair share of that corpus. Significant for this thesis is Ian Frazer's discussion of the persistence of small farmers such as those who settled on the Herbert; Lund's account of Scandinavian

¹⁰⁷ Lund, "A Norwegian Waltz"; Anders Nilsson, Lars Pettersson and Patrick Svensson, "Agrarian Transition and Literacy: The Case of Nineteenth Century Sweden," *European Review of Economic History* 3 (1999), 79-96, accessed June 17, 2018, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41377843>; Joel Mokyr, "The Intellectual Origins of Modern Economic Growth," *Journal of Economic History* 65 (2005), 285-351, accessed June 17, 2018, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3875064>.

¹⁰⁸ Marjorie Pagani, *T.W. Crawford: Politics and the Queensland Sugar Industry* (Townsville: James Cook University, 1989); Andrea Rebecca Howell, "The Australian Sugar Industry, 1850-1939," (B. Arts Hons. thesis, University of Queensland, 1983).

¹⁰⁹ Geoffrey Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away: A History of North Queensland to 1920* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1972); William Douglass, *From Italy to Ingham: Italians in North Queensland* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1995); Geoff Burrows and Clive Morton, *The Canecutters* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1986); John Kerr, *Northern Outpost* (Mossman: Mossman Central Mill Company, 1979).

settlement on the Herbert; and Ford's thesis on the QCGA in the Herbert River District.¹¹⁰ Wegner's thesis on the Hinchinbrook Shire was essential reading.¹¹¹ Another, which informed chapter six and the concluding chapter, was Barbara Pini's study of gender bias in the CANEGROWERS with a focus on the Herbert River Valley.¹¹² Moore's thesis "The Transformation of the Mackay Sugar Industry, 1883-1900" and Bianka Vidonja Balanzategui's thesis "The Material Aspects of the Tropical North Queensland Sugar Cane Industry 1872 to 1955" both provided detail on mill operation and technology, while Vidonja Balanzategui's thesis also described the material culture of planter homes and farmers cottages.¹¹³ The latter was complemented by Alan Frost's unpublished paper "The Queensland High-Set House. Its Origins, Diffusion, Refinement and Sociology" and Peter Bell's research on the development of the Queensland house including a paper based on extracts from an unpublished report to the Queensland Heritage Council entitled "A History of the Queensland House."¹¹⁴ Author Dorothy Jones wrote several local history works including *The Cardwell Shire Story*.¹¹⁵ Her account is complemented by Vidonja Balanzategui's comprehensive history of the Herbert River Valley, *The Herbert River Story*.¹¹⁶

CONTEMPORARY SOURCES

There is a rich body of pre-1915 material. Apart from Ellis Rowan's *A Flower Hunter in Queensland and New Zealand* and Flora Shaw's descriptive letters following visits to the plantations on the Herbert, snippets of life on the Herbert prior to 1915 can be gleaned from other works with careful reading.¹¹⁷ These works include Carl Lumholtz's *Among Cannibals* and Robert Arthur Johnstone's account of his time in the north. Responsible

¹¹⁰ Ian Frazer, "Conservationism and Farming in North Queensland, 1861-1970" (Master's thesis, James Cook University, 2003); Lund; Ford.

¹¹¹ Wegner, "Hinchinbrook."

¹¹² Barbara Pini, "From the Paddock to the Boardroom: The Gendered Path to Agricultural Leadership in the Australian Sugar Industry," (PhD diss., Queensland University of Technology, 2001).

¹¹³ Moore, "The Transformation of the Mackay"; Bianka Vidonja Balanzategui, "The Material Aspects of the Tropical North Queensland Sugar Cane Industry 1872 to 1955," (Master's thesis, James Cook University, 1996).

¹¹⁴ Alan Frost, "The Queensland High-Set House. Its Origins, Diffusion, Refinement and Sociology," (unpublished paper, 1992); Peter Bell, "A History of the Queensland House," (paper based on extracts from an unpublished report to the Queensland Heritage Council: Guidelines for Entering Houses in the Queensland Heritage Register, 2002), <https://flinders.academia.edu/PeterBell>.

¹¹⁵ Dorothy Jones, *Cardwell Shire Story* (Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1961).

¹¹⁶ Bianka Vidonja Balanzategui, *The Herbert River Story* (Ingham: Hinchinbrook Shire Council, 2011).

¹¹⁷ M.E. Rowan, *A Flower Hunter in Queensland and New Zealand* (London: John Murray, c. 18980); Flora Shaw, *Letters from Queensland* (London: Macmillan, 1893); Flora Shaw, "The Sugar Industry in Queensland," *Times*, January 9, 1893, reprinted in *The Sugar Question in Queensland: A Series of Papers* (Brisbane: Watson, Ferguson and Co., 1901).

for the native police on the Herbert, his account is a whitewashed one.¹¹⁸ Another was an account given by an anonymous Danish immigrant when he passed through the Herbert Valley looking for work.¹¹⁹ Descriptive literature of progress on the Herbert is not as available as it is for the central district of Mackay. Examples of works about Mackay are George G. Perkins' *Mackay. An Essay upon The Rise, Progress, Industries, Resources and Prospects of the Town & District of Mackay* and Aeneas F. Munroe's *The Sugar Fields of Mackay*.¹²⁰

The main emphasis of pre-1915 material is either remarking on the progress of the sugar industries in NSW and Queensland or manuals on how to cultivate and produce sugar and its by-products. The former includes J.V. Chataway's *The Problem of Queensland – the Sugar Industry*; G.C. Craig's *The Sugar Industry: A Review*; and Henry Ling Roth's 1880 report on the sugar industry.¹²¹ Manuals include John Hinchcliffe's essential textbook on sugar cultivation; F. Bell's *Handbook of Practical Directions for Sugarcane Planting, Sugar Making and the Distillation of Rum*; and Thomas de Keating's *A Practical Treatise on the Cultivation of the Sugarcane and Manufacture of Sugar Adapted to New South Wales and Other Australian Colonies*.¹²² Angus Mackay wrote several works including a guide to semi-tropical agriculture to help ignorant new

¹¹⁸ Carl Lumholtz, *Among Cannibals: Account of Four Years Travels in Australia, and of Camp Life with the Aborigines of Queensland* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1980 [reprinted from the original 1888 edition]); Robert Arthur Johnstone, *Spinifex & Wattle: Reminiscences of Pioneering in North Queensland Being the Experiences of Robert Arthur Johnstone* (East Melbourne: J.W. Johnstone-Need, 1984). Original published in *Queenslander*, 1903-1906.

¹¹⁹ Anonymous, *Missing Friends: Being the Adventures of a Danish Emigrant in Queensland (1871-1880)* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1892).

¹²⁰ George G. Perkins, *Mackay. An Essay upon The Rise, Progress, Industries, Resources and Prospects of the Town & District of Mackay* (Mackay: H.B. Black & Co., 1888); Aeneas F. Munroe, *The Sugar Fields of Mackay* (Mackay: Hodges & Chataway, 'Mercury' Machine Printing Works), 1895.

¹²¹ J.V. Chataway, "The Problem of Queensland – the Sugar Industry," *Review of Reviews* 7 (1895): 358-63; G.C. Craig, "The Sugar Industry: A Review," *Queensland Review: A Literary and Political Monthly Magazine for Queensland and all the Colonies* 1 (1885): 54-64; Henry Ling Roth, *A Report on the Sugar Industry in Queensland* (Brisbane: Gordon and Gotch, 1880).

¹²² John Hinchcliffe, *The Sugar Cane of Queensland: the Natural History, Botanical Structure, Different Varieties, Chemical Analysis, General Cultivation, &c, &c Adapted for Small Planters* (Brisbane: George Slater, 1868); F. Bell, *Handbook of Practical Directions for Sugarcane Planting, Sugar Making and the Distillation of Rum* (Sydney: J. J. Moore, 1866); Thomas de Keating, *A Practical Treatise on the Cultivation of the Sugarcane and Manufacture of Sugar Adapted to New South Wales and Other Australian Colonies* (Sydney: Clarson, Shallard & Co., 1865).

colonists.¹²³ Similarly Maurice Hume Black, planter and politician, wrote a guide for prospective British immigrants who aspired to farm sugar cane in Australia.¹²⁴

Edward Swayne as cane farmer, politician and founding member of the Pioneer River Farmers' Association (PRFA) was well placed to comment on the sugar industry in his report *Some Phases of the Sugar Industry*.¹²⁵ Director of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association (HSPA) Walter Maxwell's *Report upon an Investigation into the Condition of the Sugar Industry in Queensland* was very critical of the Australian sugar industry and resulted in changes that would set the Australian sugar industry on a course of reorganisation and modernisation.¹²⁶

The account of the HRFA (and its successors, the HRFL and the short-lived Herbert River Planters' Association) in the critical years from 1872 to 1914 relies on newspaper reports, *Pugh's Almanac*, government records, personal diaries and memoirs, and CSR and HRFL records. The CSR records are held at the Noel Butlin Archives and include letters from head office to the Victoria Mill management. Records of the HRFL are held by HRFL Inc. and the Pearson family. Records of the HRFL (once it was required to be audited each year) are also held at the state archives. Particularly invaluable are the diary of planter Arthur Neame and the memoirs of Scandinavian small farmer John Alm.¹²⁷ An exhaustive search of newspaper reports, accessible on TROVE, netted rules and objects, letters from members, and details of activities and concerns. *Pugh's Almanac* gives an idea of who was president and secretary in a particular year.¹²⁸ Government records, particularly legislation, reports by government departments, petitions and Hansard locate events chronologically and contextualise the discussions taking place and issues faced by the planters and small farmers. The voices of members of the associations can be heard in the evidence provided to royal commissions. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, with deregulation of the industry, the minutiae of the drama as it unfolded can

¹²³ Angus Mackay, *The Semi-Tropical Agriculturalist and Colonists' Guide* (Brisbane: George Slater & Co., 1875).

¹²⁴ M. Hume Black, *The Sugar Industry of Queensland. To the Agricultural Community of Great Britain* (London: Lake and Sison, 1894).

¹²⁵ Edward Swayne, "Some Phases of the Sugar Industry," in *Sugar Planting in Queensland* (Brisbane: Department of Agriculture, 1893), 17-23.

¹²⁶ Walter Maxwell, *Report upon an Investigation into the Condition of the Sugar Industry in Queensland* (Brisbane: Edmund Gregory Government Printer, 1900).

¹²⁷ Arthur Neame, *The Diary of Arthur Neame, 1870-1897*, ed. Sydney May (Aitkenvale: Terry Lyons, 2003); Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*.

¹²⁸ *Pugh's Almanac* was often a year or two out of date.

be found in government-commissioned reports such as the controversial Clive Hildebrand report and the locally commissioned Herbert cultural imprint analysis conducted by Neels Botha, Jeff Coutts and Ian Plowman.¹²⁹

The shortcomings of these records are that the correspondence from the Victoria Mill manager to CSR's head office for this period was either destroyed or never archived. As the names of the associations were often incorrectly recorded, details from *Pugh's Almanac* and some newspaper reports have to be authenticated against other available records. The local paper, the *Herbert River Express*, was not published until 1904 and the first local newspaper, the *Ingham Planter*, began in 1894 but left no extant copies. The minutes of the Halifax Planters' Club (HPC) dating from circa 1895 recently went missing while the records of the HRFL up to the 1930s, when it handed over its role to the Herbert River Cane Growers' Association (HRCGA), have not survived. No records of the HRFA are extant.

CONCLUSION

A review of the origins and nature of the sugar industries of Brazil, Hawai'i, Louisiana, Barbados and Fiji underscores a failure of writers to remark on the agricultural association movement unless the agricultural associations were large enough to leave heavy footprints. A survey of the preeminent scholarship on the worldwide agricultural association movement indicates that the Australian agricultural association movement on the periphery of empire was both an extension of, and networked with, a worldwide agricultural association movement. The review of twenty-first-century scholarship reveals a renewed interest in the agricultural association movement. However, consistent with the tendency for historiography to take a top down perspective, much of it appears to be still examining the movement from the point of the view of the elite. Quality comparative work on the global sugar industry's organisational history is negligible. In Australian scholarship small agricultural associations are virtually invisible. This is no more apparent than in the sugar industry historiography. In the twentieth century, Australian sugar industry scholarship focused momentarily on the larger associations—

¹²⁹ Neels Botha, Jeff Coutts and Ian Plowman, "Cultural Imprint Project Final Evaluation Report: Herbert Cultural Imprint Analysis – A Pathway to Greater Understanding and Co-operation in Decision Making," Sugar Research and Development Corporation (2006), 95-97, accessed May 1, 2018, <http://hdl.handle.net/11079/12606>; Clive Hildebrand, "Report: Independent Assessment of the Sugar Industry 2002" (Canberra: Secretariat, 2002).

the QCGA and the Australian Sugar Producers' Association (ASPA)—but in the process sidelined small sugar farmer associations and perpetuated misconceptions about them.

What the review does establish is that agricultural associations in the sugar growing areas of the globe in the period 1872 to 1914 were dominated by the white elite planters, reflecting the dominance of plantations in sugar industry organisation. But the plantation in tropical north Queensland, as elsewhere across the globe, was not inevitable because of race and climate (the acclimatisation theory) but rather, as Guerra y Sanchez noted, was “purely social and economic.”¹³⁰ White elites insisted on the exploitative mode of production as their right. Being white, therefore, was valued across the sugar growing areas, though in Brazil, Hawai'i, Louisiana, Barbados and Fiji being white was not enough. The scholarship reveals that the marginalisation of the arable land for plantation agriculture, and the failure of legislators to distribute land equitably, denied small farmers, white or otherwise, the type of independence that came to characterise Australian small sugar farmers. In Australia being white conferred status but it was a flexible category which justified the use of certain types of labour on the plantations while effectively excluding non-whites from owning land or membership of agricultural associations.

The review confirms that associations were vehicles both planters and farmers used to access rural extension, promote agricultural skills and innovation, and were a means to lobby effectively with one voice. The sources verify that the small farmer associations being formed on the periphery emulated the extension and lobbying roles of home country associations and were networked into a global associative movement. The review corroborates the impression that the Australian small sugar farmers' association was unique in the global sugar industry association movement and that the HRFA was indeed the first of its kind in the plantation era in tropical Australia.

The failure by the scholarship to take a bottom up approach has made for a large void in the understanding and appreciation of the development and role of sugar industry agricultural associations in Australia; in particular, their significant intermediary role as providers of extension services and as lobby groups, and their dominant and sometimes powerful place in the political life of colonial Australia.

¹³⁰ Guerra y Sanchez, *Sugar and Society*, 15.

This thesis will fill this void. Chapter one will examine the plantation complex. The writer will identify the particular characteristics which distinguish the vertically integrated plantation. Using that set of characteristics the sugar industries of Brazil, Hawai'i, Louisiana, Barbados, Fiji and Australia will be examined in order to identify the ways in which they manifested as iterations of that persistent global pattern.

In chapter two the dichotomy of plantations and small farms will be analysed in order to explain why the family farm mode of production carried out by authentically independent, white, small farmers was practised in Australia, and why it was not a pervasive phenomenon across the sugar growing areas of Brazil, Hawai'i, Louisiana, Barbados and Fiji by 1914.

In chapter three the origins of the agricultural association movement and the manifestations of that movement in Britain, Portugal and America will be examined. This will be followed by an examination of the sugar growing area of Brazil which inherited the associative traditions of Portugal, Hawai'i and Louisiana, reflecting the American proclivity for association, and Barbados and Fiji which inherited the associative tradition of Britain.

In chapter four how the worldwide agricultural association movement was initiated, first in wider Australia, and then by the sugar planters on the Herbert River in tropical north Queensland, will be explored.

In chapter five how the small selectors came by their land on the Herbert; how they lived; what drove them to form an agricultural association; and what they hoped to achieve through the agency of collective action will be examined.

In chapter six the legacy of the HRFA will be appraised as the trajectory of the Herbert River sugar industry and sugar farmer representation is traced from 1896 to the present day.

This examination will establish that the HRFA and by extension, other farmers' associations, were indeed agents of change contributing to the demise of the plantation and the restructure of the sugar industry in Australia.

CHAPTER 1

THE PLANTATION COMPLEX

INTRODUCTION

In order to appreciate the achievement of the Herbert River Farmers' Association (HRFA) in challenging the hegemony of the planter in the Herbert River Valley, it is necessary to understand the nature of the plantation.¹ When the HRFA was founded in 1882, sugar cane was being cultivated on vertically integrated plantations, where both cultivation and milling were carried out onsite. The plantation is a global phenomenon and the extent of that mode of production for sugar can be attributed to the botanical nature of sugar cane, the demand for crystallised white sugar, and sugar cane's peculiar cultivation and processing requirements. Despite an enduring dilemma of definition, a particular set of characteristics identify the plantation—geographic locality, imperial motive, product, size, labour use, control and management, and industrial organisation. Using that set of characteristics as a guide, the sugar industries of Brazil, Hawai'i, Louisiana, Barbados, Fiji and Australia will now be examined in order to identify the ways in which they manifested as iterations of that persistent global pattern. It is proposed that the persistence of plantation agriculture in sugar growing areas in the late nineteenth century had implications for what type of agricultural associations emerged and by whom they were formed. In that case, the HRFA, a small farmers' association forming in a plantation dominated area, may well prove to have been an anomaly.

THE BOTANICAL NATURE OF SUGAR

Sugar cane is believed to be indigenous to the south Pacific, possibly originating in New Guinea.² Around 1000 BCE Austronesians are thought to have carried cane stalks from New Guinea to India and China.³ Hybrids (*S. barberi* and *S. sinense*) developed in India and China respectively made possible the manufacture of crystalline sugar for a

¹ Referred to as 'the Herbert' from here on.

² Deerr, *History of Sugar*, vol. 1, 13-14.

³ Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry*, 4; Deerr, *History of Sugar*, vol. 1, 35.

commercial output.⁴ They also matured and ripened at the time necessary to allow the glucose to change to crystallisable sugar. Carried in the trail of Muslim armies, sugar reached north Africa and the southern and eastern Mediterranean in the seventh century, from whence crusaders introduced cane sugar to Europe, where a taste developed for sugar as a medicine and spice.⁵

As an introduced tropical plant, sugar required irrigation in the largely dry Mediterranean area. With the colonisation of the west coast of Africa and islands in the Atlantic Ocean by the Portuguese and Spanish, sugar industries developed with varying degrees of success. The cultivation of sugar cane by European colonial powers gained momentum in the New World after its arrival in the Caribbean in 1493 where it flourished in the tropical climate.⁶ Conquistadores carried sugar cane to the mainland where it eventually spread widely across the South American continent and into North America. Other colonising powers—Holland, Britain, France, Denmark and Portugal—also introduced sugar into their New World territories. The French went on to establish sugar-growing colonies in the Indian Ocean on Reunion and Mauritius while the Dutch built up an industry in Java, and the Spanish in the Philippines. In the latter half of the nineteenth century sugar industries were founded in Australia, Fiji, Hawai'i and South Africa. With sugar industries flourishing in the New World where the climate and soil fertility were ideal and the fuel required to produce the sugar was plentiful, cheap sugar flowed into Europe.

THE DEMAND FOR CRYSTALLISED WHITE SUGAR

The progression of sugar from medicine and spice to everyday sweetener happily coincided with the imperative for the colonies to grow cash crops, leading to the large-scale cultivation of sugar. The need to produce sugar in the amounts demanded by the metropole was answered by vertically integrated plantations. Other edible cash crops cultivated for the same purpose were tea, coffee and cocoa which were all transported back to Europe where they found a voracious market. Crystallised sugar has an “intense

⁴ E. Brandes, “Origin, Dispersal and Use in Breeding of the Melanesian Garen Sugarcane and their Derivatives, *Saccharum Officinarum* L,” *Proceedings: International Society of Sugarcane Technologists* 9 (1956): 709-50, as referred to in Angelique D’Hont et al., “Oligoclonal Interspecific Origin,” 259.

⁵ O’Connell, *Sugar*, 17.

⁶ William Found and Marta Berbés-Blázquez, “The Sugar-Cane Landscape of the Caribbean Islands: Resilience, Adaptation and Transformation of the Plantation Social-Ecological System,” *ResearchGate*, January 2010): 167, accessed September 4, 2018, doi: 10.1017/CBO9781139107778.013.

sweet taste” and its ability to make those other newly introduced food stuffs more palatable was quickly appreciated while many other uses for sugar were consequently found.⁷

Wherever sugar was established in the colonies, individuals were enabled by imperial governments to take up large tracts of land. This both secured sovereignty and facilitated the establishment of cash crops.⁸ For landholders, sugar was a potentially lucrative enterprise, while for investors it was a promising if risky investment.⁹ However, the botany of sugar cane and its optimum growing and processing conditions, together with the volume of demand for refined white sugar, determined distinct cultivation and processing methods.

The vertically integrated plantation and the central mill were different responses to sugar cane’s peculiar cultivation and processing requirements. Where the vertically integrated mode of production originated is contested. Menard has suggested that it originated in Barbados. He purported that previously and in other areas sugar was grown as a dispersed system—small farmers supplying to a larger farmer’s mill.¹⁰ Other scholars similarly acknowledged that Barbados, if not the origin of the vertically integrated plantation, was where it reached a distinguishing level of “refinement.”¹¹ In contrast, the competing central mill concept is said to have originated in Martinique in the French West Indies somewhere between 1840 and 1860. Described as the ‘French’ system it was designed to separate cultivation and sugar manufacture in order to circumvent the dilemma of mill machinery being too expensive for individual small holders to purchase.¹² Conversely, Meide suggested that the seminal ‘central mill’ was to be found in Portuguese and Spanish colonies, while the vertically integrated model was to be found in English, Dutch and French colonies.¹³

⁷ Mintz, “Pleasure, Profit, and Satiation,” 118.

⁸ Ashcroft, “A Fatal Sweetness,” 43.

⁹ Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*, xxiv.

¹⁰ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, 91-105.

¹¹ Crowley, “Sugar Machines,” 405, accessed April 4, 2017, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/121.2.403>.

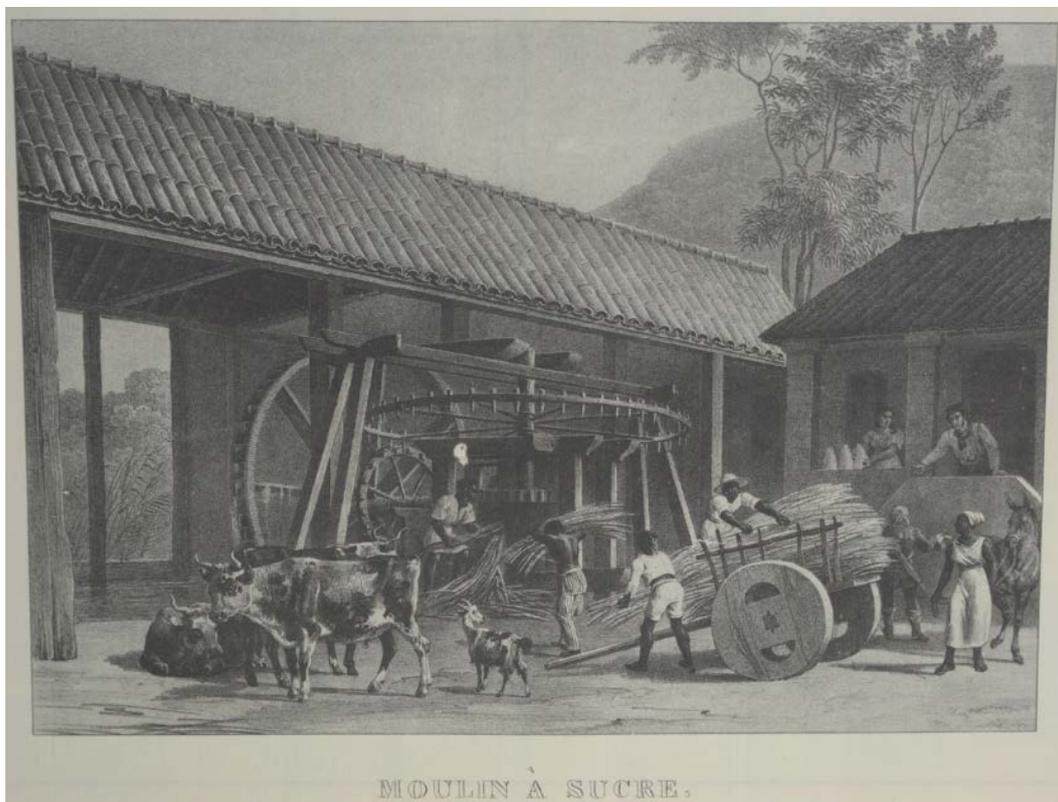
¹² Moore, “The Transformation of the Mackay,” 101; Beachey, *The British West Indies Sugar Industry*, 81-83.

¹³ Meide, “The Sugar Factory in the Colonial West Indies,” 4, accessed April 4, 2015, http://www.academia.edu/3258102/The_Sugar_Factory_in_the_Colonial_West_Indies_an_Archaeological_and_Historical_Comparitive_Analysis.

The vertically integrated plantation located the mill and the fields in close proximity so that the highly perishable harvested cane could be transported to the mill quickly. The separation of the milling and cultivation processes could only be achieved with central milling once speedy means of transporting the harvested cane to the mill had been devised and millers were willing to install the expensive transport infrastructure to access farmers' far flung fields.

Pressing juice out of cane stalks and boiling it down into a portable substance can be achieved with primitive equipment but refining white sugar is a technically and chemically sophisticated process. The metropolitan taste and multiple uses for refined white sugar exerted pressure for milling and refining technology to improve. Vertically integrated plantations and refineries located in the metropolises, resolved the dilemma of how to produce a product of saleable quality in sufficient quantities to keep up the supply to a metropole market. They were best positioned to source the monetary investment required to install the latest processing equipment and transport facilities, and source and afford an abundant supply of labour.

Image 1: A hand-fed mill sugar mill, Brazil: Johann Moritz Rugendas, “Moulin à Sucre,” 1835. (Source: The Bahian History Project, image reference NW0295)



THE GLOBAL PATTERN

Colonial agriculturalists in tropical and temperate zones responded very differently to the challenges of their new environments. Plantation scholars have been absorbed by the nature of colonial agriculturalists' responses to their environment and the way that agriculture shaped colonial development. L.D. Scisco talked of the "moulding influence" of agriculture while Edgar T. Thompson observed that some colonies were clearly dominated by plantation agriculture and others by small-scale farming.¹⁴ The reasons that may be so and what distinguishes a plantation from other agricultural pursuits remains elusive despite over a century and a half of intense debate.¹⁵

Clukey, however, detected an "iteration" of a global pattern shaped by local circumstances.¹⁶ This thesis identifies the global pattern as geographic locality, imperial motive, product, size, labour use, control and management, and industrial organisation. It is cautioned however, that the characteristics should be understood, as Thompson put it, to be "a product of forces working within the system itself ... not as an explanation of it."¹⁷ This explains why, when there was a change in the forces at play, a shift in agricultural practice from plantation to small farming was achievable.

GEOGRAPHIC LOCALITY

Plantation and farms were two dominant types of labour economies and social organisations that developed on the colonial frontier. The first was typically found in the tropics, and the latter in the temperate zone. William K. Storey and Leo Waibel both argued convincingly that the needs of the sugar cane plant determine the location of plantations in the tropics.¹⁸ Sugar cane is a hardy and resilient crop able to withstand droughts on the one hand and, on the other, heavy rainfall, short-term waterlogging, and

¹⁴ L.D. Scisco, "The Plantation Type of Colony," *The American Historical Review* 8 (1903): 261; Thompson, "The Climatic Theory of the Plantation," 52.

¹⁵ Examples of different views can be found in Courtenay, *Plantation Agriculture*, 11; Gregor, "The Changing Plantation," 222; Goldthorpe, "A Definition and Typology of Plantation Agriculture," 26, accessed March 11, 2015, doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9493.1987.tb00183.x; Taylor, "Plantation Agriculture in the United States," 141; Higman, "Sugar Plantations and Yeoman Farming," 699, accessed February 22, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2561714>.

¹⁶ Clukey, "Plantation Modernity," 207, 509, accessed March 20, 2015, doi: 10.1215/00029831-2079305.

¹⁷ Thompson, "The Climatic Theory of the Plantation," 60; Courtenay, *Plantation Agriculture*, 12-13; Graves and Richardson, "Plantations in the Political Economy," 229.

¹⁸ Waibel, "The Climatic Theory of the Plantation," 310. He pointed out that beet sugar, because of its similar processing requirements, was established in temperate zones on a typically plantation economy.

high winds, even cyclones. It grows best though in well-drained soils and in frost-free, tropical conditions where there is a warm, wet season, ideally in excess of 1 000mm of rainfall annually, followed by cooler, drier weather before harvesting. This is essential to check growth and increase the commercial cane-sugar content (CCS).¹⁹ Tropical areas tend to have the ideal wet and dry seasonal pattern rather than four distinct seasons. Harvesting takes place in the dry season which, in the tropics, falls in the second half of the year. It is the busiest time of the sugar growing cycle and when labour was most intensely employed. Under a small farming system, paid workers were not required in the sugar fields in the slack season or for work other than cane cutting.²⁰ The advantage of the vertically integrated plantation was that it was able to disperse its labourers into other field tasks, thus keeping them occupied throughout the year. Another advantage of the vertically integrated system was that it located the sugar mills near the fields so that the perishable cane could be processed within the 24-hour window of opportunity before it deteriorated.²¹

Attitudes to acclimatisation are also used to explain why plantations were typically found in the tropics. Those attitudes to go hand in glove with white settlement in the tropics.²² Asserting that they could not acclimatise to working in the tropics, Europeans used that as justification to employ other groups of people whom they regarded as being more constitutionally suited to the tropics.²³ In areas where sugar industries were established after the abolition of slavery, centuries of use of African slaves simply gave a convenient credence to that prejudice. Thompson contended that the climatic theory failed to account for why there was a transition from plantation to farm or even from farm to plantation in some areas.²⁴ Tropical north Queensland was one such example.

¹⁹ N.J. King, R.W. Mungomery and C.G. Hughes, *Manual of Cane-Growing* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1953), 5. This is a classic and timeless manual of cane-growing.

²⁰ The 'slack' season was usually the rainy season and the months between the harvests.

²¹ William K. Storey, "Plants, Power and Development: Founding the Imperial Department of Agriculture for the West Indies, 1880-1914," in *States of Knowledge: The Co-Production of Science and Social Order*, ed. Sheila Jasanoff. (London: Routledge, 2004), 110-11.

²² Thompson, "The Climatic Theory of the Plantation," 56-57. Thompson argued against the climatic theorists' view of the plantation as "biological and constitutional in origin." He identified the reasons as being "history and circumstances."

²³ Allan McInnes, "Hambledon Plantation – 1899," *Journal of the Historical Society of Queensland* 10 (1977): 38; John Lely, "Black and White: To the Editor," *Brisbane Courier*, June 15, 1897, 7.

²⁴ Thompson, "The Climatic Theory of the Plantation," 54.

IMPERIAL MOTIVE

In seeking to understand why plantations manifested where they did scholars have identified three imperial motives for taking possession of colonies—conquest, settlement and exploitation. Though the plantation was a tool which helped to achieve all three motives, Ashcroft and Walvin emphasised its singularly exploitative nature.²⁵ Indeed, the legacy of this exploitation underpins global cultural and economic relations in former sugar colonies to this day. Scholars have developed terminology to describe the relationship between the colony where plantation crops came from—hinterland and periphery—and the market for where they were destined—heartlands, centres, core regions and metropolises.²⁶ The plantation was the agent that forged a comprehensively exploitative mercantilist connection between them all.

Curtin finds the ‘plantation complex’ “utterly wasteful and irrational.” He identified the wasteful aspects as a non-self-sustaining population, the dependence on long-distance trade to bring in not only supplies and people but also food, and political control of the system by imperial powers which were enmeshed in competition with each other.²⁷

KEY FEATURES OF PLANTATIONS

The crop grown is not necessarily a distinguishing feature of plantations, although sugar, cotton, tobacco, coffee and tea all flourished on tropical plantations. But some scholars have argued plantation agriculture was not defined by its product.²⁸ For instance, Courtenay argued that plantations are no more than a method of organisation of production and that the product is irrelevant.²⁹ Nevertheless, the nomenclature, planter

²⁵ Ashcroft, *A Fatal Sweetness*, 37; Walvin, *Fruits of Empire*, 150-51.

²⁶ The Plantation Economy Model (PEM), used the terms “centre” and “periphery,” identifying the centre as the origin of innovative change while the periphery was dependent on the centre or outside market. The model was used to explain why a disproportionately large share of the world’s economic and political power was wielded by the centres and also why characteristic economic structures emerged in various parts of the periphery. That balance of power and dependency, it was argued, continues in economic structures today, impeding structural transformation. See Best and Levitt, *Essays on the Theory of Plantation Economy*; Beckford, *Persistent Poverty*; Dennis A. Pantin, “The Plantation Economy Model of the Caribbean,” *Institute of Development Studies Bulletin*, 12 (1980): 17-23.

²⁷ Curtin, *Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex*, 13. He is not the only one to use the ‘plantation complex’ terminology. Menard, 91-105, is another.

²⁸ W.O. Jones, “Plantations,” *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* 12, ed. David L. Sills (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 154; Courtenay, “An Approach to the Definition of the Plantation,” 90.

²⁹ Courtenay, “An Approach to the Definition of the Plantation,” 90.

and plantation, was never used for crops such as maize, potatoes or wheat which are grown in more temperate climates or for pastoral holdings, regardless of the size of landholdings.

Nor was size a clear indication of a plantation. The plantation is popularly described as a large landholding though what was regarded as large in one country may have been small in another.³⁰ Agricultural economist Ida C. Greaves wittily commented that the plantations of the West Indies were only “family-size farms with delusions of grandeur.”³¹ Nevertheless, the plantation was typically large. An efficient up-to-date mill required significant amounts of capital investment, and a large, reliable through-put of cane was needed to justify that investment. The best way to guarantee the required quantity of cane was for the millers to cultivate a reasonably large area themselves. The costs to increase landholdings and employ the necessary labour force meant that only the wealthiest individuals or companies could own plantations.

However, plantations inevitably needed a large, reliable labour force to achieve large-scale production of sugar. While Europeans asserted that they could not work in the tropics, the inability to source a reliable and pliable workforce from either the European settlers or the indigenous populations led planters across the sugar cane growing areas of the globe to look off shore. Whole new groups of people, regarded to be constitutionally suited to labouring in the tropics, were imported and brutally compelled to achieve the production output. Meanwhile the indigenous people were dislocated with devastating consequences. But slavery is not a requirement of all plantations. Paul S. Taylor argued that the long-held belief that the plantation system *depended* on slavery was never correct and argued that slavery followed rather than preceded plantation agriculture.³² Randolph B. Persaud and Courtenay both remarked that the use of unfree labour, slave or indentured labour did not turn on the scarcity of labour but on a shortage of a certain type of labour—

³⁰ Jones, “Plantations,” 154.

³¹ Ida C. Greaves, “Plantations in World Economy,” in *Plantation Systems of the New World*, ed. Vera Rubin (Washington: Pan-American Union, 1959), 14.

³² Taylor, “Plantation Agriculture in the United States,” 142-43. He gave the example of Virginia where the plantations of the seventeenth century used indentured labour which he said was unfree but not slave labour.

one whose wages and work conditions could be controlled and which did not challenge the dominant planter class's privileges.³³

The way that management and labour were combined also distinguished the sugar plantation from other work environments.³⁴ Fraginals identified that peculiar combination as a "socio-economic complex."³⁵ Puckrein classified plantation society as "a distinct social system that fostered forces peculiar to its internal structure."³⁶ The internal structure was characterised by the need for all aspects of production to be carried out on the plantation site in a fixed production cycle. The complexity of this regime imposed profound social and cultural strictures which were articulated in a highly stratified social system. That system was a response to the botanical nature of sugar cane, the high labour needs of capitalist agriculture and the fact that the planter alone could not supervise all the plantation tasks.³⁷ Life on colonial plantations across the globe was regulated by the bell and the clock. Geoff Burrows and Clive Morton wrote that the call of 'bell oh' on the Australian plantation was the "cry at the end of the day which echoed from near paddock to far as the mill plantation bell tolled the end of the work day."³⁸ Sugar cultivation, industrialised under the vertically integrated mode of production, using large gangs of labour, needed an artificial time managed system of organisation (bells and clocks) which separated work from leisure. This in turn required close supervision, hence the use of gang labour and overseers.³⁹

³³ Randolph B. Persaud, "Colonial Violence: Race and Gender on the Sugar Plantations of British Guiana," *Race and Racism in International Relations: Confronting the Global Colour Line*, ed. Alexander Anievas, Nivi Manchanda, and Robbie Shilliam (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 123-25; Courtenay, "An Approach to the Definition of the Plantation," 86. The profitability of slavery is open to contention, see Ryden, "Does Decline Make Sense?," 347-74, accessed March 31, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org.elibrary.jcu.edu.au/stable/207086>, and Coclanis and Engerman who asserted that "virtually all scholars of slavery now believe that slavery, broadly speaking, was profitable to slaveholders," see Coclanis and Engerman, "Would Slavery Have Survived Without the Civil War?" 66-90, accessed March 31, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com.elibrary.jcu.edu.au/docview/1448439107?accountid=16285>.

³⁴ Jones, "Plantations," 154; Jay R. Mandle, "The Plantation Economy: An Essay in Definition" *Science and Society* 36 (1972): 57-58.

³⁵ Fraginals, *The Sugarmill*, title and content *passim*.

³⁶ Puckrein, *Little England*, 74.

³⁷ Storey, "Plants, Power and Development," 111; Mandle, "Plantation Economy," 58; Eric R. Wolf, *Pathways of Power: Building an Anthropology of the Modern World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000): 219, accessed June 15, 2016, <http://site.ebrary.com.elibrary.jcu.edu.au/lib/jcu/detail.action?docID=10057112>.

³⁸ Burrows and Morton, *The Canecutters* 15.

³⁹ See Mark M. Smith, "Time, Slavery and Plantation Capitalism in the Ante-Bellum American South," *Past and Present* 150 (1996): 142-68, accessed April 1, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/651240>, and his later work, *Mastered by the Clock: Time, Slavery and Freedom in the American South* (Chapel Hill:

The internal structure of the plantation was a vertically integrated one with all aspects of production (cultivation, crushing and milling) carried out onsite if possible. Every need of animals and humans too was catered for onsite. The industrial arrangement dictated a particular spatial arrangement. The mill house and fields were in close proximity in response to the fragility of cut cane. The labour force was housed nearby in order that its every movement was able to be supervised and controlled. The planter's house was often located on a hill, in a position to survey the conduct of the plantation. Management was housed at a discreet distance from the workers but close enough to all aspects of production for ease of supervision. The animals too, which either hauled the cane trucks or provided the manure to fertilise the cane fields, were housed in large stables onsite.

The conduct of vertically integrated plantations was challenged by the end of unfree labour. Sugar industries either collapsed or turned to other labour systems which enabled the essential aspects of plantation society to be preserved. Alternatively, they abandoned cultivation and converted to a central mill industrial arrangement.⁴⁰ The central mills sourced their cane from suppliers, whether tenants, sharecroppers or independent landowners. The central mills could be owned by a single family, a family consortium, a large company or cooperative ownership by farmers. The technology of the sugar milling process was no different for vertically integrated or central mills. However, with the abandonment of the costs of cultivation, labour and its supervision capital could be invested in securing the latest technological milling methods.

THE GLOBAL EMERGENCE OF SUGAR PLANTATIONS

Moving from the general attributes of the plantation to the specifics of sugar plantations gives a context for events on the Herbert. Using as a guide the particular set of characteristics previously iterated—geographic locality, imperial motive, product, size, labour use, control and management, and industrial organisation—Brazil, Hawai'i, Louisiana, Barbados, Fiji and Australia will now be examined in order to establish whether they conformed to a persistent global pattern. The extent to which their industries

University of North Carolina Press, 1997), for a discussion on the use of clocks in the American South and its transformative effect. Singleton, "Nineteenth Century Built Landscape," 93-115, also discusses the use of bells and clocks in plantation life. See also E.P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism," *Past & Present* 38 (1967): 56-97, accessed June 20, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org.elibrary.jcu.edu.au/stable/649749>.

⁴⁰ Griggs, "Origins and Early Development," 47.

were an iteration of that pattern will in turn determine the nature of the sugar industry's agricultural association movement that took shape in those areas.

Geographic locality

Sugar is typically thought of as a tropical crop, and in Brazil, Hawai'i, Louisiana, Barbados, Fiji and Australia that is the case. However, parts of both the Brazilian and NSW industries, and all of the Louisianan industry, instead lie in a subtropical climate. In Louisiana sugar is described as a "forced" crop.⁴¹ Surveying these areas shows how distinctive climatic and geomorphic conditions demanded innovative and costly responses of those attempting to grow sugar cane. For example, in Hawai'i the challenge was to establish sophisticated irrigation systems to harness artesian water. In Louisiana new varieties of frost-resistant cane and new milling techniques to handle those varieties had to be developed, while in Barbados a laborious manuring regime to compensate for a depleted soil was practised. In Australia, the Burdekin sugar growing area lies in the 'dry tropics' and is hence fully reliant on irrigation, using both groundwater and surface water.⁴² The considerable initial capital investment required for the development of wholesale irrigation there and the intensely tropical climate of north Queensland were factors that determined the development of plantation agriculture. The nature of the agricultural associations formed, and by whom, was determined by those with the resources to respond effectively to the climatic and geomorphic challenges.

Sugar cane was introduced to Brazil, Barbados, Louisiana and Australia by those Europeans making the first expeditionary journeys.⁴³ Europeans found species of sugar cane already growing in Fiji and Hawai'i. Sugar cane plants were brought to Hawai'i with the Polynesian peoples when they settled the islands.⁴⁴ The sugar plant arrived in

⁴¹ Schafer, "Life and Labour," 157.

⁴² Peter Griggs, "Plantation to Small Farm: A Historical Geography of the Lower Burdekin Sugar Industry, 1880-1930," (PhD diss., University of Queensland, 1989), 51-53, 205-09.

⁴³ Fernando Tasso Fragoso Pires, *Fazendas: The Great Houses and Plantations of Brazil* (New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1995), 8; Charles B. Reed, *The First Great Canadian: The Story of Pierre Le Moyne, Sieur d'Iberville* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1910), 190; British Museum, Sloane MSS 3662, f. 54; John Scott, "The Description of Barbados," as quoted in Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 129; Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, 16; Puckrein, *Little England*, 56-57; see also Griggs, *Global Industry, Local Innovation*, 21; Deerr, *The History of Sugar*, vol. 1, 188; C.T. Wood, *Sugar Country: A Short History of the Raw Sugar Industry of Australia, 1864-1964* (Brisbane: Queensland Cane Growers' Council, 1965), 34; Lecture given by Arthur F. Bell, Under Secretary of Agriculture, and printed as "The Queensland Sugar Industry. Address in Melbourne," *Australian Sugar Journal* 41 (1949): 735; A.F. Bell, *The Story of the Sugar Industry in Queensland* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1956), 7-8.

⁴⁴ Kessler, "A Plantation upon a Hill," 136, accessed May 7, 2015, <http://www.istor.org/stable/10.1525/phr/2015.84.2.129>.

the Fijian archipelago long before the arrival of the British.⁴⁵ With the vertically integrated plantation Europeans turned sugar cane into a lucrative cash crop—the production of which was both driven by, and served to realise, imperial motives.

Imperial motive

Colonies were occupied for either military reasons, exploitation or settlement. The plantation, wherever it manifested, was exploitative. Brazil, Hawai'i, Louisiana, Barbados, Fiji and Australia all illustrate that the three imperial ambitions often acted simultaneously. However, who executed those first incursions into tropical areas—conquerors, planters or yeoman settlers—would determine what type of agricultural associations were founded and by whom.

When Brazil was claimed as a Portuguese colony in 1500 it was envisaged that it could be exploited for its minerals and for agriculture. The Portuguese crown promoted Brazil as a settlement colony in the sixteenth century in order to secure it against competitors. By the seventeenth century Brazilian sugar planters had monopolised large tracts of land, while sugar was proving very lucrative with capital input from the Dutch East India Company.⁴⁶ For the crown, the ambitions of exploitation and settlement came head-to-head in the sugar districts.

Hawai'i was similarly initially exploited for its natural resources. The first colonists to reach Hawai'i were an eclectic group, originating not only from Europe, but also from China and America. Protestant American missionaries, in particular, were the vanguard of white settlement and sought to proselytise the indigenous Hawai'ians. Proselytising went hand-in-hand with the exploitation of the people and the land, instrumented through the planting of sugar in response to the large, new market created by the advance of settlements in mainland America.

In contrast, the first French settlers arriving in Louisiana were occupying what was essentially a military outpost and were reliant on imported food. The first economic

⁴⁵ W. Arthur Whistler, "Polynesian Plant Introductions," in *Islands, Plants, and Polynesians: An Introduction to Polynesian Ethnobotany*, ed. Paul Alan Cox and Sandra Anne Banack (Oregon: Dioscorides Press, 1991), 60.

⁴⁶ The Dutch established a fledgling industry in Pernambuco and introduced African slaves. Their expulsion by the Portuguese disrupted trade and set back the Brazilian sugar industry. The Dutch then looked to Barbados.

endeavours, therefore, revolved around hunting, fur trapping and trading. It was only after farmers and artisans were induced to emigrate to what would be a settlement colony that sugar cane was developed for its potential as an export crop and Louisiana exploited as an agro-export colony. However, Louisiana was for 50 years a pawn in the wars between the imperial powers—Britain, France and Spain—until it finally became a state of the Union in 1812. This was disruptive to both settlement and agricultural exploitation. The establishment of a viable sugar industry was achieved with settlement, while settlements elsewhere in the Americas provided a growing market for Louisiana sugar.

The French had envisaged Louisiana as a settlement colony. Similarly, the British, although recognising the economic potential of Barbados, thought initially that economic development there might be achieved as a settlement colony of yeoman farmers. However, economic imperatives, opportunism and British investment (incentivised by booming sugar prices) combined to determine that it would be plantation agriculture that would transform Barbados into a valuable agro-export colony.

The British were no more successful in Fiji than in Barbados in developing a settlement colony of yeoman farmers. Following the first European incursions, possible ways to exploit the economic potential of the Fijian archipelago were explored. The first to venture there were traders and missionaries followed by Australians and New Zealanders intent on establishing plantations. It was a full hundred years between Captain James Cook's sighting of the archipelago and Fiji becoming a British possession in 1874. This was only achieved after a decade and a half of argument over the advisability of annexation. As Ethel Drus noted, "it is clear that Fiji was regarded as an exceptional case and that the annexation was not intended to signalize a new period of British expansion."⁴⁷ Thereafter sugar provided the means to attract investment and justify annexation but did not provide the environment for European settlement in the long term.⁴⁸

Queensland presents a curious contradiction. Dennis Pantin suggested that the model of hinterland-metropole symbiosis was observable in New World societies including

⁴⁷ Ethel Drus, "The Colonial Office and the Annexation of Fiji: The Alexander Prize Essay," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 32 (1950), 110, accessed July 12, 2018, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3678479>.

⁴⁸ Young, "Evanescence Ascendancy," 162.

Australia.⁴⁹ Courtenay argued that Australia did not fit the model as most of Britain's other overseas colonial areas did. It had a temperate south (which because of prevailing attitudes to acclimatisation, was considered suitable for permanent European settlement) and a tropical north (which was not).⁵⁰ Therefore, cultivation of sugar cane by small growers predominated from the outset in NSW but in tropical north Queensland plantation agriculture was encouraged and developed. Furthermore, initially sugar was not grown in Australia to supply an overseas metropole demand but rather for a domestic market in order to reduce the Australian colonies' importation of sugar.⁵¹

Though tropical north Queensland started as a hinterland of exploitation, the quandary of how tropical Queensland was to be developed was reflected in the conflicting views of Thomas McIlwraith and Samuel Griffith.⁵² McIlwraith's policies favoured the large-scale speculative planter while Griffith's vision was of small-scale farming. Griffith's vision of closer settlement by yeomen farmers prevailed.⁵³

In tropical north Queensland the plantation was caught at the nexus of imperial intents. The sugar plantation was both a means to economically exploit a vast tropical area, and also a way for Britain to secure possession of the tropical reaches of the Queensland colony. The plantations were followed by settlers who developed townships which further secured the defence of the north east coast. The establishment of a monoculture and enterprises conducted by absentee landlords, and the use of imported indentured labour in tropical north and central Queensland, illustrated the hegemonic and

⁴⁹ Pantin, "The Plantation Economy Model," 17, accessed June 12, 2018, https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/10751/IDSB_12_1_10.1111-j.1759-5436.1980.mp12001004.x.pdf?sequence=1.

⁵⁰ Courtenay, "The White Man and the Australian Tropics," 58.

⁵¹ In Australia, from the outset, "sugar was power", part of the convict rations and distributed to the convicts as incentive for compliancy or withheld as punishment. By the 1870s the consumption of sugar in colonial NSW was in excess of that of Great Britain. It has even been suggested that its consumption there may have been the highest in the world, and that in Queensland it was higher than in the rest of the country. See Robert Dare, "Introduction," in *Food, Power and Community: Essays in the History of Food and Drink*, ed. Robert Dare (Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 1999), 12; Peter Griggs, "Sugar, Demand and Consumption in Colonial Australia 1788-1900," in *Food, Power and Community*, ed. Robert Dare, 78, 82-87; Ted Henzell, *Australian Agriculture: Its History and Challenges* (Collingwood: CSIRO Publishing, 2007), 177.

⁵² McIlwraith, Premier of Queensland, 1879-1883, 1888-1888, 1893-1893; Griffith, Premier of Queensland, 1883-1893.

⁵³ Queensland Parliament, "Pacific Island Labourers Act" or "Pacific Island Labourers Act 1880 Amendment Act 1885".

exploitative practices the colonial government was willing to condone in order to satisfy both Britain's imperial motives and the domestic demand for sugar.

Product

In each territory the first products were not necessarily sugar but rather subsistence crops and herds of cattle and sheep. Once territorial sovereignty was established the imperial powers required adventurous and enterprising colonists to establish industries whose products could be exported to the home country, while in return the new colonies would provide markets for manufactured goods produced in the metropole. What products showed export potential could determine whether the areas were developed as plantation or farm colonies and, furthermore, what types of social forms, such as agricultural societies, were introduced.

In Brazil for instance, the first product exploited was dyewood, a trade initiated by private individuals.⁵⁴ The imperial government initially promoted mining to develop Brazil's economy while the development of agricultural industries was once again left up to enterprising individuals.⁵⁵ This reflected a lack of incentive, funds and population to create a settlement colony. Once the focus of the crown turned to occupation and settlement of the colony, a small number of entrepreneurs incentivised by large land grants financed alternative economic activities such as sugar cultivation.

As in Brazil, colonists were encouraged to exploit the natural mineral wealth of Hawai'i. Using the labour of indigenous Hawai'ians, the Europeans first explored the economic potential of local natural resources: sandalwood and whaling.⁵⁶ Once potential planters obtained leases or grants of land from the Hawai'ian royalty those enterprises were abandoned for sugar cultivation.

Three products typically experimented with in the colonies were tobacco, cotton and sugar. In Louisiana, under Spanish control, indigo and tobacco received the most encouragement for their potential as cash crops, though sugar was experimented with. Unsuitable climatic conditions, pests and competition from other colonies resulted in the

⁵⁴ James Lockhart and Stuart B. Schwartz, *Early Latin America: A History of Colonial Spanish America and Brazil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 182-83.

⁵⁵ Levine, *The History of Brazil*, 18, 46.

⁵⁶ Gregory Rosenthal, *Beyond Hawai'i*, 23-81.

abandonment of those crops for cotton, which vied with sugar to be the preferred crop. Market fluctuations saw planters converting from sugar to cotton and back again. When Louisiana became part of the United States in 1812, it gained a much larger market for its sugar. Twenty years later it was producing half of the nation's output.⁵⁷

Similarly, in Barbados sugar, cotton and tobacco battled for dominance. A significant portion of the land first taken up was put under sugar, but cotton and tobacco were the export staples initially. Both grew well though the returns were variable.⁵⁸ Responding to strong sugar prices, cotton planters converted to sugar. Menard argued that it was cotton that provided the industrial model of the vertically integrated plantation that allowed sugar to flourish.⁵⁹

Likewise, opportunistic settlers from Australia, New Zealand and America came to Fiji to set up cotton plantations, after which experienced sugar planters from Mauritius and Ceylon followed. They hoped to capitalise on the rising cotton prices at a time when America's cotton industry was disrupted by the American Civil War. A subsequent fall in demand for Fiji-grown cotton drove the planters to turn to sugar.⁶⁰

Queensland too, responding to market forces, experimented with cotton and tobacco before sugar became the dominant crop. Attached to a garrison and convict settlement, the first priority was the supply of food staples. Separated by great distance from neighbouring European occupied colonies, and a hazardous sea journey of up to four months from Britain, it was imperative that the Australian colonies became self-sufficient as quickly as possible. Therefore, the cultivation of agricultural staples to meet the colonies' needs, as well as cash crops to bolster colonial revenue, were encouraged by the imperial government. A fast-growing appetite for sugar drove enterprising European settlers to experiment with sugar production but initial efforts were unsuccessful.⁶¹ A

⁵⁷ "An Outline of American History (1990) Chapter Four Cotton Promotes Slavery," in *From Revolution to Reconstruction*, HTML project (University of Groningen: Department of Humanities Computing), accessed January 6, 2004, <http://odur.let.rug.nl/usa/HI990/ch4 P3.htm>.

⁵⁸ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, 21.

⁵⁹ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, 67. The generally accepted view that it was sugar alone that transformed Barbados was contested by Menard. He argued that the plantations system was vigorous and prosperous there before the arrival of sugar. Menard, 18-19, 23.

⁶⁰ Deerr, *History of Sugar*, vol. 1, 190; Moynagh, *Brown or white?*, 14; Lal, "'Nonresistance'," 193-94.

⁶¹ *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, October 14, 1824, 2.

discouraged British government then ceased to encourage plantation agriculture, instead approving the growing of food crops.

With the exploration and opening to European settlement of the subtropical and tropical areas of Queensland, cotton, sugar and tobacco were tried in tandem just as they had been in Louisiana, Barbados and Fiji. The downturn in world cotton prices meant production had all but ceased by the 1880s.⁶² All efforts to establish a viable tobacco industry also failed.⁶³ Once cotton and tobacco cultivation were effectively dismissed, sugar growing was seriously embarked on. In 1872 a commercial sugar industry was established in tropical north Queensland, north of the 19th degree south latitude, and there the introduced species thrived.

Size

Plantation agriculture was able to take hold in tropical areas because of the way land was distributed. Large land holdings were dispensed as land grants or titles to favoured recipients in Brazil, Louisiana and Barbados. In Queensland, government passed land legislation promoting plantation agriculture, while in Hawai'i and Fiji negotiation with traditional owners allowed the settlers, either legally, or by manipulation of the laws, to acquire large holdings. In each, the large landholdings were held by a white minority. Apart from in Fiji and Australia, the planters' hold on the land gave them enduring economic, social and political power. The power paradigm that resulted from the distribution of land, would decide who founded agricultural associations.

To administer its new colony of Brazil, the Portuguese crown broke the area up into hereditary captaincies.⁶⁴ The administrators of the hereditary captaincies handed out huge parcels of land for sugar growing near the coast and along rivers in order to facilitate the transport of goods, timber and sugar.⁶⁵ Land tenure arrangements ensured that a small number of planter families owned most of the arable land and were able to wield considerable political power to extract ongoing concessions. Despite attempts during the

⁶² D.B. Cameron, "Economic Development in Queensland during the Nineteenth Century," 83, accessed June 12, 2018, <https://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:157921/n03Chapter1.pdf>; "Telegraphic," *Brisbane Courier*, October 10, 1868, 4; "Bowen Sugar Company," *Queenslander*, July 18, 1868, 11..

⁶³ Sugar Industry Commission, "Report of the Royal Commission, 1889," xxvi.

⁶⁴ Administrative land areas. By 1822 these loosely reflected the boundaries of the provinces. They, in turn, became states when Brazil was declared a republic in 1890.

⁶⁵ Blume, *The Geography of Sugarcane*, 167.

seventeenth century to limit the size of landholdings, land laws continued to favour the wealthy.⁶⁶ None of the political developments that ensued substantially altered the characteristics of land ownership, or the social and political influence of those companies and individuals who monopolised the capital and processes of the sugar industry.

In contrast to Brazil, Protestant American missionary settlers in Hawai'i had to negotiate around traditional land ownership. The reluctance of chiefs to grant land on agreeable terms, and the preference of foreigners for fee simple titles rather than leases, obstructed foreign agricultural pursuits. The Great Mahele or Division of 1848, achieved because the settlers had become trusted confidants of the Hawai'ian royalty, dismantled traditional land laws and resulted in foreigners being able to both lease and buy land.⁶⁷ With the Hawai'ian monarchy overthrown and the Republic of Hawai'i established in 1894, state power was assumed by the planter class.⁶⁸ Consolidation for more efficiency and profitability saw the passing of plantations out of the control of individual planters, who had started them with private capital, into the hands of the merchant companies-turned-agencies called 'factors' (employed to purchase equipment and supplies, secure finance and insurance, and market and ship the sugar on behalf of the planter). This process started after 1850 and continued until, in the first decades of the twentieth century, not only land ownership, but sugar production, politics and many other areas of the Hawai'ian economy came to be firmly controlled by a few oligarchy families or coalitions of several families, described as "an elaborate system of vertically integrated corporations."⁶⁹ The corporations known as the Big Five—American Factors, C. Brewer, Alexander and Baldwin, Castle and Cooke, and T.H. Davies—all had missionary origins.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ John Schultz, *The Financial Crisis of Abolition*, 5.

⁶⁷ Jon J. Chinen, *The Great Mahele: Hawaii's Land Division of 1848* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1958), 31; Robert H. Horwitz and Judith B. Finn, *Public Land Policy in Hawaii: Major Landowners* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 1967), 3.

⁶⁸ Sumner La Croix, "Economic History of Hawaii," EH.Net, Economic History Association, accessed November, 15, 2015, <https://eh.net/encyclopedia/economic-history-of-hawaii/>; Center for Labor & Research, "History of Labor in Hawai'i," CLEAR, University of Hawai'i – West O'ahu, accessed November 15, 2015, <http://www.hawaii.edu/uhwo/clear/home/HawaiiLaborHistory.html>; MacLennan, "Plantation Capitalism," 148-49.

⁶⁹ MacLennan, "Plantation Capitalism," 164.

⁷⁰ Horwitz and Finn, *Public Land Policy*, 4; Takaki, *Pau Hana*, 20; Curtis Aller, *Labor Relations in the Hawaiian Sugar Industry* (Berkeley: Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California, 1957), chart 1, 24.

The way that colonists obtained their land in Louisiana resembled the way the Brazilian colonists had obtained theirs. When Louisiana was a French colony, large land grants, called concessions, were granted by the French crown to those of influence and wealth in order to secure the colony. These were invariably absentee landlords. Resident colonists received smaller landholdings called habitations. The misuse of the land, contrary to the colonising precept, resulted in a revision of the size of land grants. Under the Spanish, settlers received small holdings limited to the rivers and bayous. The system was arbitrary, and titles were often incomplete or verbal.⁷¹ As a result, Anglo-American planters and speculators were able to purchase adjacent small holdings, particularly those with water frontages, in order to consolidate them into large plantations. When the front landowners were enabled, by a revision of land legislation, to purchase the back lands behind the original “single depth,” those with the means to do so quickly took them up.⁷² Even though sugar planters were not numerically significant they came to exert a disproportionate degree of influence in the antebellum period. After the Civil War, however, few of the original plantations continued under their pre-war ownership. Speculative northerners—carpetbaggers—took advantage of the chaotic conditions and bought up sugar lands and derelict mills. This saw a new approach to plantation ownership: partnerships and corporations were financed by northern capital, and while no longer owned by single individuals, shares were usually held by members of one family.⁷³

Again, the way that land was distributed to the founders of the British colony on Barbados was not dissimilar to the way that colonists came by their land in Brazil and Louisiana. In the pre-sugar stage of development in Barbados, large holdings were granted to friends and associates of the founders of the colony.⁷⁴ As planters of tobacco and cotton became established, they bought out small farmers and consolidated their holdings. Having acquired their land before land values sky-rocketed with the sugar boom, the tobacco and cotton planters were well placed to invest in sugar themselves or realise on the value of their land by sale or rent. Others to invest in sugar plantations and mills were English

⁷¹ Harry L. Coles, “History of the Administration of Federal Land Policies and Land Tenure in Louisiana 1803-1860,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 43 (1956): 41, accessed 20 November, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1895282>.

⁷² Sitterson, *Sugar Country*, 47.

⁷³ Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest*, 38.

⁷⁴ Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 132.

merchants. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, an opportunistic investment in sugar resulted in almost all available arable land being taken up for a virtual monoculture, and landownership concentrated in a plantation hierarchy. Because of the scarcity of land, individual estate acreage was historically small in Barbados (and in the West Indies generally) compared to elsewhere in the sugar growing world.⁷⁵ Where landholdings were large it was due to planters owning several estates. What distinguished the planter class of Barbados from those of other sugar plantation areas was that two-thirds were resident owners who had been farming sugar for several generations. Reluctant to sell out or lose their independence by merging with others, they maintained their control of the land and society with an exclusive grip on arable land, and a similar control of the wages and conditions of their labourers.⁷⁶ The characteristics of land tenure and ownership therefore remained unchanged.⁷⁷ In contrast to industries elsewhere, rather than investing in mills, Barbadian planters were required to invest in means to address the ecological damage they had wreaked with the deforestation of the island. The replenishing of the soil and the devising and implementing of suitable cultivation methods required a large work force. Hence, J.H. Galloway commented that “In terms of the evolution of sugar cane plantations as an agricultural system, Barbados presents the conjuncture of great dependence on slavery with the intensive cultivation of small estates.”⁷⁸

The experience of colonists in Fiji, in relation to land distribution, stands in distinct contrast to elsewhere in the sugar growing world. Agricultural land in Fiji has a unique arrangement of ownership and administration that prevails to this day. Up until 1860 Fijian lands were owned by the traditional indigenous owners. With the arrival of Europeans, land claims were made by both companies formed for the purpose of land speculation and individuals hoping to establish plantation agriculture. After 1860 the Fijian islands were ruled by Britain through the Fijian chiefs. Communal land was protected by a policy designed to protect the rights of the indigenous Fijians while at the same time ensuring there was enough freehold land for both the establishment of a plantation economy and for European settlers to alienate for commercial purposes. The

⁷⁵ Greaves, “Plantations in World Economy,” in 14; Griggs, “Sugar Plantations in Queensland,” 618.

⁷⁶ Craton, “Reluctant Creoles,” 360.

⁷⁷ Into the late twentieth century 80 percent of arable land was still held by one percent of landholders for the cultivation of sugar cane, see *Agriculture in Barbados 1991-1995 and Beyond* (Newtown: Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, 1997), 5.

⁷⁸ Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry*, 82.

Deed of Cession of 1874 brought Fiji under British administration. Thereafter, land matters were administered by the state. Despite customary land tenure dictating that land was inalienable, strict adherence to this was ignored in the interests of allowing for earlier title claims to be sanctioned and leaving enough freehold land for plantation agriculture. Freehold land (excluding crown land) only comprised ten percent of Fiji, yet, advantageous to the sugar industry, this consisted of a disproportionate amount of arable land, including the better-drained alluvial flats with easy access to the coast.⁷⁹ A singularly large land owner was CSR, to whom the sale of land in 1880 had been in direct contradiction to the concept of land inalienability.⁸⁰ CSR paved the way for the development of capital intensive, modern, technologically advanced plantation agriculture in Fiji.⁸¹

Australia, again, presents an intriguing dissimilarity. Land laws, which enabled taking up of landholdings for plantation agriculture, at the same time promoted yeoman farming. These seemingly conflicting motives reflected the fact that Australia had a temperate south which was considered suitable to permanent European settlement, and a tropical north which was not. The colonies of Queensland, NSW and the Northern Territory were all areas where it was anticipated that sugar could be grown successfully on plantations. In the Northern Territory attempts at sugar cane cultivation failed. Ian Mackintosh Hillock suggested that this was because of successive governments' ongoing failure to "mobilise private capital and initiative."⁸² In contrast, plantation agriculture succeeded in tropical north Queensland because the Queensland government passed special legislation to mobilise capital and initiative for plantation agriculture.

Easy access to large tracts of land precipitated the plantation era in Australia. In 1864 the Sugar and Coffee Regulations Act allowed intending planters to lease blocks of unoccupied land in the newly explored northern districts expressly for sugar and coffee

⁷⁹ Ralph Gerard Ward, "Plus Ça Change...Plantations, Tenants, Proletarians or Peasants in Fiji," in *Of Time and Place*, ed. J.N. Jennings and G.J.R. Linge (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1980), 137.

⁸⁰ Moynagh, *Brown or White?*, 19, 24, 33. Five hundred acres were also sold to Stanlake Lee & Co. Ltd., a Bristol firm. Lee sold that concern to CSR and opened another mill, Tamanua on Navua River, in 1884 as the Fiji Co. Ltd.

⁸¹ Moynagh, *Brown or White?*, 24; and K.L. Gillion, "A History of Indian Immigration and Settlement in Fiji," (PhD diss., Australian National University, 1958), 161.

⁸² Ian Mackintosh Hillock, *Broken Dreams & Broken Promise: The Cane Conspiracy: Plantation Agriculture in the Northern Territory 1878-1889* (Darwin: Northern Territory University Press, 2000), 105.

growing on very easy terms.⁸³ The blocks could be anywhere from 320 to 1 280 acres within 10 miles of the coast and any navigable river, which put a limit on selections.⁸⁴ The 1876 Act would address some of those limitations.

The Queensland Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1876 enabled individuals to make conditional purchases of country lands in homestead areas of up to 1 280 acres, but where homestead areas were not designated in the tropical north, individual members of a company could make conditional purchases of 5 120 acres.⁸⁵ This speculative phase was propelled by three factors: liberal land laws to promote the taking up of greater tracts of land by potential planters; a rise in sugar price; and a favourable political climate that saw a conservative government come to power in Queensland, by which the planter class exerted some influence.⁸⁶

Griggs identified the early Queensland plantations as being on the larger end of the scale of plantations found elsewhere, though only slightly larger than Louisiana sugar plantations. He suggested that this was because of the great quantity of new land available for selection in the colony; the cooperation of government which legislated for planters to secure extensive acreages to cultivate sugar at a low cost; and the common colonial practice in Australia of dummying—somebody taking up land on behalf of another.⁸⁷

Labour use

Such land units cultivated for intensive production required a large labour force. In the old-world industries of Brazil, Louisiana and Barbados, the labour force was predominantly comprised of African slaves. In the new-world industries established post emancipation, in Hawai'i, Fiji and Australia, indentured labour was sourced mainly from

⁸³ Queensland's "Sugar and Coffee Regulations 1864". The regulations were later incorporated by the Queensland parliament into the "Crown Lands Alienation Act 1868". Rent was charged on the easy terms of one shilling per acre per annum on the condition that five percent of the area of the holdings were planted with tropical crops during the first three years. Leasees had the right to purchase their leases for £1 an acre if they had undertaken the requisite improvements. See also Griggs, "Sugar Plantations in Queensland," 615, 634, 643. The minimum allowable lease of 320 acres, if it was associated with a mill, was thereafter identified in Australia as a plantation.

⁸⁴ Imperial measures are used throughout this thesis.

⁸⁵ Queensland Parliament, "Crown Lands Alienation Act 1876"; "The Sugar Industry on the North-east Coast of Queensland," *Brisbane Courier*, December 5 1881, 6.

⁸⁶ Graves, *Cane and Labour*, 16-17; Saunders, "The Workers' Paradox," 224, 246-49, appendices 1-3. Saunders identified the period of expansion as the 'consolidation phase', spanning the years 1871 to 1879 and the 'speculative phase' spanning the years 1880 to 1885.

⁸⁷ Griggs, "Sugar Plantations in Queensland," 618.

China, Japan, India and the Pacific Islands but also from European countries including Portugal. Nalini Mohabir, who wrote on the experience of indentured labour in the Caribbean, cautioned that slavery to indenture was not a “sequential progressive narrative.”⁸⁸ In the Caribbean, for example, indentured labour, white or otherwise, was used prior to slavery in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and then reintroduced after emancipation. The type of labour force used, and whether labourers ever managed to control any of the factors of production, had implications for what type of agricultural associations were formed in the sugar regions.

Before European contact, the indigenous Indian population of Brazil was in the millions; these populations either led semi-nomadic hunting and gathering lifestyles or practised aquaculture and agriculture, domesticating and cultivating crops that now constitute a good part of the world’s diet. With Portuguese occupation, the indigenous lifestyle was disrupted and tribes decimated.⁸⁹

Until the 1570s the bulk of the workforce on Brazilian plantations comprised enslaved indigenous Indians overseen by European workers. With disease and warfare taking their toll on the Indian population, the church and crown united in their opposition to their enslavement.⁹⁰ Consequently, African slaves were introduced. While the slaves were in the main field workers, artisan craftsmen, and those holding positions of management or technical positions in the mill could be any colour and free, freedmen, or slaves.

Slavery was abolished in Brazil with the Golden Law of Abolition proclaimed on May 13, 1888.⁹¹ The slave owners’ negative reaction to the abolition of slavery was a knee-jerk one; in reality, the use of free labour had increased with the threat of abolition and had proved more economical. This was so because as the number of slaves available diminished those available became increasingly more expensive.⁹² After emancipation

⁸⁸ Mohabir, “Servitude in the Shadow of Slavery,” 237.

⁸⁹ Rex A. Hudson, ed., *Brazil: A Country Study* (Washington: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1997), accessed 19 November, 2015, <http://countrystudies.us/brazil/>.

⁹⁰ Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry*, 72.

⁹¹ Eisenberg, *The Sugar Industry in Pernambuco*, 159.

⁹² Slave numbers were not replenished by natural reproduction because work conditions on the plantations resulted in a high mortality rate.

the planters employed free labour under various schemes, but whatever the scheme, free rural labourers in the late nineteenth century were treated little better than slaves.⁹³

Nevertheless, the natural increase among free rural labourers living on the plantations supplied enough workers that planters were not inclined to seek out immigrant labour. As it was, immigrants from Europe could not be attracted to the sugar districts. The tropical climate, land scarcity, and lack of economic opportunity and lesser relative prosperity compared to other areas deterred them.⁹⁴ With the land locked up by planters, immigrants were attracted to other more dynamic areas where they could not only find work as labourers, but also purchase land to grow foods for a growing domestic market on independent family farms. This lack of dynamism in the workforce along with the failure of the industry to attract new European immigrants and the ability to continue to exploit the rural poor, together with an uninterrupted monopolisation of the factors of production by the planters, would have ongoing implications for the forming of agricultural associations.

Like Brazil, the Hawai'ian Islands too were well populated.⁹⁵ The powerful indigenous elite, comprising monarchy and chiefs, held common ownership of land. The elite enforced laws which bound commoners to political and productive obligations. In the first decades of the Hawai'ian sugar industry there was only a small demand for labour, and indigenous Hawai'ian and Chinese were the principal sources.

Planters complained that the native Hawai'ians were intractable as plantation labour. This perceived intractability is understandable given that Hawai'ians were a settled and sophisticated people—farmers, builders, manufacturers and traders. When paid fairly as wage workers rather than exploited as contracted labour, they proved to be good workers and were the primary labour source until the Reciprocity Treaty of 1876.⁹⁶ Working for Europeans conflicted with the demands of subsistence farming and productive obligations. Subsistence farming provided food not only for the native Hawai'ian population but foreigners as well. Ultimately, it was subsistence farming that had to be

⁹³ Eisenberg, *The Sugar Industry in Pernambuco*, 214.

⁹⁴ Eisenberg, *The Sugar Industry in Pernambuco*, 205.

⁹⁵ Dudley Smith, *Cane Sugar World* (New York: Palmer Publications, 1978), 184.

⁹⁶ Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry*, 23. The Treaty of Reciprocity was a free-trade agreement negotiated between the United States and the Hawai'ian Kingdom.

abandoned in order for there to be labour for the plantations but also for the Hawai'ians to earn the cash required in both a growing cash economy and to pay taxes.

The Masters and Servants Act of 1850 was passed as a response to the planters' call for labour. The act limited the mobility of native Hawai'ians in order to ensure a stabilised indigenous plantation labour force working under contract.⁹⁷ But this could only be a stop-gap remedy. The ongoing increase in sugar production required a labour force that could not be met by the native Hawai'ians, even if they abandoned subsistence farming. In addition, the indigenous population was succumbing to a welter of introduced European diseases as well as to the effects of conducting warfare with lethal European weaponry. The Bureau of Immigration, created in 1864, planned to obtain labour from Polynesia.⁹⁸ Though unsuccessful, it brought the labour trade under government control, which was advantageous to the planters because the state subsidised recruitment costs, shipping and healthcare. This facilitated concentrated efforts to obtain a foreign labour force. When the industry began a rapid expansion after 1876, labour began to be sourced in ever increasing numbers from numerous countries including China, Portugal and Japan. This influx of labour would alter the demographics of the islands for perpetuity. After the Organic Act was passed in 1900 to end indenture, most labourers chose to remain on the islands.⁹⁹ This resulted in "a landless, wage-earning rural proletariat" dominated by ethnicities other than indigenous Hawai'ians.¹⁰⁰ The dynamic of a landless rural labouring group and a sugar industry conducted on the vertical integration model influenced who formed agricultural associations in Hawai'i.

Like Brazil and Hawai'i, Louisiana was the homeland of many culturally rich and diverse Indian tribes. Skilled farmers, they cultivated crops including maize, squash and sunflowers. European settlers adopted aspects of both their material culture and their knowledge of native food crops. Indentured white labour and enslaved Indians were first used to clear and prepare new land. Contact with Europeans and introduced diseases

⁹⁷ MacLennan, "Plantation Capitalism," 86.

⁹⁸ Katharine Coman, "The History of Contract Labor in the Hawaiian Islands," *Publications of the American Economic Association* 4 (1903):13. Coman suggested that it was unsuccessful for several reasons including the different ways that the Polynesian labour was viewed by the Hawai'ian elite and the foreign planters. The first saw the Polynesians as racially suitable, replenishing the depleting Hawai'ian population while the planters looked to them simply to supply an adequate supply of suitable labour. Meanwhile there was the perception that the Polynesians were not particularly keen to engage in the type of cultivation work that sugar growing entailed.

⁹⁹ Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, 3:116; Coman, "History of Contract Labor," 47.

¹⁰⁰ Aller, *Labor Relations*, 11.

significantly affected the indigenous population as did their exploitation as labour. African slaves were brought to Louisiana by Haitian refugees and Anglo-American growers and proved to be more abundant and malleable than either white or Indian labourers. The number of slaves an individual planter could own was grotesque. Julien Poydres, founder of the still operating Alma Plantation, owned six plantations and 1 000 slaves.¹⁰¹ For many planters, slaves were the major and most important part of their estate for they counted as collateral and could be mortgaged to pay off debt.¹⁰²

In 1863 President Abraham Lincoln issued an Emancipation Proclamation which effectively freed all slaves in Federal occupied areas of the South. After the Civil War a devastated sugar industry had to rebuild without slaves. Labourers from China, Italy, Spain and Portugal were sourced. The persistent exploitation of workers, by paying less than what would have been expended on slave labour, ensured that securing labour became an ongoing problem. Just as in Brazil, “the foreigner avoided Louisiana because it seemed to offer him nothing better than a chance to displace the Negro by working and forever living ‘like a nigger.’”¹⁰³ Prior to mechanisation of the harvesting process, African Americans continued to be the major source of labour, employed in gangs on a stipulated wage. This dissonance, between those who owned the factors of production and those who labored, prescribed the type of agricultural associations that were formed in the sugar growing regions of Louisiana.

In contrast to Brazil, Hawai’i and Louisiana, where the indigenous peoples were not so easily dominated, the indigenous people of Barbados succumbed quickly once Barbados became a European colony. The people indigenous to Barbados were Arawaks and Caribs. The Arawaks were agriculturalists and farmed a wide range of crops including cotton, pawpaw, guava, peanuts, corn and cassava, all of which similarly afforded the first English small holder settlers a semi-subsistence lifestyle. The Caribs were not as proficient as farmers but were adept sailors and fishermen. They resisted European

¹⁰¹ Mark D. Schmitz, “Postbellum Developments in the Louisiana Cane Sugar Industry,” *Business and Economic History* 5 (1976): 93, accessed December 14, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org.elibrary.jcu.edu.au/stable/23702782.93>; Mark Schmitz, “The Transformation of the Southern Cane Sugar Sector 1860-1930,” *Agricultural History* 53 (1979): 270.

¹⁰² Sitterson, *Sugar Country*, 46.

¹⁰³ Roger Wallace Shugg, “Survival of the Plantation System in Louisiana,” *Journal of Southern History* 3 (1937): 322.

invasion and their population was already decimated by the time sugar plantations were established.¹⁰⁴

In Barbados all three crops, cotton, tobacco and sugar, were initially worked by whites, who if not free, were either convicts, indentured labour or those who had been kidnapped and then forced to work. To attract more indentured labourers, accommodations had to be made, including rates of pay and length of indenture, and obtaining them from further afield. An early export boom stimulated a demand for labour. Exploitative working practices increased as the pressure mounted to produce more sugar in response to that boom and despite all the inducements, indentured labour could not be attracted.

Beginning in the mid-1630s new-world sugar industries began to use African slaves obtained from Sierra Leone, Guinea, Ghana, the Ivory Coast, Nigeria and Cameroon. Barbados had the geographical advantage of being the first port-of-call for the transatlantic slave ship traffic.¹⁰⁵ By 1770, so intense had been the importation that slaves made up 84.2 percent of the population of Barbados.¹⁰⁶ Indentured labour consequently ceased altogether. Plantation agriculture limited the opportunities for labourers, who were also not willing to work alongside slaves or be forced into toiling at a pace and scale of work that was inhumane.¹⁰⁷ Slaves were regarded as a disposable entity: the mortality rate was such that a planter who owned 100 slaves killed off that entire number within 19 years.¹⁰⁸

With emancipation in 1834 free men were employed under an apprenticeship arrangement called the Tenantry System.¹⁰⁹ The tenantry workers still laboured under conditions that differed little to slavery. They were poorly paid and lived on the plantation in primitive if rent-free accommodation with a small plot of land. This occupancy gave

¹⁰⁴ From which their name derived, *Arawak – cassava-eaters*. Caribs meanwhile derives from the Spanish word *caribal*, meaning cannibal. See Hoyos, *Barbados*, 10. For short discussion of Arawaks and cotton, see Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, 23-24.

¹⁰⁵ Menard claimed that Barbadians began developing a law of slavery before the island's legislature wrote the developing English empire's first comprehensive slave code in 1661. Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, 11.

¹⁰⁶ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, 32-34, 48.

¹⁰⁷ Thompson, "Henry Drax's Instructions," 575, accessed January 27, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org.elibrary.jcu.edu.au/stable/40467523>.

¹⁰⁸ Thompson, "Henry Drax's Instructions," 576.

¹⁰⁹ Bentley Gibbs, "The Establishment of the Tenantry System in Barbados," in *Emancipation 11: Aspects of the Post-Slavery Experience in Barbados*, ed. Woodville Marshall (Bridgetown: University of West Indies, 1987), 23-45.

them no security of tenancy and they could be evicted at the planter's whim. They continued to work long hours under a strict and regulated regime.¹¹⁰ These labour regimes and the persistence of a plantation ethos determined the type of representative associations founded in Barbados.

The traditional landownership arrangements and obligations to that land were not dissimilar in Fiji and Hawai'i, yet in Fiji the traditional owners would not only retain land ownership despite European incursion, but also manage to survive as a significant demographic. Governor Sir Arthur Gordon observed that European settlers on the islands of Fiji "had not colonized an empty waste[land] ... only roamed over by nomadic savages." Rather, he noted that the Fijians were numerous and industrious and outnumbered the settlers 50 to one.¹¹¹ The indigenous people practised an agricultural economy, were skilled craftsmen, and lived in villages comprising inter-related families. They were fierce warriors and adaptable. Their chiefs held the right to extract tribute, particularly from outsiders who were permitted to settle on the land of a community.¹¹² Governor Gordon's pressing concern was "how a large native population should be governed by a handful of white aliens—peacefully and enduringly."¹¹³ The dilemma was solved by indirect rule through the Fijian chiefs.

The colonial government viewed it as counterproductive to defy the chiefs in order to compel the Fijian people to work, while it was also recognised that they were able to support themselves on the land more productively than working for wages on the plantations. Furthermore, the indigenous population declined on European contact. Remedial measures were put in place by the colonising government to halt further decimation, protect indigenous people from exploitative labour practices, guarantee native land rights, and stimulate the growing of cash crops by Fijians.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Gibbs, "Establishment of the Tenantry System," 34-36.

¹¹¹ Julian Go, *Patterns of Empire*, 94-95.

¹¹² This would have ramifications for colonial administration on cession.

¹¹³ Arthur Gordon, "Native Councils in Fiji," *Contemporary Review* 43 (1883): 713.

¹¹⁴ On the face of it these measures seem noble. However, Governor Gordon's policy, his motives, and the results have been revisited and re-evaluated from many perspectives by scholars and continue to be into the twenty-first century. Conclusions tend to be polarised and more critical than in the past. See Michael C. Howard, *Fiji: Race and Politics in an Island State* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1991) for a review of the re-evaluations that commenced even prior to the bloodless coup of 1987.

Beginning in 1864, attempts were made to draw workers to Fiji from neighbouring islands, including the Solomons, New Hebrides and Gilbert Islands. The recruitment of this labour was fraught with difficulties.¹¹⁵ The government intervened, formulating new legislation to replace the Queensland legislation that had regulated their recruitment, and began to act as an agent between the planter and the recruiter.¹¹⁶ The new legislation resembled the Indian coolie system which Gordon was already familiar with from Trinidad and Mauritius, and governed Pacific Islander recruitment until 1883.¹¹⁷ The terms of the new legislation, however, made it more difficult for recruiters to attract Islander labour and Queensland proved a far more attractive option. There the wages paid were nearly double those paid in Fiji, and the term of indenture was shorter.¹¹⁸

Gordon suggested Indians as a solution to the labour difficulties.¹¹⁹ While sugar was not returning profits, planters were reluctant to pay costs for Indian labour which was estimated to be double that for Pacific Islander labour. Despite this, their introduction in 1879 was eventually driven by significantly increased labour needs demanded by technological developments both in the factory and in the field.¹²⁰ Signed up on five-year contracts, extendable to another five years, the indentured Indian labourers could either return to India by free passage on the completion of their contracts or remain in Fiji.¹²¹ As had happened in Barbados and Hawai'i, imported labour changed the demography and character of Fiji forever: while many Indians returned home, over half of those recruited chose to stay.¹²²

¹¹⁵ Drus, "The Colonial Office and the Annexation of Fiji," 87-110.

¹¹⁶ Queensland Polynesian Labour Act 1868.

¹¹⁷ Brij V. Lal, "Labouring Men and Nothing More: Some Problems of Indian Indenture in Fiji," in *Indentured Labour in the British Empire, 1834-1920*, ed. Kay Saunders (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 127. See also firsthand account by J.W. Burton, *Our Indian Work in Fiji* (Davullevu: Indian Mission House, 1909).

¹¹⁸ O.W. Parnaby, *Britain and the Labor Trade in the South West Pacific* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1964), 183-84. The annual wage rate was £3 in Fiji but £6 in Queensland and term of service, five years in Fiji in contrast to three years in Queensland.

¹¹⁹ Arthur Gordon, "Evidence to Committee on Emigration from India to the Crown Colonies and Protectorates, 1909-10," as quoted in Alan Birch and J.F. Blaxland, "The Historical Background," in *South Pacific Enterprise: The Colonial Sugar Refining Company Limited*, ed. A.G. Lowndes (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1956), 33.

¹¹⁹ Moynagh, *Brown or White?*, 41.

¹²⁰ Deerr, *History of Sugar*, vol. 2, 392.

¹²¹ Lowndes, "The Sugar Industry of Fiji," 71; Deerr, *History of Sugar*, vol. 1, 190; Moynagh, *Brown or White?*, 21; Lance Brennan, John McDonald and Ralph Shlomowitz, "The Geographic and Social Origins of Indian Indentured Labourers in Mauritius, Natal, Fiji, Guyana and Jamaica," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 21 (1998): 39-71, accessed June 22, 2016, doi: 10.1080/00856409808723350.

¹²² Brennan, McDonald and Shlomowitz, "Geographic and Social Origins," 55.

While CSR may have used advanced sugar making technology in Fiji and have encouraged innovative cultivation techniques, Umesh Sharma and Helene Irvine observed that the “physical remoteness” of CSR’s absentee administration through mill managers, overseers and sidars (Indian foreman), meant that the mistreatment of workers was made “morally easier.”¹²³ Brij V. Lal described the Indian indentured workers’ lot as a “grim experience.”¹²⁴ The dynamics of a former indentured labourer class, a landowning indigenous Fijian population, and a ruling white class determined the nature and momentum of the first agricultural associative movement in Fiji.

Image 2: Girmityas, indentured workers, standing in front of sophisticated sugar mill in Fiji, n.d. (Source: Ministry of External Affairs / Government of India at <http://himalmag.com/girmit-fiji/>)



Rather than negotiating with the indigenous people over both land usage and labour requirements as the colonial administration had in Fiji, efforts in Australia were directed to alienating indigenous land for European use and keeping out the traditional owners. The east coast of Australia was claimed as a British colony and established as a convict colony in 1788. Though regarded as a *terra nullius*, because the indigenous people did not farm the land intensively, nor appear to claim ownership of land in the way that Europeans did, the land was in fact occupied by over 600 clan groups.¹²⁵ The alienation

¹²³ Sharma and Irvine, “Governance and Accounting.”

¹²⁴ Lal, “Labouring Men,” 151.

¹²⁵ See proclamation by NSW Governor Sir Richard Bourke which asserted that the land belonged to no-one prior to the British crown taking possession, “Proclamation of Governor Bourke, 10 October 1835,”

of indigenous land for use as pasture and sugar fields denied the traditional owners access to food, water holes, well-used pathways, sites of religious significance and ceremonial grounds, while contact with Europeans resulted in warfare and decimation by European diseases. Planters attempted to use indigenous labour on their plantations, but requiring a pliable, plentiful labour supply, planters turned to sourcing Melanesian indentured labour.¹²⁶

The use of such labour was justified by planters because they considered indigenous Australians to be intractable as field labour because they were unfamiliar with structured day-by-day work. Meanwhile, planters perceived white labourers to be reluctant workers.¹²⁷ However, this was often because white Europeans who did fieldwork alongside an Aborigine or Melanesian were criticised by their peers as doing “niggers’ work.”¹²⁸ Nevertheless, the most popular perception of why alien labour had to be imported into tropical north Queensland was, as noted earlier, that white people could not work in the tropics as the climate was detrimental to their health. An additional and more practical reason why large numbers of field labourers were required was that, in the older, established sugar growing areas of southern Queensland and northern NSW, the land had been cleared many years before and was being worked by horse-drawn implements. Tropical lands, on the other hand, were heavily timbered and had to be cleared first, making the use of horse-drawn implements impossible. Hence the work was laborious and required large teams of workers which were simply not available locally.

That the sugar plantations of tropical Queensland would consider indentured labour to solve their labour question is consistent with the solutions found in other sugar growing colonies. As in Barbados, where the cotton industry provided the sugar planters with the prototype socio-economic complex, together with its labour type, so the sugar plantations

Museum of Australian Democracy, accessed November 25, 2015, <http://www.foundingdocs.gov.au/item-did-42.html>.

¹²⁶ Popularly, and at the time, inaccurately referred to as Polynesian though the labour was actually recruited in the main from the islands of Melanesia. This thesis will use the word Melanesian to avoid confusion.

¹²⁷ Ann Curthoys and Clive Moore pointed out that the voice of the Indigenous Australian needs to be heard, rather than the white account which prevails. Ann Curthoys and Clive Moore, “Working for the White People: An Historiographic Essay on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Labour,” *Labour History* 69 (1995): 1-29. Though considerable scholarship has been conducted in the twentieth century to redress the view that indigenous Aborigines were reluctant to engage in, or unable to partake in paid, structured work, there is still another untold story in the sugar industry: the quantity and quality of the contribution Aboriginal workers made whether by force or choice.

¹²⁸ Saunders, *Workers in Bondage*, 157.

of north Queensland inherited the Melanesian labourers that had been brought out for the cotton plantations.¹²⁹ The government responded to the need for sugar-field labour by legislating in favour of indentured labour.¹³⁰ The importation of such labour was made palatable by the insistence that the labourers would be working at jobs and in areas that even the working-class felt was unsuitable for whites. Nevertheless, the use of indentured labour had its vocal detractors from the outset because slavery and its associated practices were still the stuff of living memory. The recruitment process carried a taint of intimidation, coercion and trickery, by which some Islanders were secured against their own will or ‘black-birded.’¹³¹ Instances “of deceit, cruel treachery, deliberate kidnapping, and cold-blooded murder” were involved in their recruitment, candidly attested to in the 1885 royal commission.¹³² Economic and demographic historian Ralph Shlomowitz attested that the Melanesian indentured labourers were employed in a “stipulated-wage system.”¹³³ They had agency in the indenture arrangement. They were paid, and at the end of the indenture they could return to their islands or re-indenture, or even work as time-expired workers on a set wage. This is in marked contrast to slave labour. Colonial and post-colonialism historian Tracey Banivanua-Mar, on the other hand, questioned the degree of agency. She argued that indenture occurred within a space where violence by European individuals was, if not patently officially sanctioned, rationalized by racial theories and attitudes that such violence was a necessary corollary to the colonizing endeavors of settlement and economic development.¹³⁴ Furthermore, even as time-expired workers, where, for how long, and in what industry they could work was circumscribed while they operated within an increasingly relentless nationalistic drive to expunge people of colour or race from the Australian social landscape.¹³⁵ Regardless of

¹²⁹ Moore, “Queensland Sugar Industry,” 33.

¹³⁰ Megarrity, “White Queensland,” 2; Shlomowitz, “The Search for Institutional Equilibrium,” 100-01.

¹³¹ A euphemism for enticement and kidnapping, see Vidonja Balanzategui, *Herbert River Story*, 28. The term began appearing in the colonial press in 1872 and, in one of the first references, the means used to *black-bird* were described: “Colonial Topics,” *Northern Argus*, October 21 1872, 3. See also “Slavery in New Caledonia,” *Daily Northern Argus*, January 13 1875, 3, for a short semantic discussion of the “appellation”.

¹³² The full report of the royal commission appointed to inquire into the recruiting of Polynesian labourers in New Guinea and the adjacent islands as reprinted in “The Labour Trade,” *Brisbane Courier*, May 4, 1885, 2.

¹³³ Ralph Shlomowitz, “Team Work and Incentives: The Origins and Development of the Butty Gang System in Queensland’s Sugar Industry, 1891-1913,” *Journal of Comparative Economics* 3 (1979): 41, 49.

¹³⁴ Tracey Banivanua-Mar, “Stabilising Violence in Colonial Rule: Settlement and the Indentured Labour Trade in Queensland in the 1870s,” *Labour History* 113 (2017): 11, 13.

¹³⁵ Tracey Banivanua-Mar, *Violence and Colour: The Australian-Pacific Indentured Labour Trade* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2007), 73, 87-90.

what agency individual indentured labourers may have been able to exercise the trauma, sense of displacement, loss and wrong experienced by them and their descendants cannot be overstated.

The ever-escalating demand for labour and the difficulties in securing the numbers to satisfy that demand meant that planters employed other non-whites including indigenous Australians, indentured Javanese, Japanese, Malays and Sinhalese, or Chinese, and even demanded of the government that the indenture of Europeans be permitted.¹³⁶ Nevertheless, the use of indentured labour was never planned to be an indefinite arrangement, and beginning in 1885 legislation was passed to phase out the use of such labour, culminating in the remaining labourers' enforced repatriation in 1906. The different types of organisational and labour arrangements in the sugar growing areas of Australia determined the nature of social forms that developed there. The agricultural association movement in the different sugar growing districts reflected those arrangements.

Control and management

The sugar plantation, as a distinct type of labour economy, required a suitable social and spatial organisation to ensure control of, and optimum production from, labour. The primary characteristic of the socio-economic arrangement was a well-defined social hierarchy linking owners to workers and a spatial layout of the plantation that separated the classes and functioned as a quasi-town. The control that planters continued to exert over labour, tenants or share-croppers, even after slavery and indenture, was often orchestrated through agricultural associations. Such control confined participation in those associations to planters.

In Brazil during the colonial period, a resident planter class was committed to colonial life but nonetheless lived in the city, their milling concerns left in the immediate care of overseers or agents.¹³⁷ Nevertheless, a visual indicator of their prosperity and power was the lavishness of the sugar-plantation house and lifestyle that the planters enjoyed both in the city and on their occasional sojourns on the plantation. Even after slavery the

¹³⁶ See Commonwealth Government, "Contract Immigrants Act 1905," which allowed for non-British workers to be contracted to work in the sugar fields.

¹³⁷ Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry*, 116.

aristocratic and indulgent nature of the lifestyle of the wealthier planters was still visible.¹³⁸ The spatial arrangements of the plantations assumed the characteristics of a village, and the relationship between planter/manager and worker was authoritarian. The plantation village included the grand house of the *senhor de engenho*, houses for the European workers, slave housing, a church, the sugar mill, workshops, sawmill, store houses, stables and jetties.¹³⁹ As they were distant from urban centres, self-sufficiency was vital. While luxury goods were imported, the plantations produced clothing and rudimentary tools and utensils. Reliant on subsistence crops, the slaves were also required to provision themselves by growing their own food crops. The several hundred years of the tradition of planters' control over the economic, social and political life of the sugar districts—over the very mechanisms of the daily lives of their workers and sharecroppers—would also determine the nature of the agricultural association movement in Brazil.

Image 3: Large plantation house, mill and African slave huts, Brazil, circa 1718.
(Source: Figure 7. Plate 2 from J. D. Herlein, *Beschryvinge van de volk-plantinge Zuriname* (Leeuwarden: Meindert Injema, 1718) (artwork in the public domain) <https://apps.carleton.edu/kettering/sutton/>)



Like the Brazilian plantation the Hawai'ian plantations also had village-like characteristics, with planters and workers and their respective families leading disparate

¹³⁸ Eisenberg, *The Sugar Industry in Pernambuco*, 70.

¹³⁹ Blume, *The Geography of Sugarcane*, 168.

lives typical of plantation society. Ronald Takaki called the Hawai'ian plantation "a system of capitalist paternalism that would embrace the total needs of plantation workers and set a pattern for planter-worker relationships in Hawaii" from then on.¹⁴⁰ It was "a small world in itself" consisting of the mill building, the planter's house, workers' cottages, school, church and store.¹⁴¹ Workers lived in the plantation community of houses, six to a hut or 40 to a barrack, and were paid in coupons that could only be redeemed at the plantation store. They were assigned plots of land to grow subsistence crops to supplement the goods purchased from the plantation store. Other needs of body and soul were provided for by rudimentary medical treatment as well as religious services. As every available piece of arable land was used for sugar cane growing, the plantation dedicated little land, besides the workers' subsistence plots, to food crops and as a result even the most basic food stuffs for both humans and animals was imported.¹⁴² Just as in Brazil, the agricultural association movement in Hawai'i would reflect the capitalist imperatives of a planter class and the degree of control they came to exert over every aspect of Hawai'ian life.

Brazilian and Louisianan planters equally aspired to lavish lifestyles. In Louisiana in the antebellum period planters were predominantly white and tended to reside on the plantation. They were class conscious and effected a lifestyle that reflected their sense of racial superiority. Nevertheless, there was also a significant number of wealthy free Afro-American planters who owned slaves. They presented what Sarah Paradise Russell calls an "anomalous space in the social structure," sharing the economy with whites but, regardless of their wealth and planter status, ever excluded from white social and familial networks.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Takaki, *Pau Hana*, 10.

¹⁴¹ Aller, *Labor Relations*, 19.

¹⁴² James W. Girvin, *The Master Planter; or, Life in the Cane Fields of Hawaii* (Honolulu, Press of the Hawaiian Gazette Co., 1910), 129.

¹⁴³ Russell, "Cultural Conflicts and Common Interests," 15.

Image 4: Mansion built for Sylvain Peyroux, a Creole sugar cane planter. Three Oaks Plantation, St Bernard Parish, Chalmette, Louisiana, n.d. (Source: www.pinterest)



Before the Civil War the Louisianan sugar industry experienced a golden age with plantations “superb beyond description.”¹⁴⁴ The palatial planter’s residence was built “solidly and superbly” and for that reason some have survived into the twenty-first century.¹⁴⁵ The architectural style of a planter’s home and the spatial layout of the buildings were determined by ethnic origin, whether Creole or Anglo-American.¹⁴⁶ Plantation homes fronted the waterways while the mill house and other buildings—store houses to store goods and grain, a saw mill, a brickyard with furnaces to fire bricks, and a mill to husk rice—were located behind.¹⁴⁷ Slaves were housed in barracks or small huts with most of their needs, and those of planters, supplied by the plantation. Clothing and materials were often manufactured onsite while small food crops were grown to feed both slaves and animals. The concentration on producing one staple crop with little crop diversification across Louisiana meant that few plantations could be totally self-sustaining therefore there were foods items which had to be brought in. The memberships

¹⁴⁴ Sitterson, *Sugar Country*, 44, 60-61. Sitterson quotes an 1818 visitor’s observation.

¹⁴⁵ Samuel Wilson Jr., “Early History,” in *New Orleans Architecture Volume IV: The Creole Faubourgs*, ed. Roulhac Toledano et al. (Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company, 1974), 5.

¹⁴⁶ Nathan A. Buman, “Two Histories, One Future: Louisiana Sugar Planters, their Slaves, and the Anglo-Creole Schism, 1815-1865” (PhD diss., Louisiana State University, 2013). 35-36, 50.

¹⁴⁷ Wilson, “Early History,” 5-6.

of powerful agricultural associations in the sugar districts of Louisiana would correlate with the social divide embodied in the spatial layout and power dynamics of plantation facilities.

Planters from other sugar growing areas would have been perfectly at home on a Barbadian plantation, and in fact they may have even been a little envious. The Barbadian planters were amongst the wealthiest in the British Caribbean, held powerful official positions, and lived and entertained lavishly. For instance, James Drax, whom historian Michael Craton described as the “quintessential” early West Indian planter, created a plantocracy dynasty. He is said to have introduced the vertically integrated plantation worked by slaves, which he had observed during a visit to Pernambuco. He consequently brought slaves to Barbados and built the first windmill. Enjoying a baronial lifestyle, he resided in a stone Jacobean-style manor house, Drax Hall, which survives to this day.¹⁴⁸ His son Colonel Henry Drax, in turn, was a member of the Governor’s Council of Barbados, and owned 705 acres and 327 slaves.¹⁴⁹

As in Brazil, Louisiana and Hawaii, the planters presided over virtual villages. There was the planter’s manor house, offices, the mill with its various buildings, the stables, houses for overseers and white servants, workshops and slave quarters. Small food crops were planted amongst the cane holes to feed both the planter’s family and his workforce.

Image 5: Thatched hut for plantation workers, Barbados, circa 1890+. (Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. Carpenter Collection b/w image number LC-USZ62-95078)



¹⁴⁸ Craton, “Reluctant Creoles,” 351-52.

¹⁴⁹ See description in Thompson, “Henry Drax’s Instructions,” 565-604.

Similarly, fruits were grown and numerous animals kept and used for work and transport while others provided a food source. Most were also valuable producers of the precious manure required for frequent manuring. Most other requisites were supplied at the planter's discretion, including extra food rations, clothing and medical attention. The reach of the monoculture of sugar in Barbados meant that the wider population of Barbados, let alone that of the plantations, could hardly be self-sufficient, and increasingly foodstuffs and other vital commodities had to be obtained from elsewhere. The concerns of planters to source an abundant supply of pliable labour and to maintain control over it as it carried out the intensive fieldwork required in Barbados, determined the priorities of the agricultural association movement.

Though the leased estates on Fiji may not have had a mill at their centre, nevertheless, land division and the layout of those estates mirrored the society of the plantations everywhere.¹⁵⁰ By the 1890s, at the same time that it was abandoning cultivation in Queensland, CSR had leased its estates in Fiji to former European employees, thus divesting itself of cultivation and labour management. At the apex of the hierarchy was the planter or the company's manager. Their instructions were conveyed and enforced through a privileged group of overseers, indentured Indians whose personal disposition, physical appearance and language skills lent them authority in their own communities.¹⁵¹ At the bottom of this hierarchy were the indentured workers whose labour and even movement was constrained by the plantation boundaries.

¹⁵⁰ Ward, "Plus Ça Change," 137.

¹⁵¹ Ward, "Plus Ça Change," 137.

Image 6: Europeans supervising the loading of cane, Mango Island, Fiji, 1884.

(Source: Burton Brothers Studio (Dunedin, NZ) Fiji photographs, Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, reference number PA7-01-06-2)



Besides the mill house, on those Fijian plantations that had mills, there were dwellings for the manager and other officers. The planter or manager's house dominated, often located on a hill, shaded by trees and with a commanding view. The house was built of timber and corrugated iron. The workers' barracks were located at a suitable distance on land unsuitable for cultivation. These barracks, in contrast to Europeans' homes, were primitive, with dirt floors, no windows and afforded no privacy. The plantations were self-contained communities with a dairy, butcher, store, stables, workshops, hospital, church and school. Sugar was cultivated on the flat land, while sloping land was used for horse paddocks.

Locating the manager's house on a hill was both a spatial and a semantic device to indicate social superiority. Historian Claudia Knapman wrote of social standing in Fiji that it could be determined by whether an individual was "in" or "out," or their housing "uphill" or "downhill."¹⁵² The typical hierarchical social arrangement continued to pertain post-indenture. Both indigenous Fijian sugar farmers and Indian tenant farmers were subject to the paternalistic technical and managerial supervision of a mill staff that

¹⁵² Knapman, *White Women in Fiji*, 132.

was of European extraction and recruited from Australia. That hierarchical social arrangement, particularly given that CSR was the major planter and miller, presented particular constraints to the development of an associative movement.

Like elsewhere in the sugar growing world, Australian sugar planters made up “an aristocratic plantocracy.”¹⁵³ Clive Moore remarked on the mobility of the Queensland planters as most of them came to Queensland hoping to make their fortunes but left when the sugar industry was transformed into one conducted by small growers. Their better education, social standing and economic position allowed them to be a quasi “ruling class” which directed the political, legal and social conduct of the sugar districts of tropical north and central Queensland.¹⁵⁴ They only did this for a brief period however, as they never managed to achieve as secure a hold on the physical, political and social landscape as their counterparts did elsewhere.¹⁵⁵

The planters, who were male, mainly British-born, and predominantly upper-middle class from landed, merchant, and industrial backgrounds, held certain aspirations for how they should live. The plantation house, though certainly no Louisiana plantation mansion with Greco-Roman columns, nevertheless dominated the plantation’s physical landscape and was constructed and furnished with attention to comfort and style.¹⁵⁶ Most planters did build quite palatial homes in the ‘Queenslander’ style, raised high on stumps out of reach of the unhealthy fever-bearing miasmas.¹⁵⁷ The style included long hallways through the centre of the house and surrounding verandahs accessed through French doors. In this way the house was well ventilated in the tropical heat.¹⁵⁸ The mansions built on the bayous of Louisiana, though built of more durable materials than those of Queensland, were designed similarly. In both, the kitchen was a separate structure connected to the

¹⁵³ Moore, “Whips and Rum Swizzles,” 120-21.

¹⁵⁴ Wegner, “Hinchinbrook,” 264-65; Clive Moore, “Kanaka Maratta: A History of Melanesian Mackay,” (PhD diss., 1981), 234-35, 238, 241-42.

¹⁵⁵ Moore, “Whips and Rum Swizzles,” 120-21.

¹⁵⁶ See Susanna de Vries, *Blue Ribbons, Bitter Bread: The Life of Joice Nankivell Loch*. (Alexandria: Hale & Iremonger, 2000) 13-14, 16, for a description of those stylish comforts.

¹⁵⁷ Alan Frost, *East Coast Country: A North Queensland Dreaming* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1996), 218-21; Peter Bell, “Miasma, Termites, and a Nice View of the Dam: The Development of the Highset House in North Queensland,” in *Lectures on North Queensland History*, fourth series (Townsville: James Cook University, 1984), 36-53.

¹⁵⁸ Peter Bell, “A History of the Queensland House,” accessed June 12, 2018, <https://flinders.academia.edu/PeterBell>. Frost argues that in Australia the ‘Queenslander’ was first constructed on the Herbert. Frost, *East Coast Country*, 218-25.

house by a breezeway in order to guard against fires.¹⁵⁹ Queensland plantation houses were surrounded by well-kept gardens. There were fruit trees of all varieties, decorative plants, manicured borders and lawns, and usually a tennis court.

The plantation was a self-contained community with a store, blacksmith and wheelwright workshops, the ‘big’ house, the manager’s house, workers’ cottages, workers’ huts, stables and carriage-house, and sometimes a church and even a School of Arts, all “practically under the control of one person” as BSES director H.T. Easterby observed.¹⁶⁰ A newspaper description of one tropical north Queensland plantation in 1882 described it as resembling a township which was far larger than the actual township nearby.¹⁶¹ Besides the planters’ residence the other dominant structure on the plantation was the mill house where the crop from the plantation’s extensive landholdings was processed.

Given that planters were a virtual aristocracy in tropical north Queensland, it would be expected that the agricultural association movement there would be driven by their imperatives. But given that at the same time land legislation was being promulgated to favour yeoman farming in the tropics, the small farmers had the opportunity to form associations to challenge the planters’ hegemony.

Industrial organisation

The organisational systems practised in Brazil, Hawai’i, Louisiana, Barbados, Fiji and tropical Australia all suggested a preference for the vertically integrated plantation and the use of labour closely controlled by overseers. Where the vertically integrated plantation persisted to 1914, the agricultural association movement exhibited characteristics that reflected the concerns of how to maintain that particular mode of industrial organisation.

The organisational systems that evolved in Brazil were the plantation run by a *senhor de engenho*; the central; and the *usina*. The primitive *engenho*, central, and highly sophisticated *usina* were sequential stages of what Peter Eisenberg identified as a “dialectical process.”¹⁶² The *usina* was a later version of the traditional *engenho* on a

¹⁵⁹ W.E. Butler, *Down Among the Sugar Cane: The Story of Louisiana Sugar Plantations and their Railroads* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana, 1980) documents the plantations, their structures and railroads.

¹⁶⁰ H.T. Easterby, *The Queensland Sugar Industry* (Brisbane: Government Printer, n.d.), 13.

¹⁶¹ “The Lower Herbert,” *Queenslander*, May 13, 1882, 588.

¹⁶² Eisenberg, *The Sugar Industry in Pernambuco*, 106.

larger and more complex scale: an evolution from vertical integration to small farming and back again. These changes were market driven, the aim being to produce a plentiful, good quality product at the lowest price possible.¹⁶³ That cyclical evolutionary process determined that the memberships and concerns of agricultural associations were those who had vested interests in maintaining vertical integration.

As in Brazil, the first sugar mills in Hawai'i were not strictly vertically integrated units. They were primitive and could hardly be called plantation complexes. Their primitiveness reflected a lack of capital. As the industry developed, different units of production were practised: vertically integrated plantations, estates with land only, and those with mills and no land. With the influx of Californian capital after the Treaty of Reciprocity, vertically integrated plantations became more numerous.

An example of the magnitude of that investment is reflected in the plantation enterprise of Claus Spreckels which was described as the "largest sugar estate in the world."¹⁶⁴ Owning vast landholdings, mills, railways to transfer the sugar to his own landings and warehouses at the port, and a partnership in an agency that transported his sugar on his Oceanic Steamship Company to his refinery in California, he exemplified vertical integration at its fullest elucidation.¹⁶⁵ The nature of the primary agricultural association in Hawai'i not only patterned the dominating 'factors' and well-coordinated business interests that characterised the industry, but reflected the imperatives of the vertically integrated mode of production.

¹⁶³ Eisenberg, *The Sugar Industry in Pernambuco*, 106.

¹⁶⁴ *Pacific Coast Commercial Record*, May 1882, 20, quoted in Jacob Adler, *Claus Spreckels: The Sugar King in Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1966), 72-73.

¹⁶⁵ Adler, *Claus Spreckels*, 78; Jacob Adler, "The Maui Land Deal: A Chapter in Claus Spreckels' Hawaiian Career," *Agricultural History* 39 (1965): 155, accessed June 6, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3740255>.

Image 7: An advanced vertically integrated plantation. Hana Sugar Plantation, Maui, circa 1885. (Source: Hawai'i State Archives digital collection, call number: PP-106-9-018)



Hawai’ian planters were growing for an export market and Louisianan planters for a predominantly domestic market, and under very trying climatic and geomorphic conditions, ensuring that the industries would evolve very differently. In Louisiana a sugar industry only developed when it was established how best to cultivate sugar cane on land that was poorly drained and that experienced freezing temperatures.¹⁶⁶ The mills, using primitive kettle technology, produced only raw brown sugar which was shipped to the western and southern states. As little as 10 percent was refined.¹⁶⁷ In the 1880s technological improvements which replaced the open-kettle system and revolutionised sugar processing were uniformly adopted.¹⁶⁸ The use of such technology however, reinforced the requirements for millers to retain large landholdings to justify the

¹⁶⁶ Conrad and Lucas, *White Gold*, 6.

¹⁶⁷ Schmitz, “Transformation,” 270.

¹⁶⁸ “Louisiana State Museum Online exhibits. The Cabildo: Two Centuries of Louisiana History Antebellum Louisiana ii: Agrarian Life,” Louisiana State Museum, accessed 19 November, 2015, <http://www.crt.state.la.us/louisiana-state-museum/online-exhibits/index>; “Norbert Rillieux and the Multiple Effect Evaporator National Historic Chemical Landmark,” American Chemical Society, accessed 20 November, 2015, <http://www.acs.org/content/acs/en/education/whatischemistry/landmarks/norbertrillieux.html>; Allen Begnaud, “The Louisiana Sugar Cane Industry: An overview,” in *Green Fields: Two Hundred Years of Louisiana Sugar* (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1980), 36.

investment.¹⁶⁹ Post-Civil War reconstruction entailed experimentation and a scientific approach, and mechanisation and modernisation in both the mills and the fields.

Image 8: Drays of cane waiting at the weighbridge. Sugar Mill, Burnside Plantation, Ascension Parish Louisiana, circa 1890. (Source: <https://www2.gwu.edu/~folklife/bighouse/panel9.html>)



The costs entailed to achieve this drove the industry into the hands of an ever-decreasing number of owners. By the turn of the century the industrial unit had changed to large modern, central factories which Greta de Jong described as “rationalized, efficiency-driven enterprises.”¹⁷⁰ Though they were now more likely to be owned by absentee landlords rather than resident planters, they still persisted with the exploitative labour practices of the past. The leading agricultural association represented the owners of those efficiency-driven enterprises, and managed to secure advantages for the industry by means of social influence and connections.

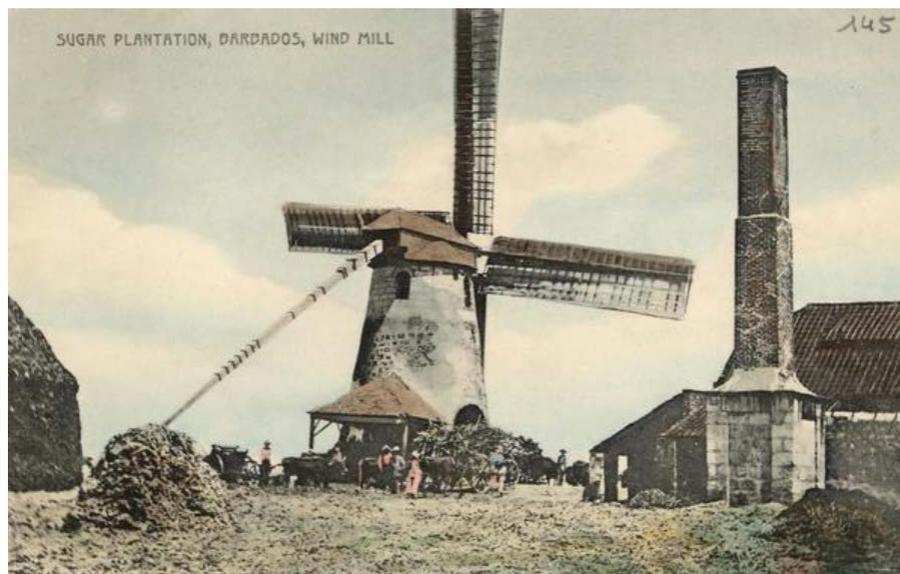
In the colonial era, both Louisiana and Barbados produced a raw product which was refined elsewhere. This permitted the continued use of more primitive industrial methods. The vertically integrated plantation’s first manifestation in Barbados was for the cultivation of cotton, becoming a dominant industrial mode by 1680 and prevailing until

¹⁶⁹ Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry*, 153. No less than 500 acres.

¹⁷⁰ Greta de Jong, *A Different Day: African American Struggles for Justice in Rural Louisiana, 1900-1970*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 22.

the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁷¹ A raw product, muscovado sugar, was produced and shipped to Europe for refining. The lack of sophistication of Barbadian mills can be attributed to the fact that muscovado sugar could be produced without vacuum pans and largely was into the twentieth century. As the industry consolidated while also converting to windmills, single plantation families came to own

Image 9: Wind powered Spring Hall Sugar Works Mill and chimney. St Lucy, Barbados, n.d. (Source: Mills Archive, catalogue.millsarchive.org, reference number MCFC-10346)



several estates and several windmills. Richard Sheridan described the Barbadian plantation as a “capital-intensive, power-intensive system of agriculture conducted on a sustained-yield basis.”¹⁷² Agricultural associations reflected the conservative nature of Barbadian planters who were determined to maintain an industrial status quo.

The sugar industry in Fiji was established 300 years after that of Brazil and was thus positioned to take advantage of the leaps in technology that sugar production had made in those intervening centuries. From the outset the mode of production in Fiji was the vertically integrated unit. From 1870 to 1916 planters dominated the Fijian sugar industry just as they did in Queensland in the same period.¹⁷³ CSR was renowned for the use of the most up-to-date technology in its mills from its earliest incursions into sugar milling in both Fiji and Australia. In contrast to the sophistication of the milling technology, field

¹⁷¹ Christine Barrow, “Ownership and Control of Resources in Barbados: 1834 to the Present,” *Social and Economic Studies* 32 (1983): 85, accessed January 30, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27862044>.

¹⁷² Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 147.

¹⁷³ Potts, “An Outline of the Successful Development,” 27-29; Moynagh, *Brown or White?*, 8.

technology in Fiji continued to be primitive even into the twentieth century, with Fijian and Indian tenants using bullocks or horse-drawn equipment. The first efforts to form agricultural associations in Fiji were driven by prospective planters seeking investors willing to invest in mills. The paternalistic relationship imposed by CSR retarded the development of a more catholic associative movement.

The later start of the Australian sugar industry meant that planters and millers could take advantage of the technological developments achieved already by sugar industries which had been operating for hundreds of years. Nevertheless, the struggling farmer crushing his cane in his own primitive mill characterised the sugar cane industry of southeast Queensland, when sugar growing commenced there. The first mills were horse or cattle driven and the open evaporating trains were not unlike those that were seen in the West Indies two centuries earlier.¹⁷⁴ By the time the first mill began crushing north of Townsville in 1872, the industrial unit of sugar manufacture used there was consistent with those commonly found in the most developed sugar growing areas.¹⁷⁵ Ten years later, the plantation mills had become state-of-the-art and technologically Australia was outpacing other sugar growing areas such as Brazil and Barbados. In order to keep pace, large, ongoing capital investment was required.

There was a compendium of reasons why the Australian sugar industry converted to central milling, not the least being the pressure exerted by small farmers. But planters meanwhile were inclined to this mode of production because they could pass cultivation costs onto small farmers and invest instead in the milling process. Because independent small farmers demanded to run cooperative mills, and planters did hand the cultivation process on to small farmers, the nature of the agricultural associative movement in the sugar growing districts of Australia would be different to that in Brazil, Hawai'i, Louisiana, Barbados and Fiji.

CONCLUSION

The global extent of the plantation mode of production can be attributed to the botanical nature of sugar cane, the demand for crystallised white sugar, and sugar cane's peculiar cultivation and processing requirements. Despite the difficulty of finding a widely

¹⁷⁴ "Early Sugar History in Queensland," *Australian Sugar Journal* 28 (1936): 624-27.

¹⁷⁵ Bosma and Knight, "Global Factory and Local Field," 1-2, accessed August 27, 2016, doi: 10.1017/S0020859003001342.

accepted definition a particular set of characteristics of the plantation are able to be identified through geographic locality, imperial motive, product, size, labour use, control and management, and industrial organisation. It has been shown here that Brazil, Hawai'i, Louisiana, Barbados, Fiji and Australia were all iterations of that persistent global pattern.

But while the tropical north Queensland sugar industry experienced a brief plantation era, there plantation agriculture and the use of indentured labour was an interim response to the imperial imperative to exploit the tropics for cash crops. Unlike in other areas, those labourers were not permitted to stay on to become a significant demographic. When the Queensland and commonwealth governments in turn legislated not only for the cessation of the use of indentured labour but the repatriation of all labourers back to the Melanesian islands after federation, the Australian sugar industry took a unique turn which distinguished it markedly from other sugar growing countries. Not only would it come to be worked by small farmers, but this transformation would also be partly driven by a strong associative movement. The next chapter will examine the dichotomy between plantations and small farms. It will explain why the family farm mode of production carried out by authentically independent, white, small farmers was practised in Australia, and why it was not a pervasive phenomenon across the sugar growing areas of Brazil, Hawai'i, Louisiana, Barbados and Fiji.

CHAPTER 2

THE GLOBAL EMERGENCE OF SMALL GROWERS

INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter showed how, prior to 1914, the sugar industries of the tropical and subtropical areas of Brazil, Hawai'i, Louisiana, Barbados, Fiji and Australia were all linked by a common phenomenon: the plantation, a universally recognisable socio-economic complex. Geographic locality in the tropics and sub-tropics, imperial motive, the nature of the product and its market, size of the enterprise, the use, control and management of unfree labour, and a strongly hierarchical industrial organisation were unifying characteristics and all determined by: the botanical nature of sugar cane; the demand for crystallised white sugar; and sugar cane's peculiar cultivation and processing requirements. Post slavery and indenture, sugar industries were forced to adjust to new labour regimes as market demands, competition from other sugar producers, and the development of new technologies drove a need to find ways to stay competitive. Yet by 1914, while sugar milling technology was generally similar across sugar industries, there was no parallel homogeneity of mechanisation or best practice in field cultivation, and no uniformity of types of suppliers as will be explained in this chapter. In Australia, the response to those changing conditions saw the emergence of authentically independent, white, small, sugar cane farmers, as well as white field labourers and statutory regulation scaffolding every stage of sugar production from field to market. This thesis suggests that these adaptations were not simply driven by outside forces, but that small farmers were active agents in this transformation, and that one means they used to effect change was the agricultural association. This chapter will examine the dichotomy of plantations and small farms, and will explain why the family farm mode of production carried out by authentically independent, white, small farmers was practised in Australia and why it was not a pervasive phenomenon across the sugar growing areas of Brazil, Hawai'i, Louisiana, Barbados and Fiji by 1914.

Table 1: Sugar regions — details

SUGAR REGION	COLONISING POWER	DOMINANT PRODUCTION MODE	DOMINANT LABOUR MODE	SMALL FARMER ELEMENT IN SUGAR 1914	DOMINANT EXAMPLE OF SUGAR ASSOCIATIONS before 1914
BRAZIL	PORTUGAL	VERTICAL INTEGRATION →CENTRAL MILLS → <i>USINA</i> (VERTICAL INTEGRATION)	AFRICAN SLAVES	Negligible	Generalist and planters' associations e.g: SAAP and Sugar Planters' Association of Pernambuco. Planter dominated.
HAWAI'I	UNITED STATES	VERTICAL INTEGRATION	INDENTURED LABOUR FROM CHINA, PORTUGAL AND JAPAN	NIL	Planters' Labour and Supply Company and Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association. Planter dominated
LOUISIANA	FRANCE (then UNITED STATES)	VERTICAL INTEGRATION →CENTRAL MILLS	AFRICAN SLAVES	Tenant, white, and smaller number of tenant Afro-American and independent landowning white farmers	Louisiana Sugar Planters' Association and then American Sugar Growers' Association alongside LSPA after bi-partisan split. Planter dominated
BARBADOS	BRITAIN	VERTICAL INTEGRATION →CENTRAL MILLS	AFRICAN SLAVES	Negligible	West India Planters and Merchants and Barbados Agricultural Society. Planter dominated
FIJI	BRITAIN	VERTICAL INTEGRATION →CENTRAL MILLS CSR	INDENTURED LABOUR FROM PACIFIC ISLANDS AND INDIA	Tenant and small number of independent former indentured Indian labourers and indigenous Fijians using family labour	Fiji Planters' Association and Agricultural and Industrial Association of Fiji (Rewa). Planter dominated. British Indian Association of Fiji. Membership Indian community leaders and businessmen. Petitioned on behalf of indentured workers
AUSTRALIA	BRITAIN	SMALL FARMING* (NSW and southern Queensland) VERTICAL INTEGRATION (central and tropical north Queensland) →CENTRAL MILLS	INDENTURED LABOUR FROM MELANESIA AND ASIA	Independent, white, landowning using family labour	Planters' Associations/ Planter & Farmers' Associations/ Farmers' Associations preceding United Cane Growers' Association. Membership small farmers. Australian Sugar Producers Association. Membership small farmers and millers

Invariably, sugar cultivation and milling were first experimented with by small farmers using primitive milling technology. Inevitably, these were replaced by vertically integrated plantations in order to respond to a voracious local or metropole demand and the imperative to establish cash crops. After the abolition of slavery and the end of indenture, planters had to use new strategies to attract labour. Meanwhile, as new milling technologies evolved, mill machinery had to be regularly updated in order for plantations to stay competitive. These developments led to experimentation with alternative labour

methods, supply sources and central milling. In their perfect elucidation central mills were owned cooperatively by farmers and supplied by those farmers. Alternatively, corporate entities owned the mills which were supplied by independent or tenant farmers. However, in some areas small farmers were marginal suppliers and the central mills simply perpetuations of the organisational paradigm of the vertically integrated plantation, sourcing cane from their own lands and other landowning elites. This examination of the sugar industries of Brazil, Hawai'i, Louisiana, Barbados, Fiji and Australia traces the trajectory of each from small farming hopefuls, through vertical integration, to the industrial mode that came to prevail by 1914.

THE SMALL FARMER IN BRAZIL

In the south of Brazil, in Bahia, in the first 100 years of sugar cane growing, the practice of leasing land to small farmers appeared. The tracts of land granted to the planters were too large for them to cultivate themselves. Therefore, they contracted small tenant cultivators to grow cane for crushing at their mills. Though not central mills they anticipated that later mode of production. Beside tenant farmers there were others who were landowning farmers (*lavradores de cana*) in their own right.¹ Because of their association with the dominant export crop they held a relatively high social position compared to farmers of other crops.² They were resentful of the economic and social domination exerted by the miller (*senhor de engenho*) to whom they were obliged. Nevertheless, land ownership gave them a position of strength in negotiating with the miller since the latter was dependent on them and needed them to help share risk.³ Holding the same social standing as the millers, and with similar aspirations, they hoped to establish their own mills. However, as eminent scholar of Brazilian history Schwartz noted, the class lost social prestige as an increasing number of coloured *lavradores* took up cane planting.⁴ By 1815 the industry was technologically backward compared to competitors and facing market difficulties. Growers who were forced out of the industry by these unfavourable conditions included the *lavradores de cana* who then ceased to be

¹ Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations*, 295-312 described the *lavradores de cana* as a "kind of farmer elite, often ranked just below the *senhores de engenho* but also including people of humbler backgrounds and resources."

² Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations*, 296.

³ Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations*, 296; Schwartz, *Sovereignty and Society* 187.

⁴ Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations*, 448.

a significant demographic.⁵

In contrast, in northeast Pernambuco, sugar plantations were conducted from the beginning as vertically integrated units. The particular system of vertical integration that manifested there was referred to as the “Pernambuco System.”⁶ As remarked earlier in chapter one, it was this system that was purported to have been observed by a Barbadian planter who replicated it in Barbados. Just as in Barbados, the system limited the participation by small sugar cane farmers. In the face of falling sugar prices planters offered some of their land for sharecropping. It was a way to spread risk, while it made use of idle land accumulated as an investment strategy, a similar tactic to that exploited by the *senhores de engenho* in Bahia.⁷ Sharecropping was taken up by Brazilian whites who formed a small but nonetheless growing rural middle class.⁸ While the planters spoke glowingly of the arrangement, the reality for the sharecroppers was otherwise. They were subject to the planters’ whims: formal contracts were non-existent and loan rates extortionate; and the planters could give false weights on cane, refuse to mill the cane, and at worst evict the sharecroppers without notice. As a result, the latter tended to overcapitalise in slaves and livestock, which were moveable assets that could be taken with them on eviction.⁹ These dynamics were not sustainable for small farming to be viable in the long term.

The Land Law of 1850 aimed to attract immigrant workers with the promise of homesteads though in practice it seemed to impede the taking up of small landholdings. It only appeared so because the sugar planter elite resisted the enactment and governance of the law.¹⁰ The planters wanted immigrants to work as labourers on their lands and saw small farmers as a threat, so any prospect of small farming was defeated. In other areas

⁵ Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations*, 312.

⁶ Craton, “Reluctant Creoles,” 331.

⁷ Craton, “Reluctant Creoles,” 331.

⁸ Eisenberg, *The Sugar Industry in Pernambuco*, 128, 192-93. In both sharecropping and tenancy the planter allowed another to use his land. However, with sharecropping the landlord received part of the crop produced on that land as rent (and thereby shared the risks of production); in tenancy the farmer paid rent for the land and bore all the risks.

⁹ Eisenberg, *The Sugar Industry in Pernambuco*, 128, 192-93.

¹⁰ Bernardo Mançano Fernandes, Clifford Andrew Welch, and Elienai Constantino Gonçalves, “Land Governance in Brazil: A Geo-Historical Review of Land Governance in Brazil,” 2: *Land Governance in the 21st Century: Framing the Debate Series*, ed. David Wilson (Rome: International Land Coalition, 2012), 19.

of Brazil, where European immigrants were encouraged to establish small farms, the Land Law did prove reasonably successful.

The abolition of slavery in 1888 forced the planters to reluctantly consider alternative labour systems. These included providing the now free rural population with a plot of plantation land on which they could grow food crops, but in turn requiring them to work in the planters' cane fields. These free workers were called *moradores*, the literal meaning being dwellers.¹¹ Other small farming systems were experimented with included sharecropping, renting, and the division of large estates, the latter being an unpopular solution. Small farmers as tenants or sharecroppers were also constrained by the demands on their labour. The planters' political clout meant that their reluctance to seriously consider these other options dictated government financial and land policies which ended up preserving the status quo.¹²

Rather than continuing to find ways to preserve their domination over labour, another alternative planters could consider was modernisation, operating as central mills with outside suppliers. However, attempts to establish 'centrals' were not motivated by the intent to hand over cultivation to small growers, but were instead further manifestations of the planters' efforts to hold on to the factors of production.

By the late nineteenth century, the technologically backward Brazilian sugar industry was feeling competition from the superior sugar being produced in the Antilles and the beet sugar produced in Europe by technologically advanced processes.¹³ In 1874 government schemes were introduced, providing loans for the establishment of large modern central sugar mills—*engenhos* centrals—in northeast Brazil. Speculative foreign companies took advantage of the schemes but failed to establish centrals for reasons both real and purported. A significant tension was that planters were reluctant to become mere cane farmers, whom they considered to hold an inferior social position.¹⁴

¹¹ It was an arrangement of tenancy and labour provision that had had a long tradition. See Schultz, *The Financial Crisis of Abolition*, 6

¹² Schultz, *The Financial Crisis of Abolition*, 6.

¹³ Aurora Gómez-Galvarriato, "Premodern Manufacturing," in *The Cambridge Economic History of Latin America*, ed. Victor Bulmer Thomas, John H. Coatsworth, and Roberto Cortés Conde, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 372.

¹⁴ Eisenberg, *The Sugar Industry in Pernambuco*, 90. The reasons included lack of confidence, failure to secure the requisite financial backing, low sugar prices, insufficient supplies of cane, mechanical

Another attempt to establish centrals was made by resident Brazilian planters who decided that they could be successful if they were set up by groups of neighbouring planters sourcing cane from their own lands. This scheme, facilitated by direct loans from the provincial government, also failed. The failure can be attributed to the unreliability of cane supplies and the lack of will on the part of the prominent landowners to make the system succeed. Powerful and independent, they had been engaged in the sugar making business for generations and valued their independence. As insurance, they kept their mill machinery and, if unhappy with the price offered by the central mill, they crushed their own cane.¹⁵ Neither of these attempts at establishing centrals aimed for a supply from small farmers.

Nor were the *usinas*, which appeared in the 1890s, authentic central mills either. The *usinas* were financed by government aid in the form of long-term low-interest mortgages. Equipped with the most up-to-date technology they became the dominant industrial arrangement replicating the vertically integrated plantation. They owned their own lands and were therefore not wholly dependent on *fornecedores* (outside suppliers) who were other large estate owners. This transformation was achieved without a redistribution of land because the land of the *fornecedores* was progressively bought up, reinforcing the “socio-historically grown divide.”¹⁶ Few others managed to acquire land of their own and what small landholders there were leased their plots to the *usinas* or were marginal suppliers of cane.¹⁷ By 1914 Brazil’s industry was still dominated by the vertically integrated mode of production.

Even though to be white in Brazil was to be privileged, white farmers too were exploited by planters and were exploitable because they did not own their land. The inherent pattern of landownership, which vested large tracts of land and political and social power in the hands of a few, precluded small ownership of the factors of production despite the aspirations of smaller farmers to participate. While government was not oblivious to this issue, the unwillingness of the planters to relinquish their hold meant that any government

problems, incompetent management and the fact that the mills did not extract any more syrup than the traditional *engenhos*.

¹⁵ Eisenberg, *The Sugar Industry in Pernambuco*, 106.

¹⁶ Anna Mohr and Linda Bausch, “Social Sustainability in Certification Schemes for Biofuel Production: An Explorative Analysis Against the Background of Land Use Constraints in Brazil,” *Energy, Sustainability and Society* 3 (2013): 3, accessed August 17, 2016, doi:10.1186/2192-0567-3-6.

¹⁷ Eisenberg, *The Sugar Industry in Pernambuco*, 221.

will to effect change was defeated. Neither did a technologically advanced *usina* system alter the socio-economic plantation paradigm; the planters were still able to draw upon a poorly paid labour force and what small suppliers there were, were marginal ones. This ongoing arrangement reinforced entrenched racial inequities and prejudices and inhibited an agricultural association movement by small farmers.

THE SMALL FARMER IN HAWAI'I

The American colonisers of Hawai'i faced very different challenges to those Portuguese who colonised Brazil, not the least of which was having to bargain with a powerful indigenous population whose land laws had to be negotiated before a sugar industry could be established. Initially a sugar industry was begun by European and Chinese independent small farmers with paltry capital resources and primitive milling equipment.¹⁸ In an 1847 address to the legislative council, King Kamehameha III articulated the desire of Hawai'ians to farm and suggested that foreign investment should be attracted to achieve this. The American settlers (*haole*) also initially envisaged Hawai'ian yeoman farmers but their attitudes changed once they came to appreciate that the traditional land tenure system was an impediment to their own agrarian activity. William Little Lee, president of the land commission that was responsible under the Great Mahele of 1848 for the distribution of land deeds, argued that only land reform would enable the growth of an agrarian middle class.¹⁹ A reformed vision however, resulted in "no significant middle class" and the native Hawai'ian subsistence farmers pressed into labouring for the plantation.²⁰

Taking up the most arable land for plantation agriculture limited land availability. For that reason, Portuguese family groups from Madeira and the Azores who came to work as plantation labour between 1878 and 1898 failed to realise their goals of yeoman small farming and moved to the mainland states.²¹ There are several other reasons why the

¹⁸ George Wilfong, "Twenty Years Experience in Cane Culture," *Planters' Monthly* 1 (1882): 148, quoted in Andrew, W. Lind, *An Island Community: Ecological Succession in Hawaii* (New York: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1938), 160.

¹⁹ Kessler, "A Plantation upon a Hill," 156n91, accessed May 7, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/phr/2015.84.2.129>.

²⁰ Lawrence H. Fuchs, *Hawaii Pono: A Social History* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961), 39; Kessler, "A Plantation upon a Hill," 158; MacLennan, "Plantation Capitalism," 78-79.

²¹ Coman, "History of Contract Labor," 31, accessed June 21, 2018, <http://evols.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/bitstream/10524/1941/1/HPM-v23n1-1904.pdf>; MacLennan, "Plantation Capitalism," 123.

yeoman farmer concept failed for both the cultivating of sugar and alternative agricultural products by either indigenous Hawai'ians or former indentured workers. Author and descendant of one of the early missionary families Jean Hobbs, writing in 1935, listed the attractions of urban life, lack of markets for alternative agricultural products and the "disparity between the scant success and the great expense" of small farming in contrast to the success of the large plantation units.²² She added that the distribution of small plots would have put an unsustainable population pressure on the remnants of land surplus to plantation agriculture.²³

Challenged by the end of indentured labour in the early 1900s, Hawai'i experimented with a number of smallholder systems. One system, similar to the Australian solution, was to source cane from independent farmers or 'homesteaders' growing cane under contract.²⁴ Another was a cooperative or share system. Under that system plots were worked by "a company of laborers" known as 'adherent' planters.²⁵ It was thought that if the labourers had an interest in the crop, they would be less likely to migrate away to look for work, would work harder, and would cultivate the crop more carefully. At this time the industry had reached the limits of land expansion and any future production increases would need to come from increased labour productivity. Perhaps the planters supposed that this system would address that problem.²⁶ The planters provided the adherent planters with all their personal and farm requirements and advanced to them

²² Jean Hobbs, *Hawai'i: A Pageant of the Soil* (California: Stanford University Press, 1935), 131. Joseph Barber Jr., writing in 1941, referred to the "bitter historical dispute" about how the foreigners obtained Hawai'ian land and the "volumes [that] have been written' in the attempt to absolve the missionaries and their descendants of "land-grabbing proclivities." See Joseph Barber Jr., *Hawaii: Restless Rampart* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Publishers, 1941), 26.

²³ Her analysis however, failed to critically address the profound consequences for the Hawai'ian people as their land was acquired by foreign interests. It could be speculated that this bias was due to the time in which she wrote and her own mixed heritage. See Edgar T. Thompson's review of her book: Edgar T. Thompson, "Review of HOBBS, JEAN. Hawaii: A Pageant of the Soil," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 185 (1936): 268-9, accessed September 5, 2018, <http://journals.sagepub.com.elibrary.jcu.edu.au>.

²⁴ Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association Plantation Archives: "Register of the Laupahoehoe Sugar Company, Papaaloa, Hawaii, 1883-1954," accessed March 6, 2018, https://www2.hawaii.edu/~speccoll/p_laupahoehoe.pdf.

²⁵ *Sugar in Hawai'i: The Story of Sugar Plantations, their History, their Methods of Operations and their Place in the Economy of Hawaii* (Honolulu: Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association, 1949), 33; James H. Shoemaker, *Labor in the Territory of Hawaii, 1939* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1940), 24-26; Coman, "History of Contract Labor," 59-60; "Contract labor in Hawaiian Islands," *Planters' Monthly* 23 (1904): 50, accessed June 3, 2016, <http://evols.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/bitstream/10524/1941/1/HPM-v23n1-1904.pdf>; and Shoemaker, 26.

²⁶ MacLennan, "Plantation Capitalism," 152.

living expenses. In return the adherent planters were required to share the profits with the planters and conduct their cane farms on the side, their primary labour being directed to working the planters' land and crops. In reality it was a new way of controlling labour and locked adherent planters into debt, dependence and servitude.

Independent small farmers were in no better position. They were indebted to the goodwill of the planters to process their cane but the planters were not reliant on the supply. With little or no surplus income the small farmers were restricted to the lands that did not require irrigation. To compensate for their lack of capital they turned to the factors and ended up in an inescapable grip of ongoing debt.²⁷ The latest technology such as steam ploughs and railway systems introduced by the planters did not benefit the small farmer either. Rather, it enabled the planters to work and access their own holdings more efficiently.

Both anthropologist Carol MacLennan and environmental geographer Jessica B. Teisch argued that the adherent planter system was designed to create a new yeoman class of farmers that would counterbalance the Asian presence.²⁸ However, they disagreed as to the composition of that class. Teisch said that it was a remedial attempt to "resurrect the 'vanishing' Hawaiian race" while MacLennan suggested that it was motivated by the idea of establishing a small farmer class drawn from mainland USA.²⁹ Regardless, neither this system nor any other established a viable, significant, independent, small farmer group. There was no place for the small farmer in the complex economic configuration that was the Hawai'ian vertically integrated business unit or factor which consolidated all phases of production: cultivation, milling, refining, and marketing business interests spanning both Hawai'i and mainland America.³⁰

²⁷ Charles Nordhoff, *Northern California, Oregon, and the Sandwich Islands* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1874), 60.

²⁸ MacLennan, "Plantation Capitalism," 210; Jessica B. Teisch, *Engineering Nature: Water, Development, and the Global Spread of American Environmental Expertise* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 133.

²⁹ MacLennan, "Plantation Capitalism," 270. The group of businessmen who started the Olaa sugar mill in 1899 planned that it would achieve the Americanisation of Hawai'i by settling small farmers on the land as share-croppers who would supply the mill. "Register of the Puna Sugar Company / Olaa Sugar Company," Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association Archives, http://www2.hawaii.edu/~speccoll/p_puna.html.

³⁰ Horwitz and Finn, *Public Land Policy*, 4; Takaki, *Pau Hana*, 20; Aller, *Labor Relations*, chart 1, 24.

The Hawai'ian plantation was the epitome of corporate sugar farming.³¹ This monopolisation of the industry from field to market by a handful of factors succeeded in excluding the independent small farmer in Hawai'i. While both Hawai'ians and nationalities other than American aspired to farm sugar, the most arable land was held by the powerful white planter class, and, as in Brazil, others of European nationalities left Hawai'i to realise their ambitions of small landownership elsewhere. Political will being guided by planters' economic prerogatives predicted the failure of the yeomanry ideal, just as it had done in Brazil. The domination of the plantation, and the importation of contract labour from other parts of the world which remained to become an easily tapped and exploited labouring class, created a rural and urban landless class and racial hierarchies, tensions and inequities. These inequities would determine who formed agricultural associations and the issues that framed their objects.

THE SMALL FARMER IN LOUISIANA

As the first sugar farmers in Hawai'i had processed their own cane in their own primitive mills, in the antebellum period in Louisiana there were white small sugar farmers who milled their cane with their own horse-driven mills or transported their cane to larger, neighbours' mills for crushing. But when the Anglo-Americans arrived after the Louisiana Purchase they succeeded in buying up the small holdings of the *petits habitants* (smallholders) and consolidated them.³² Monopolising the good land, the planters were able to obtain credit for the large outlay required to stay competitive, especially when horse-powered mills and dangerous open kettles were superseded by steam powered mills in the 1820s.

Economist Mark D. Schmitz observed that even in the antebellum period the Louisiana sugar industry came to be characterised by "enormous average size and a high degree of mechanical sophistication." He theorised that this was because of the conversion to steam powered mills which gave the mills a greater capacity.³³ Any landowners who could not afford to convert to steam-powered mills either had to sell up or rely on neighbouring mills being willing to crush their cane. The Creole planters who had survived the Anglo-

³¹ J.A. Mollett, "The Sugar Plantation in Hawaii: A Study of Changing Patterns of Management & Labour Organization," *Agricultural Economic Bulletin* July (1965), 7.

³² Buman, "Two Histories, One Future," 34-35.

³³ Mark D. Schmitz, "Economies of Farm Size in the Antebellum Sugar Sector," *The Journal of Economic History* 37 (1977): 959.

American influx, for instance, continued as a slaveholding plantocracy.³⁴ Some could afford to invest in the expensive new equipment, but when modernisation was beyond their means, they sold their properties, taking advantage of rising land values. The number of mills and estates decreased accordingly and the Louisiana sugar industry came to be worked by an increasingly smaller but wealthier landowning elite.³⁵

The agricultural economist and editor of the *St Mary's Planters' Banner* Daniel Dennett suggested that a solution to the disastrous conditions afflicting the sugar cane industry after the disruptions of the Civil War could be the carving up of the plantations for small farming. White, small farmers could relocate from the northern and western states and be set up as tenant farmers with the option to purchase. Planters, however, were reluctant to subdivide for such a scheme.³⁶ Furthermore, while labour needs were satisfied by housing large numbers of estate labourers onsite, supplemented by labour from the cotton plantations during the harvest, there was no imperative to subdivide.³⁷

There were visionary planters though, who did espouse the division of plantations into small farms sending cane to a central mill. The impediments to such a scheme were that those who would have liked to have gone into small farming did not have the money to buy land, while those planters who wanted to sell out could not subdivide because it would have required more credit than they had at their disposal.³⁸ While there was no market for the sale of entire plantation holdings, economical plantations were offloaded by bankruptcy or alienation, and so continued production under new ownership.³⁹

Nevertheless, a number of critical developments allowed for the development of the small farmer as tenant and share-cropper: the changing labour market in the postbellum period; an increasing demand for refined white sugar; adoption of modern milling technologies; the planters' access to credit which could be advanced to tenants as crop liens; and progress in railway transportation. H.C. Brookfield pointed out that railway technology produced dichotomous results across the sugar world.⁴⁰ In Brazil it gave the planters

³⁴ *Creoles* were those who had settled Louisiana before the Louisiana Purchase.

³⁵ Buman, "Two Histories, One Future," 206.

³⁶ Shugg, "Survival of the Plantation System," 323.

³⁷ Shugg, "Survival of the Plantation System," 323.

³⁸ Shugg, "Survival of the Plantation System," 323.

³⁹ Shugg, "Survival of the Plantation System," 324-25.

⁴⁰ H.C. Brookfield, "Problems of Monoculture and Diversification in a Sugar Island: Mauritius," *Economic Geography* 35 (1959): 31, accessed August 27, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/142076.25-40>31.

easier access to their own cane. In Louisiana, conversely, it gave access to cane grown by independent small growers or tenants.⁴¹ As a consequence of these developments, vertical integration was abandoned for central mills in the 1880s. These central mills were owned by new, large corporations which invested heavily in cutting edge technology to produce white and clarified sugars locally rather than the rough raw sugars which had been produced formerly.⁴² By 1900, modern, central factories were owned by mostly absentee millers and managed by overseers. They sourced cane from the mill's own land as well as from independent small farmers and tenant farmers in order to meet the increased output potential and rationalise on investment.⁴³

Millers observed that there were few who would purchase land for sugar growing. Even if they did, they would not commit to making binding contracts with one mill.⁴⁴ Therefore, tenant farmers were preferred because of the control that could be exerted over them. They were not free to swap and change mills, and they could not disrupt supply by selling their land or using their land for other purposes. Nevertheless, in sugar growing areas, tenant farming was not favoured in the immediate postbellum period the way it was in the cotton growing areas. Afro-Americans were the chief tenants but with the failure of agrarian reform which could have given ownership of homestead blocks to freedmen, they persisted as the primary labour force for the large-scale holdings. Sufficient supplies of cane to feed the high-powered mills required a disciplined, supervised labour force. Even while planters recognised that the payment of competitive wages would secure reliability from Afro-American field workers, they continued to impose a centralised plantation routine and rates of pay which differed little from a slave regime.⁴⁵ Such wages prevented the labourers from ever being able to better themselves or acquire land to become small farmers. John C. Rodrigue remarked that "In the struggle over a new labor system for Louisiana's postbellum sugar plantations, freedmen won many of the battles, but in doing so they lost the broader struggle for economic

⁴¹ John C. Rumm, *HAER Laurel Valley Project Summer 1978: Written Historical and Descriptive Data* (Washington: National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1978), 1-28.

⁴² Schmitz, "Postbellum Developments," accessed August 22, 2016, <http://www.thebhc.org/sites/default/files/beh/BEHprint/v005/p0088-p0101.pdf>.

⁴³ Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest*, 37-38.

⁴⁴ *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, September 4, 1873, 2.

⁴⁵ Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry*, 191; John C. Rodrigue, *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields: From Slavery to Free Labor in Louisiana's Sugar Parishes 1860-1882* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 2.

independence.”⁴⁶ By extrapolation they lost their place in the sugar industry as independent farmers. Thereafter, tenancy or sharecropping arrangements were more usually with white farmers.⁴⁷ This resulted in central mills replicating “the longstanding racial divide.”⁴⁸

The trend of concentration and contraction of land ownership and industrial organisation intensified with the passing of the years.⁴⁹ Despite the critical numbers of independent small family farmers and tenant farmers, the corporate owner dominated.⁵⁰ Under this regime, the Louisiana sugar industry became a large and important industry supplying to a home market. Millers wielded significant political influence and were able to obtain ongoing domestic tariff protection which obviated the need to be competitive in a global context.⁵¹ The corporate nature of the industry, the ongoing reliance on a racial other, and tenancy were marked characteristics of the Louisiana sugar industry by 1914. Though there was a will by smallholders to farm sugar they were constrained by the corporate ownership of all the factors of production. The absence of independent small farmers in the Louisiana sugar industry is consistent with the trend for the leasing of agricultural land throughout America and the cultivation of all major crops by corporations.⁵² Before 1914, tenant sugar cane farmers could be Afro-Americans but they were in the minority. Whites predominated as tenant sugar farmers. This discrepancy was reinforced by the social dynamics of a society that had depended on the use of slave labour for several hundred years and in which there was a persistent racial divide, particularly in rural areas. These same social dynamics, in turn, determined the type of agricultural associations that were formed.

⁴⁶ Rodrigue, *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields*, 2.

⁴⁷ Shugg, “Survival of the Plantation System,” 324-25.

⁴⁸ Scott, “Defining the Boundaries,” 99, accessed September 2, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/216616>, 78.

⁴⁹ Sitterson, *Sugar Country*, 388; Smith, *Cane Sugar World*, 26, 29.

⁵⁰ Schmitz, “Postbellum Developments,” 95. In 1900 approximately one-third of sugar farms were tenanted or sharecropped and worked as family farms, averaging 17 acres in size, yet producing only 15 percent of the total cane production.

⁵¹ Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry*, 188.

⁵² Michael E. Salassi and Michael Deliberto, “Agricultural Cropland Lease Structures for Major Row Crops in Louisiana – Statewide Survey Results,” (Baton Rouge: LSU AgCenter Research & Extension, June 2009); Adam D. Sheingate, *The Rise of the Agricultural Welfare State: Institutions and Interest Group Power in the United States, France, and Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 35.

THE SMALL FARMER IN BARBADOS

The mainland colonies of Brazil and Louisiana offered very different potentials for land ownership compared to island colonies like Hawai'i and Barbados whose geography limited the availability of arable land. Nevertheless, initially it appeared as if the new colony of Barbados would thrive as a settlement colony of yeomen farmers. By the 1630s it was indeed an attractive destination for prospective immigrants. Opportunities abounded and servants who completed their indentures had the real prospect of becoming tenant farmers, or even land owners or "yeomen cultivators."⁵³ Up until 1650 Barbados continued to be attractive to European settlement with people of European descent making up a majority of the population. Menard observed that though tenancy did enable some to acquire modest estates and to achieve social status and influence, tenancy was not an automatic "springboard to acquiring land of one's own."⁵⁴ However, David Watts, writing of settlement in the British West Indies, observed that British settlers exhibited a discernible resistance to tenant farming. It may explain why in Barbados small British proprietors aspired to independent landowning and borrowed credit to do so.⁵⁵ But they borrowed on such terms that they went into arrears and had to forfeit their land.⁵⁶ Consequently, observers lamented that "12,000 good men formerly proprietors have gone off, wormed out of their small settlements by their more suttile [*sic*] and greedy neighbours."⁵⁷ The resultant consolidation of landholdings advanced plantation agriculture so quickly that within two decades the settler population declined from 32 000 to an estimated 8 300.⁵⁸

Just as in Louisiana the earlier milling technology allowed the smaller grower on Barbados to grow and mill his own crop and that of several neighbours, or grow a crop that was milled at another planter's mill. In the mid-1600s an appreciation of the economies of scale of vertical integration led to the dominance of that mode of production. Nevertheless, small holders remained a significant factor until at least the

⁵³ Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 83. Yeoman farmer: a farmer of small capital means, landowning and not labouring for others.

⁵⁴ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, 94.

⁵⁵ David Watts, *The West Indies*, 184.

⁵⁶ Puckrein, *Little England*, 62.

⁵⁷ Deerr, *History of Sugar*, vols. 1, 2., 160, quoting "Calendar of State Papers, American and West Indian, 1661," 529.

⁵⁸ Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 132-33; Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry*, 80. From a high point of 11 200 landholders in 1645 down to 2 639 in 1679.

mid-eighteenth century during which time a landowning middle class had emerged.⁵⁹ These were called “ten acre men” and for a short while were a force to be reckoned with.⁶⁰ Despite their numbers they never managed to challenge the planters whose large land holdings and access to the requisite financial backing to purchase slaves guaranteed their enduring dominance. Moreover, with vertical integration, planters devised a method of gang labour which, according to Menard, gave the vertically integrated plantation a productivity advantage over small farmers supplying to a neighbours’ small mill.⁶¹

The prospects for small farming became increasingly more unfavourable when in the mid-nineteenth century a further significant contraction of landownership occurred.⁶² That smallholdings continued to be numerically superior was deceptive, for they comprised less than three percent of arable land.⁶³ All other arable land was owned by the planters, who were not inclined to subdivide.⁶⁴ Those small farmers found themselves caught on the horns of a dilemma. Though its sugar production was eclipsed by the early eighteenth century on other Caribbean islands, as a British Crown Colony located closer to Europe than other competing sugar producers, Barbados enjoyed access to markets and preferential prices for its unrefined product.⁶⁵ The continuing demand for their raw product meant that Barbadian plantations did not have to invest in technological development. Neither could they afford to as their smaller size holdings did not generate the amount of capital required.⁶⁶ But the ongoing primitive nature of the mills also restricted the ability of plantation mills to take cane from outside growers.⁶⁷ The result was that white indentured servants moved away from the island on completion of their indentures while the freed slaves continued working as a cheap, plentiful and landless labour force. The outcome was a rapid decline in the white population and the eventual numerical domination of those descended from former slaves. Despite the fact that those of European origins were a demographic minority, their position as the ruling planter

⁵⁹ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, 29.

⁶⁰ Hoyos, *Barbados*, 98-100.

⁶¹ Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, 96.

⁶² Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, 138. Of 1 874 properties, 1 367 were small holdings no bigger in size than they were the previous century.

⁶³ Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry*, 150; Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 132, 136-37.

⁶⁴ Hoyos, *Barbados*, 132; W.K. Marshall, Trevor Marshall and Bentley Gibbs, *The Establishment of a Peasantry in Barbados, 1840-1920*, (Cave Hill: University of West Indies, n.d.), 86.

⁶⁵ Its raw product, muscovado sugar, was shipped to Europe for refining.

⁶⁶ Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry*, 100, 153.

⁶⁷ Drummond and Marsden, *The Condition of Sustainability*, 97.

class empowered them to impose rigid class and colour distinctions similar to those imposed by plantocracies in Brazil, Hawai'i and Louisiana.

The central milling system was consistently recommended across the sugar growing areas as a solution to labour problems. A royal commission on commerce in the British West Indies conducted in 1847 and 1848 suggested that central factories would solve Barbados' labour issues. Echoing planters elsewhere, Barbadian planters were not enthusiastic about the concept, regarding central factories as representing a loss of independence and prestige. Furthermore, the high cost of land and the planters' entanglement with mortgagees and merchants discouraged the plan.⁶⁸ In 1897 the central mill concept was revisited but in order to take advantage of the economies of scale afforded by a central mill, landowners would have had to buy up more scattered parcels of land. Once again, the prospects for a central mill were dashed. Prohibitive land prices prevented the purchase of more land, while the state of colonial finances did not permit the funding of a central mill.⁶⁹ Imperial loans were offered but once again neither mortgagees nor planters were enthusiastic.⁷⁰

Eventually, some resident planters pooled their resources to establish central mills and by this means Barbados avoided the intrusion of large speculative foreign companies.⁷¹ Nevertheless, central milling did not mean that land was opened up to small selectors. In fact, by the end of World War One further contraction of ownership had occurred. By then there were 305 plantations, some of which were central mills which, just like the *usinas* in Brazil, drew cane from their own plantation lands and other estate owners⁷²

Reliable access to markets, preferential prices for their unrefined product, monopolisation of land, and unrestricted access to cheap labour permitted a small, wealthy, powerful white planter class to control sugar cultivation and production despite being a minority themselves. Inflexible and resistant to change, they withstood the pressure to concede to modernisation, central mills and the small farming system.⁷³ Those whites who might have become small, independent landowners left the island to realise that aspiration

⁶⁸ Beachey, *The British West Indies Sugar Industry*, 81-83.

⁶⁹ Beachey, *The British West Indies Sugar Industry*, 86.

⁷⁰ Beachey, *The British West Indies Sugar Industry*, 156-58.

⁷¹ Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry*, 153.

⁷² Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry*, 154.

⁷³ Drummond and Marsden, *The Condition of Sustainability*, 100, 131, 136.

elsewhere. The sugar industry of Barbados was one from which independent small growers, black or white, were largely and permanently excluded. Their exclusion would be evident in the nature of the memberships and conduct of the agricultural associations.

THE SMALL FARMER IN FIJI

The small farming systems of Fiji and Queensland are frequently held up as exemplars of the success of the small sugar cane farming system without acknowledgment of the very great differences between the two. Such an omission was made by the geographer Helmut Blume who observed that Hawai'i on the one hand, and Australia and Fiji on the other, represented "the two extremes in the structure of the modern cane sugar industry."⁷⁴ Certainly, Australia and Fiji may have shared the same industrial mode of small farmers supplying to central mills, but there were, in the period under discussion, essential and very significant distinctions.

Hopeful opportunists of meagre means, many already with failed ventures behind them in Australia and New Zealand, came to Fiji thinking they would make their fortunes. They planted cotton on small tracts of land or overextended themselves in the purchase of larger land holdings. They lived in "extended penury" and with the collapse of cotton had to abandon the landholdings and leave if they could.⁷⁵ The failure of a predominant white elite to emerge, as had occurred in the colonial sugar areas under discussion here, can be attributed to the economic decline experienced by the planter class with the failure of cotton. Cultural homogeneity evaporated as wives and children left for home when the hoped-for prosperity failed to materialise.⁷⁶ Many planters too scattered elsewhere.

Those able to hold on to their land continued with sugar and coffee and did so because they were protected by powerful chiefs and had garnered enough wealth to maintain their European wives and way of life.⁷⁷ Governor Arthur Gordon was scathing in his description of them: "A few of the planters are men of energy and character. Others have energy without character, or character without energy. The majority have neither."⁷⁸ Leading miserable existences, they held on for sugar mills to be established by others in

⁷⁴ Blume, *The Geography of Sugarcane*, 189. Modern as in 1985 when he was writing.

⁷⁵ Young, "Evanescent Ascendancy," 152, 164.

⁷⁶ Young, "Evanescent Ascendancy," 164-67.

⁷⁷ Young, "Evanescent Ascendancy," 166-67.

⁷⁸ Draft of an official dispatch, Gordon to Carnarvon, June-Aug. 1876 (the draft was never sent), quoted in Young, 148.

more favourable positions. Mills that were built floundered, unable to process the available crops or expand their concerns. The inadequate crushing capacity of existing mills and the failure of more mills to materialise led some landholders to consider forming a cooperative in 1876, financed by Sydney capital. The proposal came to nothing.⁷⁹

From the earliest days of sugar production planters pinned their hopes on Australia as a potential market given that Australia needed to import a significant amount of sugar to meet domestic demand. Conversely, even before CSR took an interest in Fiji, Australia was taking an interest in developments there from the standpoints of colonial defence and Pacific trade, for Fiji was a vital through point on the shipping route.⁸⁰ The Deed of Cession of 1874 which resulted in Fiji coming under British administration inspired confidence and attracted commercial enterprise. It was in that very year that CSR first considered investing in a central mill in Fiji. However, it instead built Harwood Mill on the Clarence River, in the Northern Rivers district of NSW.⁸¹

In what seemed a glimmer of hope for small farmers and estate owners, the colonial secretary Sir John Bates Thurston proposed the central mill as the way to put a Fijian sugar industry on a substantial footing. The idea met with little enthusiasm from the Colonial Office as it involved loans which the office considered Fiji unable to service. Finally, in 1880, negotiations with CSR started to move forward when it became obvious that efforts to successfully cultivate alternative plantation crops had failed. After all, in NSW it conducted its mills as central mills supplied by tenant farmers. For CSR the lack of competition from another crop for scarce factors of production was a drawback. With mills in both Australia and Fiji, CSR would be a majority supplier of Australia's raw sugar needs and could monopolise the sugar market.⁸² CSR came to Fiji on the invitation of Governor Gordon, commencing operations there in 1882 after Gordon left for New Zealand and William Des Voeux had become Governor. However, neither Des Voeux nor Gordon were favourably disposed towards small-scale settler farming, and the

⁷⁹ Diane Mitchell, *A Planter's Lament: Jacob Storck of the Fiji Islands* (Sydney: D.P. Mitchell, 2009), 109-10.

⁸⁰ Alastair Dougal Couper, "The Island Trade: An Analysis of the Environment and Operation of Seaborne Trade Among Three Island Groups in the Pacific" (PhD diss., Australian National University, 1967), 31, 60, 68.

⁸¹ Moynagh, *Brown or White?*, 22.

⁸² Moynagh, *Brown or White?*, 29.

pressure for Fiji to become economically self-sustaining shaped policies that would result in the retreat of white settlers and Fiji's economy being dominated by the corporate plantation.⁸³

When CSR first came to Fiji, the company sourced cane from resident planters or estate owners, some of which could be regarded as small farmers rather than bona fide planters, from tenants growing cane on CSR land, and from land which it cultivated itself. The tenants in this case were white and aspirant 'planters'. While CSR had planned to obtain cane from farms owned or leased by small farmers as it did in NSW, the complex land tenure system in Fiji was very different to that of Australia. The small portion of state and freehold land was not sufficient for serious agricultural development by small growers. Though native land was inalienable except to the crown, in order to facilitate CSR, colonial governors allowed for both the outright purchase of freehold land, as well as the long-term leasing of sizeable portions of native land by CSR.⁸⁴ Conforming to the initial vision and undoubtedly, as geographer Ralph Ward argued, eager to relieve itself of costly estate labour management, CSR began to contract white planters in 1882 to grow cane for the company on company land.⁸⁵ While clearly it spread its risks and made considerable economic savings by offloading cultivation work, historian Michael Moynagh argued that by leasing to an increasing number of white planters, the company also strengthened its position and political clout in Fiji.⁸⁶ Hedging its bets though, the company also grew cane.⁸⁷

From the outset it met with problems from planters trying to renege on their contracts. It also had to contend with estate owners who were opportunistic absentee landlords who leased their land, hanging on for a sale to capitalise on the improved land values resulting from the arrival of CSR. Others were mediocre growers due to lack of capital and expertise or poor supervision of their workers. CSR decided that vertical integration would guarantee a reliable source of cane and dispense with the risks of mediocre supplies

⁸³ Bruce Knapman, "The Rise and Fall of the White Sugar Planter in Fiji 1880-1925," *Pacific Studies*, 9 (1985): 78, accessed November 7, 2016 <https://ojs.lib.byu.edu/spc/index.php/PacificStudies/article/download/9385/9034>.

⁸⁴ Vijay Naidu and Mahendra Reddy, "Na ghar ken a ghat ke; ALTA and Expiring Land Leases: Fijian Farmers' Perceptions of their Future," Asian Pacific Migration Research Foundation: A Ford Foundation funded project June 2000, accessed February 19, 2016 http://apmrn.anu.edu.au/projects/fiji_alta.pdf.

⁸⁵ Ward, "Plus Ça Change," 137; Birch and Blaxland, "The Historical Background," 31.

⁸⁶ Moynagh, *Brown or White?*, 41.

⁸⁷ Birch and Blaxland, "The Historical Background," 32.

from tenants. As tenants' contracts expired CSR did not re-contract. In the face of depressed sugar prices and CSR's determination to dominate the Fijian sugar industry there was marked lack of interest from outside investment. CSR's vertically integrated plantations rather than a small farmer mode of production came to predominate in Fiji.

Diligent smaller planters found themselves squeezed between government policies that favoured the absentee corporate plantation system, the price given them for their cane by both CSR and the other millers, and the costs of imported labour. Historian Sara Sohmer examined why the independent white small planter/farmer never became a persistent element in Fijian sugar production.⁸⁸ The reason cited was that CSR and the other corporate companies which invested in Fiji were large-scale and able to access or draw upon large reserves of capital and other resources not available to the smaller planters. Unable to rely upon long-term government assistance to help defray the cost of indentured labour, they found themselves priced out of the labour market. They either abandoned their enterprises and left Fiji or eventually became company employees themselves.

For CSR, imported labour had been an incentive to commence operations in Fiji in the first place.⁸⁹ Other planters were not enthusiastic about the importation of Indians as they feared that they would become a large resident population and outnumber the European settlers. Furthermore, the cost of Indian workers was prohibitive for the small planter and raised the age-old quandary of how they would be employed in the slack season, especially once out of indenture. The solution was to use the incentive of offering unused parts of estates for cultivation by labourers so that they were kept *in situ*. The land allotted was usually no more than five acres, which was half the size deemed possible to afford a reasonable living to one Indian and his family. This ensured that the smallholder would still need to turn to the planter for casual employment, earning a lesser wage than a labourer who was solely dependent on wage labour.⁹⁰ The Indians found this arrangement attractive. They were not eager to re-indenture on the low wages offered but if they

⁸⁸ Sara H. Sohmer, "Idealism and Pragmatism in Colonial Fiji: Sir Arthur Gordon's Native Rule Policy and the Introduction of Indian Contract Labor," 151, accessed November 7, 2016, <https://evols.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/bitstream/10524/586/1/JL18158.pdf>.

⁸⁹ Sharma and Irvine, "Governance and Accounting."

⁹⁰ Ward, "Plus Ça Change," 142; Moynagh, *Brown or White?*, 71, 94. There was initially a limit of five acres raised to 10 in 1914 for Indians leasing Fijian land.

worked their own plots of land on which they grew both sugar and food crops, and only engaged for the harvest season, the remuneration was more attractive.

A drop in sugar prices, chiefly due to competition from European beet sugar in the mid-1880s and mid-1890s, coincided with a significant closure of inefficient, smaller mills. CSR was able to ride out the price fluctuations and so assumed a dominant position in the Fijian economy, creating a triangular independence between Fijian land, Indian cultivators and Australian capital.⁹¹ By this time, CSR was sourcing cane from numerous sources.⁹² An inherent disincentive to tenancy though was that the estates leased by CSR and other planters to tenants were those that were least profitable. Nevertheless, Indians were eager to farm and came to be a persistent element after 1900.⁹³ While contracts with all tenants, whether Indian, Fijian or European, safeguarded the tenants' position, there can be discerned in this relationship the paternalistic nature of CSR relationships that would strengthen later, when the plantations were subdivided to be farmed entirely by Indian tenants. Control was exerted through credit extended to the tenants by the company and a close eye was kept on how tenants spent the money. This meant that the company could threaten to cut off credit if the tenant did not use particular cultivation techniques, used the land for crops other than sugar, or made purchases that the company deemed extravagant.⁹⁴ Despite that control, Indians persisted in tenancy arrangements and it was calculated that by 1911 up to three-quarters of those who had stayed in Fiji post-indenture were land owners or tenants.⁹⁵

With the termination of the indenture system in 1916 by the Indian government, CSR found a way to dodge the imminent crisis by introducing a small farming system that depended on tenancy, in contrast to the system that had come to prevail in its mill areas in Australia. Encouraging former indentured labourers to take up tenancy of plots of land, of around 10 acres, ensured the continuation of the industry, permitting further expansion

⁹¹ Ahmed Ali, *Plantation to Politics: Studies in Fiji Indians* (Suva: University of South Pacific, 1980), 26.

⁹² Moynagh, *Brown or White?*, 82.

⁹³ Elsewhere, for instance in Mauritius, immigrant Indian independent small growers were able to participate because the island could not attract external funding and local funding was inadequate to sustain the industry without change, hence plantations were subdivided. See Richard B. Allen, "The Slender Sweet Thread: Sugar, capital and dependency in Mauritius, 1860-1936," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 16 (1988): 179, accessed August 31, 2016, <http://dx.doi.org.elibrary.jcu.edu.au/10.1080/03086538808582756>.

⁹⁴ Moynagh, *Brown or White?*, 52-64.

⁹⁵ Moynagh, *Brown or White?*, 69.

of production in the future, while offering the Indian government an incentive to encourage continued emigration to Fiji.⁹⁶ But experience and observations of Indian sugar cane farming practices, not only in Fiji but also in other colonies such as Mauritius, led to the conclusion that tenants needed supervision.⁹⁷ The solution was to continue and formalise the paternalistic system already practised.⁹⁸ Scholarly descriptions of the Fijian small grower emphasise their lack of independence, the control that continued to be exerted over them, and their peasant-like existence.⁹⁹ Ward suggested that the small farming system adopted was not a seismic break with the past and that the power paradigm did not shift with tenancy. He maintained that their independence was largely illusory.¹⁰⁰

Ali Ahmed emphasised the government's collusion in ensuring that the tenancy system prevailed. While the government did give Indians access to land, it enforced provisos with the "express intention of determining itself how they might participate in the economy."¹⁰¹ Indians did become the significant sugar cane growers as tenants, but freehold was limited and what was available was priced beyond their means, putting landownership beyond the reach of most. Furthermore, putting Indians on the land was never about facilitating their betterment, but a means to limiting labour requirements. It was simply a matter of mathematics, as a comment by CSR inspector, R.T. Rutledge clearly elucidated: "For every 8-12 acres so leased we reduce the labour requirements by one..."¹⁰² It also reflected the fact that CSR managers believed that the tenant farmer would not, and did not, perform adequately without close supervision.¹⁰³

In the CSR tome *South Pacific Enterprise* both Fijian sugar farmers and Queensland farmers are identified as being independent, small, and as supplying to a central mill. The

⁹⁶ Moynagh, *Brown or White?*, 71.

⁹⁷ Richard B. Allen, "Capital, Illegal Slaves, Indentured Labourers and the Creation of a Sugar Plantation Economy in Mauritius, 1810-60," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 36 (2008): 162, accessed August 27, 2016, doi: 10.1080/03086530802180569; Allen, "The Slender Sweet Thread," 182-90.

⁹⁸ Ward, "Plus Ça Change," 148.

⁹⁹ Courtenay, *Plantation Agriculture*, 141; W. Morgan, "Economic Survey of the Sugar Plantation Industry" (Geneva: International Federation of Plantation, Agricultural & Allied Workers, 1962); Deerr, *History of Sugar*, vol. 1, 190.

¹⁰⁰ Ward, "Plus Ça Change," 136, 150.

¹⁰¹ Ali, *Plantation to Politics*, 23.

¹⁰² R.T. Rutledge to H.O., June 17, 1925. Fiji Inspectors (Rutledge & Dixon) 1915-28 in Moynagh, *Brown or White?*, 115.

¹⁰³ Ward, "Plus Ça Change," 143-50.

author went on to comment that both were “living area” farm systems. Yet while the author then proceeded to describe the Queensland sugar growing area as comprising “well integrated communities of stable, independent, working farmers of the European race”, the word ‘independent’ was conspicuously dropped when describing the Fijian sugar growing area, where the description instead read: “In Fiji the communities are mainly of Indian tenant farmers with a standard of living and way of life such as few, if any, other rural populations of Asians have achieved.”¹⁰⁴ This discrepancy was because the Fijian smallholder system shared little in common with the Queensland smallholder system.

Former indentured labourers remained in Fiji, hopeful of obtaining land for sugar farming. However, factors limiting the smallholders’ independence determined a very different small farming system to that which developed in tropical north Queensland. Indigenous land laws prohibiting large-scale ownership of land by those other than indigenous Fijians, combined with the government’s endeavours to bolster a viable sugar-based economy in collusion with a white absentee corporation, contrived to keep the Indian populace in its place. The abandonment of sugar farming by white planters and small farmers, and the decision by former indentured Indian labourers to stay in Fiji, meant that small farming was largely assumed by Indian tenant farmers. The dominance of a small family farming system, particularly because it was conducted by a racial ‘other’, differentiated it markedly from the systems of productions that prevailed in Brazil, Hawai’i, Louisiana and Barbados. The ongoing imposition of control by CSR and the lack of independence of those tenant farmers would have consequences for the type of agricultural associations formed in Fiji prior to the end of indenture.

THE SMALL FARMER IN AUSTRALIA

What is to be observed in this discussion of small farmers in Brazil, Hawai’i, Louisiana, Barbados and Fiji are the racial tensions that underpinned the persistence of the plantocracies’ hold on all the factors of production. These were white plantocracies. Whiteness was a valued construct, and even where small farming was practised, whether it was tenant, share-cropper or independent farmer, those who were not white were

¹⁰⁴ Various, “Sugar and Sugar Cane Plant,” in *South Pacific Enterprise: The Colonial Sugar Refining Enterprise: The Colonial Sugar Refining Company Limited*, ed. A.G. Lowndes (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1956), 8-9.

generally excluded. Fiji was a notable exception because a white settler demographic never attained a significant foothold there. The dominant planter/miller was CSR, an absentee corporation.

In contrast to Fiji, there was no official vision for time-expired indentured labourers, indigenous Australians, or others of non-European origins to farm sugar cane. However, this is not to say that they did not.¹⁰⁵ With federation in 1901, the Immigration Restriction Act legislated to exclude non-European migrants, while the Pacific Island Labourers Act of the same year required the end of recruitment of Melanesian labourers from 31 March 1904 and deportation of all Melanesians by 31 December 1906.¹⁰⁶ Increasingly marginalised, the number of non-European farmers diminished. This legislation was also effectively the death knell for the plantations. After that, sugar cane farming in tropical north Queensland would be conducted by white, independent, small farmers.

That the small sugar farmers should be white was explicit in the rhetoric of the time which lauded the presence of white farmers. In 1901 a commentator reported with approval that Australian sugar farmers were “strong, responsible and progressive *white* settlers.”¹⁰⁷ Sugar farming by white small farmers in the tropical north was also regarded as serving to garrison “one of the gateways of the East.”¹⁰⁸ Those to be held off at the gates were ‘celestials’ who, should they take up farming, were perceived to challenge “a settlement consistent with Britons' notions of freedom and justice.”¹⁰⁹ By settling white, small sugar cane farmers on the land, the sugar industry acted as an effective agent of the White Australia Policy, and a means to achieve social cohesion.¹¹⁰ The ‘white card’ became a

¹⁰⁵ Griggs, “Alien Agriculturalists,” in *White and Deadly*, ed. Pal Ahluwalia et al.; Griggs, “Origins and Early Development,” 46-61, February 23, 2015; Wegner and Robb, “Chinese in the Sugar,” 10-12.

¹⁰⁶ Commonwealth Parliament, “Immigration Restriction Act 1901,” and Queensland Parliament, “Pacific Island Labourers Act 1901.”

¹⁰⁷ My emphasis. See *The Sugar Question in Queensland*, 33. A revealing discussion in this regard is conducted in the questioning of the general manager of CSR, Edward William Knox, see “Report of the Royal Commission, February 27, 1911,” 179-87.

¹⁰⁸ *Our First Half-Century: A Review of Queensland Progress. Jubilee Memorial Volume* (Brisbane: Anthony J. Cumming, 1909), 143. See Russell McGregor’s discussion on the colonial government’s quandary of keeping the northern latitude white juxtaposed against the pressing need to not only settle and develop but garrison it; Russell McGregor, *Environment, Race, and Nationhood*.

¹⁰⁹ “No Title,” *Queensland Times, Ipswich Herald and General Advertiser*, March 20, 1880, 2. Celestials – a derogatory term used particularly in the press in the nineteenth century to refer to people of Chinese origins.

¹¹⁰ Commonwealth Parliament, “Report, Together with Minutes of Evidence and Appendices of the Royal Commission on the Sugar Industry, 1912,” x-xi. See Lyndon Megarrity’s article for an elucidation on the reasons why a ‘White Queensland’ could accommodate non-white workers but a ‘White Australia’ would not. Lyndon Megarrity, “‘White Queensland’”.

particularly effective political device for farmers' associations to coerce ongoing protection for the small farming mode of sugar production.¹¹¹ Government too, in the face of the general public's criticism of the level of protection and subsidisation enjoyed by the sugar industry, would emphasise the need to safeguard the tropical north by white settlement. That the small farmers were white was also significant to the formation of small farmer associations in the sugar districts.

During most of the nineteenth century being white meant having British ancestry. Expert in environment humanities Colin Salter determined that whiteness was a "socially constructed and constituted" phenomenon which was the opposite to the other construct, the "racialized non-white *other*."¹¹² Historians Jane Carey, Leigh Boucher, Katherine Ellinghaus and Warwick Anderson all observed that whiteness was not a static descriptor, with Anderson commenting that whiteness in the Australian colonial and post-colonial era was "both a sovereign category and a flexible one."¹¹³ This meant, for the sugar industry, that the Italians were an acceptable labour force: their swarthy skin and Mediterranean origins distinguished them from the Anglo-Celtic white and made them constitutionally, even *racially*, more suited to laboring in the tropics. Paradoxically, the later interpretation of whiteness meant that Italian sugar cane farmers could, in turn, be considered white enough to own land and farm sugar cane, especially if they were northern Italians.¹¹⁴ Therefore, in contrast to the planter-dominated sugar growing areas of Brazil, Italian immigrants were able to realise aspirations of land ownership and sugar farming.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Adrian A. Graves, "Crisis and Change in the Australian Sugar Industry, 1914-1939, *The World Sugar Economy in War and Depression 1914-40*, ed. Bill Albert and Adrian Graves (London: Routledge, 1988), 143.

¹¹² Colin Salter, *Whiteness and Social Change* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 31, accessed April 18, 2017, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com.elibrary.jcu.edu.au/lib/jcu/detail.action?docID=1165736>.

¹¹³ Carey, Boucher and Ellinghaus, "Historicising Whiteness," xi; Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness*, 255.

¹¹⁴ See Dewhirst, "Collaborating on Whiteness," 33-49, accessed June 26, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org.elibrary.jcu.edu.au/10.1080/14443050801993800>; Palombo "Whose Turn Is it?," 1-20, accessed June 2, 2017, <http://www.acrawsa.org.au/files/ejournalfiles/66LaraPalombo.pdf>.

¹¹⁵ This did not occur without tension however, as other small farmers resented their privileged position as white landowners being challenged by those they considered racially inferior. Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness*, 141, 155, 159, 161-62; Vanda Moraes-Gorecki, "'Black Italians' in the Sugar Fields of North Queensland: A Reflection on Labour Inclusion and Cultural Exclusion in Tropical Australia," *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 5 (1994): 306-19, accessed June 26, 2017, doi: 10.1111/j.1835-9310.1994.tb00183.x. For the tensions see Douglass, *From Italy to Ingham*. Also see

Historian David Cameron asserted that sugar growing in tropical north Queensland was one of the few successes of the colonial government's ongoing attempts to bring to reality its "agrarian dream through closer settlement."¹¹⁶ What is clear, in contrast, is that governments in the other areas being examined here did not have a similar vision for their sugar growing areas, and that this had enduring implications for both the mode of production practised and the formation of agricultural associations.

As early as 1935, Greaves contemplated "why a plantation and factory should operate in some places through contracts with smallholders, and in other places work its own land with hired labour."¹¹⁷ She suggested that the answer lay in the priorities government policy gave to land tenure. In Brazil, Hawai'i, Louisiana and Barbados, government policy deliberately located land ownership in the hands of those who conducted both vertically integrated units and central mills, and consecutive government administrations exhibited no real inclination to alter that. In tropical north Queensland, the government initially created preferential land tenure arrangements in 1864 for the establishment of vertically integrated plantations, but just over a decade in 1876 later was promulgating land laws to encourage yeomen farming. This conformed with the vision for land settlement elsewhere in Australia, expressed in the 1860s in land legislation, that favoured "small men."¹¹⁸

Beginning with the New South Wales 1861 Land Act, legislation was enacted to break the squatters' hold by formalising their titles, and to achieve a yeoman class in the temperate parts of Australia.¹¹⁹ After separation from NSW in 1859, the new Queensland parliament also passed land acts to facilitate speedy, efficient and actual settlement rather

Carey et al. who suggest that whiteness studies have received little critical attention and that the way that whiteness is looked at needs to be revisited, xi.

¹¹⁶ David Cameron, "Closer Settlement in Queensland: The Rise and Decline of the Agrarian Dream, 1860s-1960s," in *Struggle Country: The Rural Ideal in Twentieth Century Australia*, ed. Graeme Davison and Marc Brodie (Clayton: Monash University ePress, 2005), accessed July 26, 2016, <http://books.publishing.monash.edu/apps/bookworm/view/Struggle+Country%3A+The+Rural+Ideal+in+Twentieth+Century+Australia/140/xhtml/chapter06.html>.

¹¹⁷ Ida C. Greaves, *Modern Production among Backward People* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1935), 83.

¹¹⁸ Griggs, "Origins and Early Development," 48.

¹¹⁹ D.W.A. Baker, "The Origins of Robertson's Land Acts," *Historical Studies* 8 (1958): 166. See New South Wales Parliament, "Robertson Act, Crown Lands Alienation Act and Crown Lands Occupation Act, 1861." Squatter/squattocracy – both free settlers and ex-convicts, who occupied large tracts of Crown land as pastoral runs, without title. They became a squattocracy of substantial means and political influence.

than speculative taking up of pastoral land.¹²⁰ However, the 1864 Sugar and Coffee Regulations, allowing intending planters to take up plantation holdings, was a contradiction that “went against the general thrust of other land legislation in the early 1860s, which declared in favour of ‘small men’.”¹²¹ The result of these contradictory acts was a marked geographical difference in the way that sugar was cultivated and milled. In the subtropical areas of Queensland and NSW, cultivation and manufacturing were largely separated, and farms were conducted by small growers, though various modes of production prevailed including plantations. Further north, in central and tropical Queensland, large vertically integrated plantations predominated. The later 1876 Crown Lands Alienation Act passed by the Queensland government allowed for the taking up of homestead selections, opening the way to small farming of sugar. Tropical north Queensland then became settled by selectors with similar “petit bourgeoisie” aspirations to their NSW counterparts.¹²²

In the sugar industries of Brazil, Louisiana and Fiji, if there were small sugar cane farmers, they were predominantly tenants or share croppers. In Australia, the yeoman farmer was eulogised and in 1868 was identified in Queensland parliamentary discussion as a class of settler who would become “the mainstay of the colony.”¹²³ Historian B.W. Higman identified yeomen as “tenants and freeholders below the rank of gentleman.”¹²⁴ It was not presumed that these yeomen farmers would be anything other than male and white, given the dominant patriarchal traditions, and racial attitudes and laws regarding land ownership as they applied to aliens and the Indigenous people. In Australia, the government’s preferred arrangement was for the leasing of land, whether to large pastoralists or small agriculturalists.¹²⁵ The leasing of pastoral lands was favoured so that it could later be resumed and subdivided for closer settlement. The resistance of small settlers to tenancy combined with the thrust of land legislation in favour of the small farmer and closer settlement meant that small farmers were facilitated to own their own

¹²⁰ Beverley Kingston, “The Origins of Queensland’s “Comprehensive” Land Policy,” *Queensland Heritage* 1 (1965): 4.

¹²¹ Griggs, “Origins and Early Development,” 48; Queensland Government, “Sugar and Coffee Regulations 1864.”

¹²² Higman, “Sugar Plantations and Yeoman Farming,” 718-19, accessed February 22, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2561714>.

¹²³ Queensland Parliament, “Crown Lands Alienation Act, 1868”; “Queensland Parliament,” *Queensland Times, Ipswich Herald, and General Advertiser*, January 25, 1868, 3.

¹²⁴ Higman, “Sugar Plantations and Yeoman Farming,” 700.

¹²⁵ Cameron, “Closer Settlement in Queensland,” unpaginated.

land. In the sugar districts of tropical and central north Queensland, tenancy was an element of the transition from plantation to small farmer. The fact that yeomen chose overwhelmingly to convert their holdings to freehold, indicates that to them *ownership* was vital. Why Australian small farmers eschewed tenancy is open to speculation. After all, in the British Isles tenancy land occupancy was normal. In colonial Australia though, rather than wealthy landowners, the government was landlord. Either the experience of tenancy in the home country or that the landlord in the Australian colonies was the government might have determined that aversion to tenancy. Perhaps it was an Anglo-Celtic trait. Watts, writing of settlement in the British West Indies, observed that British settlers there also exhibited a discernible resistance to tenant farming.¹²⁶ Academic Glen Lewis attributed it to far more eclectic origins than a specifically Anglo-Celtic one.¹²⁷ The fact that Australian small sugar cane farmers owned their own land, and not inconsiderable acreages, was a determining factor in the type of agricultural association that developed in the tropical sugar belt.

In the countries investigated here, when tenants and shareholders were permitted to farm land it was invariably on small plots which did not prevent them from continuing to labour for the planters. Such examples are the adherent system in Hawai'i and the tenantry system in Barbados. In Fiji, the size of landholding was determined by the idea that the plots should be able to be worked by a single family, and not so large that good cultivation practices could not be sustained; the smaller the holding the more thoroughly the family farmer would be able to cultivate, achieving a larger yield per acre.¹²⁸

In Australia, legislators and planters were guided by an understanding of what size of landholding would be large enough for a yeoman farmer to make a living, while still being small enough to manage using family labour. W.O. Hodgkinson, in his 1886 central mill proposal, suggested that small growers would be successful if their enterprises were no more than 20 acres. In his opinion that was a size of holding which could be worked by a farmer and his family without outside help. He suggested that if the farmers made

¹²⁶ Watts, *The West Indies*, 184.

¹²⁷ Glen Lewis, "Queensland Nationalism and Australian Capitalism," in *Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism*, ed. E.L. Wheelwright and Ken Buckley (Sydney: Australia & New Zealand Book Company, 1978), 119-20.

¹²⁸ Griggs, "Origins and Early Development," 54.

an effort to adapt to the tropical environs by modifying their hours of labour, diet and habits, they could farm successfully.¹²⁹

The homestead selections taken up for yeoman farming consequent to the 1876 Act were between 80 and 160 acres.¹³⁰ Despite the generosity of the homestead selections, in the 1890s a holding of 20 acres was considered manageable by a married farmer with the assistance of his wife and a number of children.¹³¹ Griggs pointed out that the Australian smallholdings were much larger than those offered in other sugar growing countries.¹³² In Queensland before 1914 the average small land holding was 42.6 acres while in Fiji the average small holding was five acres.¹³³ The smaller size in Fiji reflected CSR's attitude to its tenant farmers and their farming capabilities. Size also had a bearing on the power of agricultural associations. If small farm members had equal voting rights in an association regardless of the size of their farms, their numerical predominance would mean that, combined, they would constitute a powerful lobbying force.

Ownership of moderately-sized landholdings in Australia gave farmers the collateral required to become owners of cooperative central mills. General secretary of the Australian Sugar Producers Association (ASPA) F.C.P. Curlewis suggested that it was only government legislation allowing for cooperatively owned sugar mills that prevented "a peasant-farmer" mode of production prevailing rather than that of the yeoman.¹³⁴ The extent of the scholarship on the concept of peasantry shows it to be a conceptual quandary. Though the word 'peasant' is often used interchangeably with 'farmer,' and though the peasant can be a landowner cultivating either subsistence or cash crops (or both), a loose consensus of opinion holds that peasants are distinguished by a lack of independence.¹³⁵ As Mintz succinctly elucidated, the peasant is controlled socially,

¹²⁹ W.O. Hodgkinson, "Queensland, Report on Central Sugar Mills, 1886," 6; "Proposed Central Sugar-Mills," *Brisbane Courier*, July 12, 1886, 3.

¹³⁰ Queensland Parliament, "Crown Lands Alienation Act 1876."

¹³¹ Black, *The Sugar Industry of Queensland*, 3.

¹³² Griggs, "Origins and Early Development," 54-55.

¹³³ Griggs, "Origins and Early Development," 54-55.

¹³⁴ F.C.P. Curlewis, *The Australian Cane Sugar Industry* (Brisbane: Queensland Producer, 1938), 5.

¹³⁵ Neale John Pearson, "Small Farmer and Rural Pressure Groups in Brazil" (PhD diss., University of Florida, 1967); Marc Edelman, "What is a peasant?" What are peasantries? A Briefing Paper on Issues of Definition" (presentation, Intergovernmental Working Group on a United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, Geneva, July 15-19, 2013), accessed May 13, 2016, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/WGPeasants/Edelman.pdf>; Paige, *Social Movements and Export Agriculture*, 77.

politically and economically.¹³⁶ In plantation areas, that lack of independence hinged on an ongoing mutual dependence between planters and labourers: planters depended on peasant labour just as peasants depended on plantation work.

In tropical north Queensland there was no remnant indigenous agrarian society and no large remnant population of indentured labourer groups to become a “reconstituted” peasantry, both dependent on and depended upon for labour, or confined to the margins as a disenfranchised, landless rural poor.¹³⁷ More importantly, the White Australia Policy legislated that there could not be. The independent, small farmers in tropical north Queensland had the capital means to acquire land or convert leases or tenancies to owner-occupied holdings. Rather than cultivating subsistence crops, they cultivated a crop that was in high demand and made sufficient returns to both subsist and reinvest in the farm, hiring outside labour for the harvesting season.¹³⁸ They were able to dedicate their labour to their own farm and resist demands on labour for larger concerns. The significance of this was that, free of the social, political and economic restraints used to control peasant farmers and tenants, the Australian independent, white, small sugar cane farmers were free to form agricultural associations.

The ability to accumulate capital and invest in even more acreages of land distinguished the small farmer in the sugar districts of Australia from those elsewhere in the sugar growing world. Agricultural expert H. Martin-Leake, writing on land policy in the tropics in the early twentieth century, commented: “The cane crop is of little value in itself ... its main value lies in the sugar which is contained in the juice and which must be extracted and reduced to an imperishable form.”¹³⁹ Sugar has never been a crop that can turn a quick profit, nor is it a product that can be easily or profitably produced by small producers for a commercial market without a central mill. The central mill made it possible for small farmers in Australia to produce sugar for a commercial market and realise on the capital invested in their farms. Without a central mill, small growers had to

¹³⁶ Sidney W Mintz, “From Plantations to Peasantries,” in *Caribbean Transformations*, ed. Sidney W. Mintz. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 132.

¹³⁷ Mintz, “From Plantations to Peasantries,” 146.

¹³⁸ D.E. Tribe and Lynette J. Peele, “Innovation, Science and Farmer,” in *Technology in Australia, 1788-1988: A Condensed History of Australian Technological Innovation and Adaptation During the First Two Hundred Years* (Parkville: Australian Science and Technology Heritage Centre, 1988), 11, online version 2000, accessed January 23, 2107, <http://www.austehc.unimelb.edu.au/tia/009.html>. They commented that Australians generally rejected subsistence farming.

¹³⁹ Hugh Martin-Leake, *Land Tenure and Agricultural Production in the Tropics: Being a Discussion on the Influence of the Land Policy on Development in the Tropics* (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, 1927), 40.

arrange mill access with a planter who was prepared to crush their cane and had the infrastructure in place to collect and transport the farmers' cane to the mill in a timely manner. The millers established the price and the farmers were not in a position to negotiate. They could not threaten to withhold their crops because once cut, cane needs to reach an accessible mill as soon as possible to be processed. If they left the cane to stand over rather than be harvested, they failed to make an income for that year.

Moore observed that the legislation formulated to create the central mill system in Queensland was not "terribly adventurous and innovatory."¹⁴⁰ The central milling and small farming system was experimented with by old world sugar industries before 1914 but failed to endure as a viable alternative to vertical integration. Capital requirements were significant deterrents to central milling and the smallholding system globally.¹⁴¹ There was much that made central mill crushing expensive and therefore not an attractive proposition to planters. There were increased transaction costs involved in the coordination of harvesting and milling. Measuring the sucrose content of the cane of the individual farmers' yields was a difficult and costly exercise. More sophisticated milling processes powered by sources other than animal were costly to set up and made greater demands of suppliers. The most important requirement of a large mill, which was at the same time an impediment to small farming, was a large and reliable supply of cane to keep the mill running profitably.

Other impediments included the unavailability of the necessary industrial processes, the reluctance of planters to modify or change the layout of their estates, and a lack of cooperation from planters who feared a loss of independence and prestige.¹⁴² It was also limited by the ability of small growers to participate. They had to have access to sufficient farming land, and the agricultural and organisational skills to both farm sugar profitably and negotiate to their own advantage with millers. In order to break in to small farming they often needed the helping hand of an obliging planter. Their aspirations also needed to coincide with legislators' policies.

There were still reasons why planters initiated small farming. There is little doubt that, as historian Howard Johnson pointed out, "encouragement of cane farming is explained by

¹⁴⁰ Moore, "Queensland Sugar Industry," 39.

¹⁴¹ Shlomowitz, "Plantations and Smallholdings," 9.

¹⁴² Beachey, *The British West Indies Sugar Industry*, 81-82.

the fact that they anticipated certain benefits from its establishment.”¹⁴³ Previously, much of the planters’ land lay idle. More land could be put under cultivation when worked by small farmers. Economies of scale, so vital to sugar manufacture, were not so important to cultivation and could, therefore, be conducted by small farmers who could afford to sell their cane to the mills more cheaply than the miller could grow it for themselves.¹⁴⁴ With the separation of milling and cultivation the growers would bear all the costs and angst of cultivation. Cultivation practices generally improved because of reduced acreages farmed by owner operators who cultivated the ground more thoroughly and produced larger yields per acre.¹⁴⁵

To operate larger and more sophisticated mills, and to keep abreast with the latest technological developments, required expertise and specialisation in milling, unhindered by concerns with cultivation and the recruitment and cost of field labourers. Once cultivation and milling were separated, and cultivation assumed by independent growers, milling returns could be reinvested in the mill in order to secure the latest and most efficient technology and qualified staff.

A further stimulus was that labour economies of scale for cane cultivation using indentured labourers became increasingly unfavourable. With small farming the labour bill was halved, and the need for overseers done away with.¹⁴⁶ When the plantations subdivided, they were relieved of the problems and costs of procuring, housing, feeding, clothing and employing a large labour force year-round. Because of the continuing reliance on labour into the twentieth century, the separation of milling and cultivation presented an achievable solution to the labour dilemma in the short-term.

Two significant technological developments that mills introduced facilitated the entry of the small grower into the Australian sugar industry. The first was the determination of a reliable method to measure and pay farmers on the basis of the sucrose content of the cane rather than raw tonnage.¹⁴⁷ The other was the railway which could transport the

¹⁴³ Howard Johnson, “The Origins and Early Development of Cane Farming in Trinidad, 1882-1906,” *Journal of Caribbean History* 5 (1972): 59.

¹⁴⁴ Courtenay, *Northern Australia*, 29; Griggs, “Origins and Early Development,” 51.

¹⁴⁵ House of Representatives, “A Report upon some Factors relating to the Cane Sugar Industry of Australia, by Walter Maxwell, Director of the Sugar Experiment Stations of Queensland,” 977.

¹⁴⁶ Shaw, “The Sugar Industry in Queensland,” 6. Flora Shaw visited the plantations of the Herbert River and enjoyed various planters’ hospitality. She would have seen firsthand that sugar-making, plantation style, was not profitable.

¹⁴⁷ See Griggs, *Global Industry, Local Innovation*, for a thorough discussion of this in relation to Australia.

highly perishable crop quickly from the fields of small farmers located further from the mill.¹⁴⁸

Another significant factor pushing the abandonment of cultivation by planters in Queensland was that the planters' privileged social and industrial authority was tenuous. They had operated their plantations from inception with the understanding that indentured labourers were not envisaged to become permanent settlers and a resident cheap labour force. They also knew that the small farmers, not being former indentured labourers and racial others, but white, largely Anglo-Celtic, like the planters themselves, would not be pressed into hard labour while being expected at the same time to work their small plots. It was patently obvious to the planters that it was only a matter of time before they would lose control over wages and work conditions. They would have to contend with white, free, wage labourers with contracts, wages rates, and working and living conditions regulated by the state and safeguarded by labour unions.

Landowning facilitated an alternative to the corporate central mill—cooperative mills. In the late 1860s in NSW, small farmers were attempting to grow cane but struggled for want of an accessible mill to crush their cane.¹⁴⁹ The first public meeting held to inaugurate an association to achieve a cooperative mill in Australia was in 1868 at Rocky Mouth, Clarence River.¹⁵⁰ It would be CSR though, who would go on to build five mills in northern NSW. It had all the advantages that small millers lacked and ensured that it capitalised on those by smoothing the process of those who committed their crops to their mills and putting in place supervisory devices.

Even in the boom period in central Queensland, plantation mills were accepting cane from outside growers but these arrangements were ad hoc and prices for cane established at the whim of the planter millers.¹⁵¹ The small farmers began vigorously petitioning the government for central mills in 1885. The Queensland government tacitly encouraged small-scale sugar cane farming by advancing £50 000 towards two groups of farmers for the building of cooperatively owned central mills, the Racecourse and North Eton Central Mills in Mackay. Further ventures were enabled by the Sugar Works Guarantee Act of

¹⁴⁸ See Brookfield, "Problems of Monoculture," for a discussion of railways and sugar.

¹⁴⁹ *Brisbane Courier*, January 6, 1868, 2.

¹⁵⁰ Extracts from the *Clarence and Richmond Examiner*, May 19, 26 and June 2, 1868, Z303/71-1.0-2, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

¹⁵¹ Moore, "The Transformation of the Mackay," 8, 48,141-42.

1893 which allowed for farmers to float companies to erect mills, financed by government loans secured by a first mortgage over the farms of the shareholders.¹⁵² Such arrangements were only possible because small farmers had the means to accumulate capital to buy farms, which would act as collateral, and the liberty and initiative to participate in a growing associative movement.

Though farming families may have been large enough to work ever increasing holdings, harvesting was one task that was beyond the ability of the family alone and had to be outsourced. Cane cutting was a dirty, physically demanding and unpleasant job, made additionally onerous by steamy tropical conditions. With the end of indenture looming, the Queensland government legislated for bounties to incentivise planters and small farmers to abandon the use of indentured labour. An excise and rebate scheme imposed an excise duty on all raw sugar produced in Australia and, from the monies collected, rebates were refunded to those who produced that sugar entirely by white labour.¹⁵³ The government also made cane cutting a much more attractive job by legislating for fair standards of pay and accommodation. Ongoing government protection enabled the industry to compete with countries where sugar was grown with cheaper labour.¹⁵⁴

Small farmers, of course, expected adequate remuneration for their labours. In Louisiana, the efforts of white tenant farmers were assisted by government concessions. In Australia, such assistance would be achieved with state legislation to coordinate pricing and marketing. After 1914 the government established a complex system that came to closely coordinate every aspect of sugar production—production levels, marketing, pricing, wages and conditions—to support a small family farm mode of production.¹⁵⁵ That complex system was a response to the distance from, and volatility of, sugar markets, and the unique cultivation and milling arrangements which had been created with cultivation by white, independent, small growers. The momentum for this regulatory system was maintained by the farmers' associative movement, even if parties could not agree as to the extent of the control.

¹⁵² Queensland Parliament, "Sugar Works Guarantee Act 1893."

¹⁵³ *The Australian Cane Sugar Industry* (Melbourne: Ramsay Publishing, 1934), 8-9.

¹⁵⁴ "Royal Commission upon the Sugar Industry in Australia: Statement tendered by the General Manager of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, Limited," *Australian Sugar Journal* (1912): 91; C.T. Wood, *Sugar Country*, 23.

¹⁵⁵ Clive Moore, *Kanaka: A History of Melanesian Mackay* (Boroko: Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, 1985) 114-15.

Just as the government had legislated in 1876 for the ownership of land by yeoman farmers, after 1914 it legislated for a regulatory system that would underpin the small family farm system into the twentieth century. Nevertheless, that was not only the factor that guaranteed the survival of the small farming system in Australia. From the outset survival depended on the willingness of small farmers to endure a “degree of self-exploitation” that was unparalleled in the sugar growing world.¹⁵⁶ The power of their representative organisations to speak on behalf of their farmer members was also crucial.

CONCLUSION

As this chapter explains, in the period 1872 to 1914, independent, white, small, sugar cane farmers did not predominate in any of the sugar growing areas examined except Australia. In Australia that predominance was a result of a collusion of state will, planter acquiescence and small grower initiative. Government legislated for landownership by a yeoman class of white agriculturalists who shared whiteness with the government administrators and the planters. Government design was matched by the small selectors’ desire and capital to purchase land in order to secure their independence. As the size of the farms was such that they could be worked by individual farmers and their families, only harvest season labour had to be found. This was sourced from waged white workers because government had not only legislated for the end of indenture but also for the removal of former indentured labour. These factors all enabled the small farming system to take hold.

However, there is an additional factor that has been overlooked to date: there was a critical mass of white selectors who, besides being landowning, had the acumen, persistence and freedom to form associations. They investigated ways they could assume cultivation from the millers and even invest in cooperative mills. A particular example of the small farmers’ agricultural associations was the HRFA. There is a distinct lack of specific scholarship dedicated to the agricultural association movement across the global sugar industries in the particularly transformative period 1872 to 1914, even though an agricultural association movement was active worldwide in that period. The following chapters will explore that movement and how it manifested in Brazil, Hawai’i, Louisiana, Barbados, Fiji and Australia.

¹⁵⁶ Drummond and Marsden, *The Condition of Sustainability*, 191, 193.

CHAPTER 3

COLONIAL EXPRESSIONS OF THE AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION

In tropical north Queensland the abandonment of the plantation mode of production and the industrywide transition to small farming was partly achieved through the agency of small farmers' determination to farm sugar. One vehicle they used to bring that determination to reality was the agricultural association, of which the HRFA was a significant example. The previous chapter argued that despite the appearance of the small sugar cane farmer at various points in the histories of the sugar cane industries of Brazil, Hawai'i, Louisiana, Barbados, Fiji and Australia, only Australia's sugar industry transitioned from a plantation mode of production to one worked by authentically independent, white, small sugar cane farmers in the period 1872-1914. The trajectory each sugar industry took determined who monopolised the factors of production. As was noted, this had implications for what type of agricultural associations were able to emerge and by whom they were formed.

In the late nineteenth century, an agricultural association movement was visible worldwide. Barbados and Fiji inherited the associative traditions of Britain, and Brazil those of Portugal. Hawai'i and Louisiana inherited the American proclivity for association. These inheritances determined what types of agricultural associations were formed and by whom. This chapter will first examine the origins of the agricultural association movement and its manifestations in Britain, Portugal and the United States. It will then identify the expressions of those associative traditions in the sugar growing areas of Barbados, Fiji, Brazil, Hawai'i and Louisiana. The anomalous position of the HRFA within the sugar industry association movement will be revealed when Australia is examined in chapters four and five.

THE EARLIEST FORMAL AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS

Endeavours to disseminate information to farmers have ancient precedents, and rural sociologists have long acknowledged the basic urge of isolated rural people to establish organisations for social interaction. The formation of formal associations by farmers, however, is a more recent development. Agricultural associations, formed for mutual aid and for the study of technical problems, existed from the time of the Roman Empire and

were present during the Middle Ages.¹ The earliest formal farmer association is reputed to have been formed at Rezzato near Milan in 1548.² In this period, revolutionary new agricultural practices were disseminated to ever wider audiences as community tenure changed to individual land ownership, new crops were introduced, roads and transport facilities improved, and printing press technology became widespread.

Spearheading this revolution in farming practices were those of a scientific turn of mind or “men of science,” as well as progressive, wealthy, usually aristocratic landowners and similarly progressive farmers, all of whom were dubbed “improvers.”³ Those who experimented with science and scientific agricultural methods, such as Sir Francis Bacon, published their observations and findings. This elite formed agricultural associations and met to discuss and share ideas of agricultural improvement. Their interest was driven by the availability of new scientific knowledge about plant physiology and soil chemistry, and a desire by landowners to maximise profits from both their land, and the lands of their tenants in order to extract higher rental. They shared this knowledge with the wider farming community by staging demonstrations and publicising information of their associations’ proceedings and meetings.⁴

Formal associations began emerging with more frequency in the eighteenth century, in the British Isles, Russia, France and the Netherlands in particular. These earliest associations could be named associations, societies, clubs, even leagues. The words appear to be used interchangeably and rarely does scholarly agricultural literature find it necessary to differentiate one from the other. H.S.A. Fox, an authority on English agrarian history, writing of the British agricultural associations said there was “little fundamental distinction,” though he suggested size, sphere of influence, funds and

¹ Nelson Atrim Crawford, “Agricultural Societies,” in *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. Edwin Robert Anderson Seligman and Alvin Saunders Johnson (New York: Macmillan, 1937), 570.

² F. Coletti, “Le Associazioni Agrarie in Italia: Dalla metà del secolo decimoyi’avo alla fine del decimonono,” *Il Dottore in Scienze Agrarie e Forestali* 15 (1985), 8.

³ T.H. Middleton, “Early Associations for Promoting Agriculture and Improving the Improver,” in *Report of the Eighty-Second Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science* (London: John Murray, 1913), 715; Gwyn E. Jones and Chris Garforth, “The History, Development and Future of Agricultural Extension,” in *Improving Agricultural Extension.: A Reference Manual*, ed. Burton E. Swanson, Robert P. Bentz and Andrew J. Sofranko (Rome: Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, 1997), accessed September 22, 2016, <http://www.fao.org/3/a-w5830e/w5830e03.htm>. The efforts to advance agricultural can be described as improving and the person effecting the improvement, an improver. The word ‘improver’ was in use in the English language with this agricultural connotation by 1659.

⁴ Jones and Garforth, “History, Development and Future.”

emphasis of activities may have varied.⁵ Contemporary opinions could be either quite unequivocal about the distinction, or, on the other hand, struggle with differences of meaning.⁶ Given the ongoing ambiguity of the distinction between terms, this thesis uses the word ‘association’ unless a specific association is identified as a club, society or league.⁷

As colonies were taken up by the leading European powers and agriculture was established in new and often hostile environments, familiar agricultural practices were tried and not infrequently found to be wanting. As a result, farmers across the colonies were encouraged to form agricultural associations. In 1857, a report from the commissioner of patents in agriculture, submitted to the house of representatives at the 35th Congress in Washington, noted that “one of the most effectual means of conveying agricultural knowledge in Russia, and which has been recognized in every civilized country, is by agricultural associations. They afford farmers the means of suggesting improvements, as well as a channel for communicating to each other the results of their observations and experiments, and of securing the general benefits of their respective knowledge.”⁸ It is clear from that report's overview that agricultural associations were perceived to be a common feature of the agricultural landscape across Europe and were expected to similarly proliferate elsewhere, with the suggestion that the Americans would do well to follow suit.⁹

The first informal meetings of colonial farmers were the antecedents of the agricultural associations and provided, at the very least, opportunities to share information and companionship. The later formal associations were more purposeful in their

⁵ Fox, “Local Farmers’ Associations,” 46.

⁶ Goddard, “Agricultural Societies,” 252; George P. Marsh, “Address to the Agricultural Society of Rutland County, 1847,” University of Vermont Libraries, Centre for Digital Initiatives, accessed October 20, 2016, <http://cdi.uvm.edu/collections/item/pubagsocaddr>; Alexander Gregg, *History of the Old Cheraws: An Account of the Aborigines of the Pedee, The first White Settlements, their subsequent Progress, Civil Changes, the Struggle of the Revolution, and Growth of the Country Afterward; extending from about A.D. 1730 to 1810, with notices of families and sketches of individuals* (New York: Richardson and Company, 1867), 119; National Agricultural Association, *Address to the Agricultural Organizations in the United States* (Nashville: Union & American Book and Job Office ,1871), 21.

⁷ Australian Taxation Office, “Pro-Campo Ltd. V Commissioner of Land Tax (NSW) 12 A.T.R. 26 (1981)”, in part adopting words from a previous NSW case, accessed May 30, 2018, <https://www.ato.gov.au/.../document?...%2205%3ACases%3ASupreme%20Court%3A>; *Duhaime’s Law Dictionary*, accessed October 21, 2016, <http://www.duhaime.org/LegalDictionary/S/Society.aspx>

⁸ United States House of Representatives, “Report of the Commissioner of Patents for the year 1857,” *Agriculture*, 35th Cong.1st Sess. Washington No. 32, 6-7.

⁹ United States House of Representatives, “Report of the Commissioner of Patents for the year 1857,” 9.

encouragement of innovation and excellence in farming practices and in communicating those developments to a greater number of people. They did this by conducting shows and ploughing matches, establishing rural schools, libraries, cooperatives, experimental farms and legislative commodity associations.¹⁰ The dissemination of agricultural information through written publications was even regarded as a “social duty.”¹¹ The associations’ singular strength (particularly when a number subscribed to a more central association and paid into a central fund) was the ability to collectively promote “the common cause,” including lobbying government to legislate in favour of the agriculturalist.¹² In this role they were identified variously as interest or pressure groups and scholars attempt to differentiate between the two.¹³ The conclusions that can be drawn from the debate is that both groups aim to influence public policy, albeit pressure groups are more overt, catholic and organised in their approach. Agricultural associations therefore are best defined as interest groups given that they generally preferred to lobby discreetly to influence public policy in favour of agriculture.

It was possible for agricultural associations to effect change in the nineteenth century because agricultural production was considered of vital national importance and the farmer, particularly where he was a wealthy landholder, was highly esteemed and politically influential. With the majority of the working population engaged in agricultural work, and where that population had been granted universal suffrage, agricultural policies assumed an important political aspect and assistance to agriculture was driven by politicians’ efforts to appeal to rural voters.¹⁴ Until legislative bodies and ministries of agriculture assumed the role of agricultural proselytising, agricultural associations acted to ensure that agriculture was on the government agenda.

Kenneth Hudson, industrial archaeologist, has noted differences in the agricultural association of different regions. In mainland Europe, in contrast to the British Isles, there

¹⁰ True, “Early Development of Agricultural Societies,” 296.

¹¹ Hudson, *Patriotism with Profit*, 14.

¹² United States House of Representatives, “Report of the Commissioner of Patents for the year 1857,” 8.

¹³ Andrew J. O’Shaughnessy, “The Formation of a Commercial Lobby: The West India Interest, British Colonial Policy and the American Revolution,” *The Historical Journal* 40 (1997): 71, 80, 95, accessed October 14, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3020953>; Graham K. Wilson, *Interest Groups* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 1; Grant Stewart Harman, “Graziers in Politics: The Pressure Group Behaviour of the Graziers’ Association of New South Wales” (PhD diss., Australian National University, 1968), 2.

¹⁴ Sheingate, *The Rise of the Agricultural Welfare State*, 38. See Sheingate’s argument on the rise of the agricultural welfare state.

was a network of district and local associations organised under a parent society which controlled their activities. The associations on the continent were usually established through government initiatives, and received direct government subsidies which kept them active and growing.¹⁵ The result was that, unlike in the British Isles, a majority of farmers were members of the associations and those associations were more effective.¹⁶ He also noted that agricultural associations in the United States and Australia were more likely to receive government grants and were more responsive to the needs of the rural population than those of the British Isles.¹⁷ However, rural sociologist Artur Cristóvão and co-author Fernando Pereira remarked that in Portugal, because the establishment of agricultural associations and the provision of rural extension were reform efforts effected by government, they were characterised by an ingrained, elitist, top-down approach.¹⁸ This meant that the benefits invariably did not filter down to the small tenant farmer.

Though the associative movement in the United States, Australia and the British Isles was driven by the initiative of individuals, these individuals tended to belong to the elite. Rather than the ordinary “tillers of the soil,” agricultural scientists and the wealthy, educated and scientifically minded landowners often formed the majority of members of agricultural associations.¹⁹ As American historian Catherine E. Kelly noted, the elite spoke a rhetoric which eulogised the rustic, but the reality was far from the “fiction of ‘traditional’ rural life.”²⁰ While the elite were only moderately successful in communicating the benefits of agricultural innovation to small landowning farmers or tenants, the latter were not necessarily inert. In the British Isles, farmers’ associations, generally called clubs, were formed by tenant farmers, and emerged to mirror the activities of the larger landholders’ associations: exchanging information, conducting experiments and shows, and publishing.²¹ Fox considered the small farmers’ clubs to

¹⁵ Sheingate, *The Rise of the Agricultural Welfare State*, 59; Raby, *Making Rural Australia*, 119.

¹⁶ Hudson, *Patriotism with Profit*, xii; Harro Maat, *Science Cultivating Practice: A History of Agricultural Science in the Netherlands and its Colonies, 1863-1986* (Dordrecht: Springer Science and Business Media, 2001), 46.

¹⁷ Hudson, *Patriotism with Profit*, xii.

¹⁸ Artur Cristóvão and Fernando Pereira, “Portugal: Extension Reform in the Interior North of Portugal,” in *Demand-Driven Approaches to Agricultural Extension: Case Studies of International Initiatives*, ed. William Rivera and Gary Alex (Washington: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2004), 97.

¹⁹ Crawford, “Agricultural Societies,” 570.

²⁰ Catherine E. Kelly, “‘The Consummation of Rural Prosperity and Happiness’: New England Agricultural Fairs and the Construction of Class and Gender, 1810-1860,” *American Quarterly* 49 (1997): 584, accessed May 13, 2016, <http://muse.jhu.edu.elibrary.icu.edu.au/article/175680>.

²¹ Goddard, “Agricultural Societies,” 252.

have played a vital role in the circulation of agricultural information to those who most needed it.²²

What prevented individuals from forming agricultural associations was a lack of political freedom, absence of common vision and inertia. They were the very reasons that associations foundered. Where smallholders were exploited as a labour pool, the dominant large landholders could thwart any political agitation by smallholders. Moreover, as sociologist Jeffrey M. Paige observed, the restrictive conditions that dictated the life and work of a smallholder prevented a common vision or sense of solidarity.²³ Sociologist Carl C. Taylor argued that agricultural associations did not originate until farmers' enterprises became commercial.²⁴ Paige argued conversely, maintaining that farmers were not necessarily motivated to form associations when their enterprises became commercial, but rather did so for other economic purposes or through prompting by an external agency.²⁵ Taylor also acknowledged that farmers' associations did not originate because farmers themselves saw a need for them.²⁶ Prompting agents included visionary individuals or government directives, changing conditions, or crisis situations. These factors prompted agriculturalists to combine to form associations for mutual protection. Political scientist Robert H. Salisbury suggested that if a group found itself disadvantaged it would form formal associations to maximise bargaining power and strengthen relationships within the groups in order to regain social or economic advantage.²⁷ However, once conditions of crisis had been restored to the advantage of the group, associative momentum was often lost. These agents can be seen at work wherever agricultural associations appeared.

There were numerous reasons why agricultural associations foundered. Taylor identified localism and individualism as the principal causes, while social scientist Mancur Olson

²² Fox, "Local Farmers' Associations," 45.

²³ Paige, *Social Movements and Export Agriculture*, 44-45. Examples of tenant farmers forming politically motivated associations are to be found across countries and industries in this period leading up to 1914. In Argentina, for example, in 1912 striking tenant farmers formed the Federación Agraria Argentina, both modelling itself upon and opposing the landowners and cattlemen's organisation the Sociedad Rural Argentina. See Donald Denoon, *Settler Capitalism: The Dynamics of Dependent Development in the Southern Hemisphere* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 98.

²⁴ Taylor, "Farmers' Organizations," 129.

²⁵ Paige, *Social Movements and Export Agriculture*, 46.

²⁶ Taylor, "Farmers' Organizations," 129.

²⁷ Robert H. Salisbury, "An Exchange Theory of Interest Groups," *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 13 (1969): 5.

blamed “economic competition, internal wealth stratification, and structural isolation.”²⁸ Furthermore, he linked the failure to develop strong political organisation from within farm associations as contributing to their mercurial nature. The formation of voluntary associations, such as the small agricultural associations, occurred for the most part in isolation and tended to be ephemeral, and therefore did not succeed in generating documentary records. Urban historian Peter Clark suggested that this might account for the lack of appreciation of their importance in the historiography.²⁹

The interest in agriculture in an associative sense progressed through stages, though the development was not a linear one. To put it simply, agricultural associations were first formed by those of a scientific turn of mind, then broadened to include industrial interests such as mechanics and manufacturing, while at the same time specialised agricultural associations emerged, which were also more socially inclusive than their predecessors. These were followed by specific commodity associations. With the roles of rural extension and political lobbying assumed by commodity associations, government departments and government sponsored bodies, agricultural associations disappeared from the rural landscape. The initiatives they promoted by taking an interest in rural extension and innovation and the changes they achieved through political lobbying would prove to be their lasting legacies.

DIFFERENT PATHS FOR AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS: THE BRITISH ISLES, THE UNITED STATES AND PORTUGAL

An examination of the British Isles, the United States and Portugal reveals a propensity for associative behaviour in the countryside throughout the nineteenth century but also significant differences in its manifestations. Nevertheless, all agricultural associations shared in common several objects: dissemination of agricultural information through the written medium; the promotion of agricultural innovation and skill through exhibition; promotion or provision of rural education and extension; and finally, political lobbying. Moreover, most strove to form national or federated bodies in order to effect influence with a united voice.

²⁸ Taylor, “Farmers’ Organizations,” 129; Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*, 148.

²⁹ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, 9.

In all three sugar-growing regions, the media was used to diffuse agricultural information. In the British Isles the scientific articles published in the early (often expensive) agricultural journals were probably only ever read by a few hundred farmers.³⁰ When agricultural subjects were given editorial space in unrelated journals, they reached a wider audience.³¹ Literacy rates were generally high in the United States and printed matter was cheap. As a result, agricultural information reached a wider audience than in other societies of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.³² Nevertheless, failure to write in easily understood language contributed to lack of readership.³³ Farmers themselves expressed the desire for “plain facts in plain language.”³⁴ In Portugal, the range and number of newspapers and journals dedicated to agriculture and technical and scientific developments increased in the latter half of the nineteenth century. However, their readership was limited because the literacy rate was one of the lowest in Europe. In addition, newspapers were costly and could not be transported out into the countryside easily.³⁵

Recognising that many farmers were illiterate, associations held exhibitions to introduce innovation and encourage excellence. Such exhibitions could be called sheep shearings, cattle shows, ploughing competitions, shows or fairs. Fairs had ancient precedents, were predominantly for the purpose of purchase and barter, and afforded a rare opportunity for rural people to socialise. Prizes were offered for the best specimens of the different kinds of livestock on sale. The fairs were already offering incentives for the improvement of farming technique before the agricultural associations began moving away from their more formal proceedings towards practical extension.³⁶ As the agricultural associations

³⁰ Hudson, *Patriotism with Profit*, 45-46.

³¹ Rachel Crawford, “English Georgic and British Nationhood,” *English Literary History* 65 (1998): 132, accessed May 13, 2016, <http://muse.jhu.edu/article/11390>.

³² Conevery Bolton Valencius, et al., “Science in Early America: Print Culture and the Sciences of Territoriality,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 36 (2016): 77-78, accessed May 13, 2016, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1353/jer.2016.0017>.

³³ Lewis Cecil Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860* (Washington: The Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1933), 788; Guion Griffis Johnson, “The Newspaper and Periodical Press,” in *Ante-Bellum North Carolina: A Social History: Electronic Edition*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 805, accessed September 24, 2016, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/johnson/chapter25.html>.

³⁴ *Pendleton Farmers' Society* (Atlanta: Foote & Co., 1908), 203-05, quoted in John Hillison and Brad Bryant, “Agricultural Societies as Antecedents of the FFA,” e-article accessed September 23, 2016, <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.564.174&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.

³⁵ Branco and da Silva, “Growth, Institutional Change and Innovation,” 234, 239-40.

³⁶ True, “Early Development of Agricultural Societies,” 303.

took charge of those events, they moved the emphasis away from purchase and barter to the dissemination of agricultural information and the promotion of both agricultural innovation and farming excellence. In the United States, beginning with a sheep shearing exhibition in 1807, exhibition centres for the display of agricultural machinery and implements were established and agricultural exhibitions, or fairs, were held modelled on the precedent already set in the British Isles. It was at this point, True argued, that agricultural associations made the transition to a more democratic nature and actually began to focus on the real problems of day-to-day farming.³⁷ Because of their popularity fairs became a regular feature of rural life in the British Isles and the United States, though over time their instructive intent was diluted in favour of the 'show' aspects in response to the interests of the attendees. In time, fair associations and farmers' associations become separate entities.³⁸ In Portugal between 1844 and 1877, both the Royal Central Association of Portuguese Agriculture (RACAP) and the regional associations sponsored agricultural shows. Public service experts were charged with the responsibility of encouraging the formation of associations and the holding of fairs and exhibitions. The degree to which the latter were utilised to deliberately promote agricultural excellence among tenants is open to conjecture.³⁹

Agricultural associations either promoted or where possible provided rural education and extension. In the British Isles the government was tardy in assuming responsibility for rural extension and so agricultural education was first provided through the indomitable energy and patronage of a handful of individuals and agricultural associations.⁴⁰ In the United States, the worth of educating farmers' sons and daughters for their future profession as agriculturalists led associations to pressure their state legislatures to establish agricultural colleges, and to agitate for congressional support for educational programmes devoted to agriculture, mechanics or engineering. In their own right they funded the establishment of 'professorships' of agriculture at universities.⁴¹ Though consecutive presidents espoused the need for agricultural education, it was a long time

³⁷ True, "Early Development of Agricultural Societies," 300.

³⁸ "Agricultural Organizations and Butter and Cheese Factories, Milk Stations and Condensing Plants in New York 1911," *Department of Agriculture Bulletin [New York]* 26 (1911): 839. That information was presented in table form on pages 908-909; Robert L Tontz, "Memberships of General Farmers' Organizations, United States, 1874-1960," *Agricultural History Society* 38 (1964): 153, accessed October 18, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3740434>.

³⁹ Branco and da Silva, "Growth, Institutional Change and Innovation," 234.

⁴⁰ Hudson, *Patriotism with Profit*, 23.

⁴¹ True, "Early Days of the Albemarle Agricultural Society," 253; Hudson, *Patriotism with Profit*, 31.

before federal government funds were directed to that purpose. One account goes as far as to assert that it was the local and county agricultural association movement where adult agricultural education began in the United States.⁴² Efforts to introduce agricultural extension in Portugal needed to circumvent an ingrained, elitist, top-down approach.⁴³ Nevertheless, Branco and da Silva asserted that some of the regional agricultural associations were particularly effective in advising government on agricultural education and helping to form a body of agricultural experts at government level.⁴⁴

While most British and American associations avoided overt political activities in the nineteenth century, they actively engaged in political lobbying. The longevity of some of the British associations is attributed to their neutral political stance, frequently explicitly stated in their rules. Later this neutral stance was abandoned.⁴⁵ Though agricultural associations in the United States claimed to be non-political, historian Jack Abramowitz observed that “the threat of entering politics was clearly implicit.”⁴⁶ In Portugal the subjugation of a largely illiterate rural population to central government control on one hand, and the wealthy landowners on the other, prevented them from using associations for political lobbying. The landowners on the other hand used theirs to good effect.⁴⁷

The efforts to federate associations into national bodies did not meet with success until the twentieth century. Fox remarked on an “independent spirit” in the British Isles, which manifested in a determination on the part of local associations to remain independent of national associations or even other neighbouring associations.⁴⁸ In the United States some of the state legislatures began to provide funding to assist the formation of state agricultural societies to which local societies could provide representation. They were invariably short-lived. Interest persisted however in the benefits of a larger, more powerful and representative association of which there were various expressions: the

⁴² Christopher Weller and Carol Richwine, *A Guide for Adult Agricultural Education and Young Farmer Programs in Pennsylvania: A project of: Vision for Pennsylvania Agricultural Education in Cooperation with Pennsylvania Department of Education Pennsylvania State University Department of Agricultural and Extension Education* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvanian Department of Education, 2013), accessed September 23, 2016, <http://www.payoungfarmers.com/files/agedguidecomplete.pdf>.

⁴³ Cristóvão and Pereira, “Portugal: Extension Reform,” 97.

⁴⁴ Branco and da Silva, “Growth, Institutional Change and Innovation,” 233-34.

⁴⁵ Fox, “Local Farmers’ Associations,” 47.

⁴⁶ Jack Abramowitz, “The Negro in the Populist Movement,” *Journal of Negro History* 38 (1953): 257, accessed March 3, 2108, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2715735>.

⁴⁷ Branco and da Silva, “Growth, Institutional Change and Innovation,” 234.

⁴⁸ Fox, “Local Farmers’ Associations,” 47.

impermanent United States Agricultural Society, the National Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry, and the Farmers' Alliance Movement are examples.⁴⁹ In Portugal the dominant elitist association RACAP supported a network of associations which collectively influenced agrarian policy at a national level.⁵⁰

Most early agricultural societies interested themselves in all and any crops and animals that were farmed in a particular locality. However, there were also specialised agricultural societies. Across the globe, sugar industries gave rise to agricultural societies to promote the welfare and interests of sugar cultivators. The associations that were formed in the sugar growing areas of Hawai'i and Louisiana did so within the context of a strong propensity for association in the United States.⁵¹ Barbadian, Fijian and Australian sugar growers' associations reflected the agricultural traditions and associative behaviours of the mother society, the British Isles, while Brazil, as a Portuguese colony, offers a conspicuous contrast. Despite being diverse in form and loose in structure and purpose, wherever they appeared, they were conscious of their responsibilities to publish or circulate agricultural literature; introduce the benefits of improved methods to illiterate and conservative farmers by way of demonstrations at exhibitions, shows or fairs; and to try to turn "slovenly" farmers into good farmers through providing, or agitating for government to provide, rural extension and agricultural education.⁵² Though frequently explicitly stating in their rules of association that they were to take a neutral political stance, members nonetheless turned to their associations to be a strong voice that would lobby effectively for agriculture.

THE SUGAR ASSOCIATIONS OF BRAZIL: EXPRESSIONS OF THE PORTUGUESE AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS

The agricultural association movements of the 'mother societies' examined in the previous section were replicated in their colonies by sugar planters, beginning in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Conforming to the Portuguese tradition of agricultural associations formed by the elite in the Portuguese colony of Brazil, sugar associations

⁴⁹ Theodore Saloutos, *Farmer Movements in the South 1865-1933* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), 87. Federal Farm Loan Act.

⁵⁰ Branco and da Silva, "Growth, Institutional Change and Innovation," 235.

⁵¹ A visitor to the United States in the nineteenth century commented on the American proclivity for association that took many forms, including the agricultural association. See de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 596.

⁵² Taylor, "Farmers' Organizations," 129; and Hudson, *Patriotism with Profit*, 31.

were founded by the landholding elite. Scholar Neale John Pearson identified the principal groups in the political life of Brazil until the twentieth century as being the army, a large landholding elite, bankers, industrialists, merchants, and the Roman Catholic Church.⁵³ Furthermore, the landed elite controlled the largely illiterate rural poor with violence in order to continue to secure their labour and marginalise them from active political participation.⁵⁴ With limited public rights, the rural poor were limited in their opportunities to form local associations.⁵⁵ If small sugar farmer representative associations existed in Brazil in the late nineteenth century, they have left no record, while those founded by the wealthy and powerful can be traced.

The first associations dedicated to sugar were those founded by merchants. They included the Agricultural Commercial Association (ACA) of 1836 and another with a broader interest, the Pernambuco Beneficent Commercial Association (ACBP), founded in 1839. The first actual agricultural association was the Imperial Institute of Agriculture of Pernambuco (Imperial Instituto Pernambucano de Agriculture, IIPA), formed in 1860. Its swift demise was caused by “presumptuous, incompetent inertia” and a membership which was more interested in decorations and titles.⁵⁶ Political influence and monopoly of land ownership gave the planters a dominant and powerful voice and their inclination to unite was therefore spasmodic.

Historian Celso Thomas Castilho observed that small municipal-centred agricultural clubs manifested early in both the northeast, including Bahia, and in the southeast where they had a long history.⁵⁷ Later formations, he reflected, attested to a “deepening associational culture, writ large.” Those associations reflected the planters’ growing perception that strength lay in unity.⁵⁸ One of those later formations was the Pernambuco Agriculture Auxiliary Society (SAAP) in 1872. Its rules stated that it would “aid morally its members in their individual commitments ... which are relative to farm improvements,

⁵³ Pearson, “Small Farmer and Rural Worker,” v.

⁵⁴ Hannah Wittman, “Reframing Agrarian Citizenship: Land, Life and Power in Brazil,” *Journal of Rural Studies* 25 (2009): 121, accessed October 18, 2016, doi: 10.1016/j.jurstud.2008.07.002.

⁵⁵ Herman Felstehausen, “Economic Knowledge, Participation and Farmer Decision Making in a Developed and Under-Developed Country,” *International Journal of Agrarian Affairs* 5 (1968): 279, 281.

⁵⁶ Eisenberg, *The Sugar Industry in Pernambuco*, 142, quoting from Relatório apresentado à Assembléa Legislativa Provincial de Pernambuco pelo Ex. Sr. Conde de Baependy, Presidente da Provincia na sessão de installação em 10 de Abril de 1869, 20. Paes de Andrade, *Questões Econômicas*, 49.

⁵⁷ Castilho, *Slave Emancipation and Transformations*, 73.

⁵⁸ Castilho, *Slave Emancipation and Transformations*, 100.

either in the processing of our products or those of large, or small-scale, farming.”⁵⁹ The association published a journal and held monthly exhibits. Its membership was dominated by the sugar oligarchy together with foreign merchants, while it is not clear how inclusive this association was of small farmers, despite their inclusion in the wording of the rules. The threat of the abolition of slavery provoked it into particular action, forming affiliated agricultural clubs: a Club de Lavoura in 1883 which was followed by further clubs formed across the Pernambuco counties.⁶⁰ The clubs’ memberships were planters and members of the provincial legislature.⁶¹

From the late nineteenth century into the early twentieth century, many sugar growing areas were in political transition. In Brazil, the republican movement originated from the abolitionist movement and the urban middle classes with their demands for greater political representation. The issues of abolitionism and political representation dominated the agenda and the proceedings of the Agricultural Congress held in 1884 organised by the Sugar Planters’ Association of Pernambuco.⁶² Typical of planter associations, after a period of inactivity, it had resurfaced when faced with crisis. Though the association made a call at this time for the agricultural sector to unite, that invitation was restricted to the planters.⁶³ When Brazil went from an imperial government to a republic in 1889 even the planters could see the advantages, for though they would lose their influence over a central government, they would be able to retain, or even increase, their oligarchic control over regional affairs.⁶⁴ While in theory there was universal suffrage, illiterates were not permitted to vote.⁶⁵ The consequence was that a majority of the rural population was disenfranchised. These political institutional arrangements, coupled with social and economic inequities, were unfavourable for the development of small representative rural associations of any kind.

⁵⁹ Eisenberg, *The Sugar Industry in Pernambuco*, 142-43, quoting from SAAP. Livro de Atas no. 1, “Estatutos,” and *passim*.

⁶⁰ Eisenberg, *The Sugar Industry in Pernambuco*, 142-43, quoting from SAAP. Livro de Atas no. 1, “Estatutos,” and *passim*.

⁶¹ Castilho, *Slave Emancipation and Transformations*, 102.

⁶² Eisenberg, *The Sugar Industry in Pernambuco*, 142-43; and Castilho, *Slave Emancipation and Transformations*, 23-28

⁶³ Castilho, *Slave Emancipation and Transformations*, 23-28.

⁶⁴ Francisco Vidal Luna and Herbert S. Klein, *The Economic and Social History of Brazil since 1889* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 20, 32.

⁶⁵ Francisco Vidal Luna and Herbert S. Klein, *The Economic and Social History*, 32-33.

Taylor observed that agricultural associations across South and Central America were scarce and ineffectual.⁶⁶ Furthermore, political scientist Anthony W. Periera explained that the lack of rural association activity in Brazil resulted from a lack of cohesion, cooperation and solidarity in Brazilian society, noting that “Compared to Anglo-Saxons, Brazilians are just not good at voluntarily associating with one another. The Brazilian tends to be individualistic and egoistic.”⁶⁷ Perhaps this is why, in contrast to a national unity of purpose, Eisenberg noted that where agricultural associations were formed in Brazil they contributed to an increasing regional consciousness.⁶⁸ This individualistic and parochial attitude might explain the failure of a strong central sugar association to emerge to represent all planters. In contrast to this lack of cohesion in the sugar industry, Scholtes observed that in the southern states of Brazil where colonists of various nationalities (Dutch, Polish, Italian, German and Japanese) had been settled on rural plots through both private and government initiative in the nineteenth century, voluntary associations of all sorts were usual.⁶⁹ The Japanese, in particular, brought with them a strong sense of community, mutual self-help values and commitment to residency and tenure of land.⁷⁰

Following the First National Agricultural Congress held in 1901, several new agricultural associations were formed including the União dos Sindicatos Agrícolas de Pernambuco (USAP). The USAP was unusually active. It promoted agricultural schools and laboratories, published a journal, lobbied on issues of concern such as transport, and acted as a buying and selling agent. With these organisations the sugar industry found new vehicles to articulate to government its most urgent concerns: land tenure, export markets, protective tariffs and the need to keep up with the new sugar milling technology.⁷¹ While these might have been new associations, their voices were still those of the landed sugar oligarchy.

The memberships of SAAP and its affiliated clubs were planters and members of the provincial legislature. Consequently, there is some mention of those in the historiography. Because history tends not to be written from the bottom up, no scholarly

⁶⁶ Taylor, “Farmers’ Organizations,” 130.

⁶⁷ Periera, *The End of the Peasantry*, 81.

⁶⁸ Eisenberg, *The Sugar Industry in Pernambuco*, 142-43.

⁶⁹ Fabian Scholtes, *Status Quo*, accessed April 13, 2015, http://www.zef.de/uploads/tx_zefportal/Publications/wp43.pdf

⁷⁰ Pearson, “Small Farmer and Rural Worker,” 23-25.

⁷¹ Eisenberg, *The Sugar Industry in Pernambuco*, 143.

or anecdotal evidence of the formation of associations by tenant or small independent sugar farmers in Brazil has been found and none are mentioned as eventuating in the late nineteenth century. Any attempts to organise those groups seem to have been imposed, such as those made by the SAAP, rather than self-originating. Economic historian Francisco Vidal Luna and historian Herbert S. Klein commented that Brazil was one of the less dynamic states in South America.⁷² The combined practices of slavery and large land grants in the colonial period had resulted in a highly stratified society divided not only on racial lines, but according to education, land ownership and wealth. The rural poor “were deliberately kept disoriented”: landless and dependent on the large landowner, they lived in fear of eviction.⁷³ Repercussions could be dire if they challenged the administrative and social power wielded by the elite.⁷⁴ The social, political and economic conditions experienced by small farmers limited their freedom and opportunity to form associations, despite the opportunities for mutual support and improvement of their lot that such associations may have afforded. Only in the second half of the twentieth century, with a paradigm shift caused by economic, political and economic changes, was it possible for the rural poor to form associations (leagues or *sindicatos*).⁷⁵

The stratification of Portuguese society with the noble landowners at one end of the spectrum and the rural poor at the other was duplicated in Brazil. Though wealthy landowners understood agronomy and the problems facing agriculture, and may have demonstrated new techniques and agricultural practices, they were nevertheless primarily motivated by the determination not to compromise their position as landholders.⁷⁶ Similarly, though their associations published on agricultural matters and promoted rural extension, the class divisions and inequities meant those who most needed the benefits of such extension were unable to access it. After all, the rural poor were unable to access either land or education.

The plantocracy dominated all aspects of life and society, and felt no need to form groups because it was already cohesive as a social class. As in Portugal, the planters only formed associations when they were required to by legislation, or to safeguard their position

⁷² Luna and Klein, *Economic and Social History*, 6.

⁷³ Pearson, “Small Farmer and Rural Worker,” 15.

⁷⁴ Luna and Klein, *Economic and Social History*.

⁷⁵ Pearson, “Small Farmer and Rural Worker,” 297-98.

⁷⁶ Ana Novais, “Profit, Rent, Patrimony,” 6, 9, accessed October 26, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41330814>.

when they saw it under threat. Sugar production was highly lucrative, while the benefits were all accrued by the millers and large landowners without filtering down to the small farmers whose political voice was muffled by centuries of suppression. The tradition of oppression by large landowners was a direct inheritance from the mother society. Political institutional arrangements coupled with social and economic inequities made for unfavourable conditions for the development of small representative rural associations in the period 1872 to 1914. Such inequities resulted from a highly stratified society divided, as in Portugal, by education, land ownership and wealth, but these were compounded, in Brazil, by issues to do with race.

THE SUGAR ASSOCIATIONS OF HAWAI'I: EXPRESSIONS OF THE AMERICAN AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS

In contrast to the experience of Portuguese colonies, Hawai'i as a territory of the United States reflected that society's strong tradition of association. Protestant American missionaries were among the vanguard of white settlement. They imposed not only Christian values and European ways but also introduced a tradition of cooperative activity. This cooperative action would express itself as the planter association, dominated by large vertically integrated concerns, and factors or agencies. Such were the long-lasting effects of the cooperation of sugar interests that MacLennan concluded "Every major political event in Hawaiian modern history is infused with sugar's organizational strategy."⁷⁷ This dominance by planters prohibited the formation of a viable small grower class, let alone small farmer associations.

Yet a visitor to the islands in 1873 commented that "The planters make a grave mistake in not acting together and advising together on their most important interests. There are so few of them that it should be easy to unite; and yet for lack of concerted action they suffer important abuses to go on."⁷⁸ There were several possible reasons for the lack of concerted action, and the failure of the first association to survive. The early sugar growing concerns were small, numerous and scattered, planters were divided by nationality, and there was a rapid turnover as they were defeated by lack of funds.⁷⁹ Any

⁷⁷ MacLennan, *Sovereign Sugar*, 220.

⁷⁸ Nordhoff, *Northern California*, 60.

⁷⁹ MacLennan, "Plantation Capitalism," 138-39.

united action was made in response to single issue concerns during periods of crisis and usually by the American planters.⁸⁰

Physical isolation in the mid-Pacific and the common problems of climate, labour, trade and finance eventually drew them together for “mutual support.”⁸¹ The formalisation of cooperation was prompted by the desire to respond to the burgeoning demand for Hawai’ian sugar. The first call for concerted action was made in 1849 in a letter written to the *Polynesian* newspaper.⁸² The writer suggested that an agricultural convention for planters be held. The seed had been planted and one year later, in 1850, the Royal Hawaiian Agricultural Society (RHAS) was organised for the express purpose of encouraging cooperation among those interested in agriculture and cash crops.⁸³ The short-lived society was preoccupied with issues of infrastructure and labour. This first foray into association resulted in government policies which were achieved because planters and legislators shared a common vision for the path that economic development should take.⁸⁴ This symbiotic relationship would ensure the dominance of sugar and the planter class for the next 150 years.

After the RHAS folded in 1869, planters continued to meet informally when urgent issues needed addressing. In addition, the Hawaiian Club of Boston was formed, made up of people who had previous business interests in Hawai’i. This club gave the Hawai’ian sugar industry a strong and effective voice in Washington, DC.⁸⁵ In 1882, there were grave fears in Hawai’i that the Treaty of Reciprocity would not be renewed due to opposition within the United States. In Hawai’i this prompted a call for “the most energetic and united action,” a call taken up by the factors.⁸⁶ A circular was sent to all those involved in the Hawai’ian sugar industry, suggesting that they combine to form an organisation with which to lobby the United States government regarding the extension of the Treaty. Sourcing reliable labour for the plantations had also become an increasingly dominant concern so the factors proposed that united action might also be able to deal

⁸⁰ MacLennan, “Plantation Capitalism,” 138-39.

⁸¹ *Hawaii’s Sugar*, (Hawai’i: HSPA, 1985), 3.

⁸² *Polynesian*, August 25, 1849 quoted in Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, 1: 327.

⁸³ Larry K. Fukunaga, *A History*, unpaginated.

⁸⁴ MacLennan, *Sovereign Sugar*, 220.

⁸⁵ MacLennan, *Sovereign Sugar*, 228.

⁸⁶ Fukunaga, *A History*.

with the problems of labour procurement and immigration.⁸⁷ What happened next would see planter cooperation become an enduring “institutionalized system of collaboration.”⁸⁸

Interested parties met in Honolulu on 20 March 1882, and formed the Planters’ Labour and Supply Company (PL&S Co.). The company was designed to be an association through which all sectors of the diverse business community could not only negotiate the terms of an extension of the reciprocity treaty, but also import labour for fieldwork, and coordinate the purchase and transport of essential supplies and equipment for the sugar plantations. It would be a united voice for negotiating agriculture and government matters generally.⁸⁹ Members paid a subscription and the company published a popular and readable journal called the *Planters’ Monthly*. By 1886 the company had developed a two-tier internal structure. The trustees comprised one tier and addressed market and labour issues while the second tier comprised the general membership and the committees which addressed plantation matters.⁹⁰ Other district planters’ associations formed in Hilo, Haua’i, Kauai, Maui and Oahu for the purpose of meeting and sharing common concerns and information.⁹¹

The PL&S Co. lasted longer than its predecessor because it managed to identify and represent interests across the different sectors of the planter class.⁹² Yet, in 1895 the company was dissolved. It faltered on a clash of planter interests and uneven representation. Not all the factors participated equally and the most powerful planter, Claus Spreckels, was not a member at all. The company was replaced by the Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association (HSPA) with a name-change reflecting its broader functions. This was an unincorporated, voluntary association of people and corporations interested

⁸⁷ Letter, February 18, 1882, as quoted in *Address of Retiring President Allen W.T. Bottomley at the Fiftieth Annual Meeting of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association* (Honolulu: Advertiser Publishing Co., 1930), 3.

⁸⁸ MacLennan, *Sovereign Sugar*, 228.

⁸⁹ Report of the Trustees of the Planters’ Labor and Supply Company, first annual meeting, October 1882, quoted in A. R. Grammer, “A History of the Experiment Station of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association 1895-1945,” *The Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Record* 51 (1947): 179.

⁹⁰ MacLennan, *Sovereign Sugar: Industry and Environment in Hawaii*, 230.

⁹¹ “Planters of Kauai. A Meeting for the Organization of a Local Planters’ Association,” *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, September 1, 1883, 3; Edward D. Beechert, “Patterns of Resistance,” 49 n19, and 65; “Planters of Lauai. A meeting for the Organization of a Local Planters’ Association,” *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, September 1, 1883, 3.

⁹² MacLennan, “Plantation Capitalism,” 143.

in the sugar industry and many of the former members of the PL&S Co. naturally became members of the new organisation.

Article 1 of the HSPA's by-laws stated that it would not only be responsible for an experiment station and laboratory, but for the recruitment of labour, improvement of the sugar industry, and development of agriculture in general.⁹³ The two-tier system adopted by the PL&S Co. was replicated in the organisation of the HSPA with the experiment station responsible for research while the trustees managed labour policies, government relations and internal sugar industry affairs.⁹⁴ Chemist Walter Maxwell, formerly of the Louisiana experiment station, set up the new experiment station and began to effect a scientific approach to the growing and processing of sugar cane. The HSPA developed a worldwide reputation for the quality and benefits of its research, and the Hawai'ian sugar industry a reputation for innovation and high yield.⁹⁵ While it was mentioned that experiment station staff attended agricultural fairs, there is no indication that it or the HSPA ran them.⁹⁶

Committees were formed from the HSPA membership to address the following priorities: labour, cultivation, machinery, legislation, reciprocity, transportation, manufacture of sugar and executive business.⁹⁷ Such were the breadth of its functions that it came to "practically control the sugar industry of the Islands," determining production policies and practices, and controlling all the factors of production: land, water, labour and credit.⁹⁸ Even after indenture finished, in the absence of systemised state welfare, the HSPA implemented a welfare programme for its workers. This not only legitimised its labour system but increased the plantations' hold over their workers while mollifying them.⁹⁹

In order to maintain a tight supervision of labour matters, the HSPA organised branch associations or affiliated existing planter associations on each island. It worked closely with the branches in order to establish consistent pay strategies and rules and incentive

⁹³ *By-Laws of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association* (Honolulu: Hawaiian Gazette Co. Print., 1895), 3.

⁹⁴ MacLennan, *Sovereign Sugar*, 231, 240.

⁹⁵ MacLennan, *Sovereign Sugar*, 246.

⁹⁶ *The Hawaiian Annual: The Reference Book of Hawaii* (Honolulu: Thos. G. Thrum, 1918), 132-35.

⁹⁷ H.P. Agee, "A Brief History of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association," *Hawaiian Annual* (1935): 72.

⁹⁸ "Appendix No. 3. The Sugar Industry of the Hawaiian Islands." Commonwealth Government, *Minutes of Evidence. Australia Royal Commission on the Sugar Industry*, 1911; MacLennan, "Plantation Capitalism," 259.

⁹⁹ MacLennan, "Plantation Capitalism," 192, 209.

systems for the now free labour force.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, tensions persisted because of the unequal relationship between workers and plantation owners.¹⁰¹ The HSPA assumed the role of intermediary and enforcer in the resolution of tensions while at the same time striving to adhere to the standards set for securing and employing labour. But as Beechert observed, the HSPA was “able to manipulate the full power of local, territorial, and ... national, government [bodies]” and workers were frequently no match in the contest.¹⁰²

What is particularly to be noted of this association is that the managers of the agencies or factors, including those referred to as the Big Five, were the trustees and it was they who determined the policies to be pursued by the association. The president’s position rotated amongst the principals of the Big Five.¹⁰³ The association’s publication, the *Hawaiian Planters’ Record*, replaced the *Planters’ Monthly* and recorded the priorities and concerns of the HSPA which ranged from the effects of deforestation, the demands and problems of mono-crop production, soil chemistry, biological pest control, irrigation, cultivation techniques and labour type and procurement.

In the period 1872 to 1914, American missionaries predominated amongst the first planters. They brought with them the American tradition of forming associations for the benefits of united action. Galvanised into cooperation by physical isolation, and the need to secure assured markets and a reliable large supply, the planters and factors formed associations. That the initial associations foundered was consistent with Salisbury’s theory that associations formed in times of stress tended to lose momentum once solutions had been brokered to the groups’ advantage.¹⁰⁴ The preeminent association was the HSPA.¹⁰⁵ It survived because its members were drawn from the Big Five and because it controlled every aspect of sugar production; and it secured for itself a preeminent reputation globally for rural extension, experimentation and innovation.

¹⁰⁰ Carol A. MacLennan, “Notes and Queries. Plantation Payday: A Research Note,” *Hawaiian Journal of History* 42 (2008): 280-82, accessed November 8, 2016, <https://www.hawaiianhistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/HJH42MacLennan.pdf>.

¹⁰¹ Edward D. Beechert, “Labour Relations in the Hawaiian Sugar Industry, 1850-1937” in *Crisis and Change in the International Economy 1860-1914*, ed. Bill Albert and Adrian Graves (Norwich: University of East Anglia, 1984), 281.

¹⁰² Beechert, “Labour Relations,” 290.

¹⁰³ Yayoi Kurita, “Employers’ Organization in Hawaii,” *Labor Law Journal* 4 (1953): 281-82.

¹⁰⁴ Salisbury, “An Exchange Theory,” 5.

¹⁰⁵ Which still exists today but with a change of name to the Hawaii Agriculture Research Center (HARC). With the demise of the sugar industry the Centre now focuses on the urgent need to identify and promote alternative agricultural crops.

The members of the associations were the social, economic and political elite, with a pedigree that traced their lineage back to missionary origins. They used their association to not only create a competitive, efficient industry but to consolidate their dominance across every aspect of Hawai'ian life with ruthless effect. There was no viable space in the industry for those former indentured labourers of varying nationalities, including those from China, Japan and Portugal, to be a significant independent small grower group. With the conduct of their farms circumscribed by the plantation management who took their cane, and divided as a class by race and nationality, they were not a homogenous group and did not form grower associations before 1914.

THE SUGAR ASSOCIATIONS OF LOUISIANA: EXPRESSIONS OF THE AMERICAN AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS

Louisiana too, as a territory of the United States, reflected that society's strong habit of association. Louisiana, though, inherited associative traditions from both Britain and France. In the early 1800s planters began to establish associations in Louisiana for mutual benefit. Henry Rightor, in his *Standard History of New Orleans, Louisiana* (1900), listed a dazzling number of associations initiated in the city of New Orleans alone, ranging across a wide breadth of interests.¹⁰⁶ Of the Louisiana sugar industry he observed that "one is forced to emphasize the great good accomplished by the various organizations working in its interests."¹⁰⁷ The interests that those organisations served were those of the planter elite; small sugar farmers were marginalised and failed to form viable representative associations.

The Consolidated Association of Planters of Louisiana (L'Association Consolidee des cultivateurs de la Louisiane) was an early example of planters associating for mutual benefit.¹⁰⁸ It was a land bank created by an act of the Louisiana Legislature in 1827, designed to enable sugar planters to secure credit to purchase slaves or improve their

¹⁰⁶ Henry Rightor, *Standard History of New Orleans, Louisiana, Giving a Description of the Natural Advantages, Natural History in Regard to the Flora and Birds, settlement, Indians, Creoles, Municipal and Military History, Mercantile and Commercial Interests, Banking, Transportation, Struggles against High Water, the Press, Educational, Literature and Art, the Churches, Old Burying Grounds, Bench and Bar, Medical, Public and Charitable Institutions, the Carnival, Amusements, Clubs, Societies, Associations, Etc.* (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1900).

¹⁰⁷ Rightor, *Standard History*, 682.

¹⁰⁸ Butler, *Down Among the Sugar Cane*, 173.

properties.¹⁰⁹ Another early experiment in association was the Agricultural and Mechanical Association of Louisiana founded in 1842. It endeavoured to promote and reward mills that were producing good sugar using the latest inventions.¹¹⁰ However, it foundered on a lack of unity of purpose between agriculturists and mechanics, planter complacency and the lack of official sanctioning by the Louisiana legislature.¹¹¹ Despite this initial flowering, agricultural associations were not a significant feature of pre-Civil War Louisiana. Historian Nathan Buman suggested that though planters of different ethnicity—French, Spanish, Anglo-American and Afro-American—practised similar plantation management methods, “the ethnic split” prevented unity of purpose.¹¹²

The sugar plantocracy managed to continue to be an elite society despite the upheaval caused by the Civil War, but it was clear to those planters with foresight that, as historian Joseph P. Reidy put it, “an appropriate survival strategy” was needed.¹¹³ Heitman and Sitterson both acknowledged that the key to the modernisation of the Louisiana sugar industry was organisation.¹¹⁴ The crisis led to the formation of the Louisiana Sugar Planters’ Association (LSPA) in 1870, in what turned out to be an abortive first attempt. The president of the inaugural executive committee was Duncan F. Kenner of the Kenner family, one of the earliest Anglo-American settlers to plant sugar upriver from New Orleans.¹¹⁵ Twenty-four sugar planters took up the momentum and formed the Teche Planters' Club in 1876. The club aimed to improve agricultural practices while also “elevating agriculture to the standard of a *science* and *Profession*.”¹¹⁶ The latter objects echoed those of gentlemen farmers forming associations in the British countryside. They

¹⁰⁹ Judy Bolton, e-mail message to author, 7 January 2004, regarding Consolidated Association of Planters of Louisiana papers held in the special collections at the Louisiana State University Libraries. “Consolidated Association of Planters of Louisiana,” LSU Libraries Special Collections, accessed September 29, 2016, <http://lib.lsu.edu/special/manuscripts/guides/consolidated-association-planters-louisiana-0>; Rightor, *Standard History*, 587. The record of that legislation can be found in *Journal du Senat Durant La Premiere Session de la Neuvieme Legislature de L'etat de la Louisiane* (Nouvelle-Orleans: John Gibson, 1828), 49-51.

¹¹⁰ Rightor, *Standard History*, 669, 682-83.

¹¹¹ “Legislature of Louisiana, Senate, January 4,” *Courrier de la Louisiane*, January 4, 1844, 4 and *Journal of the Senate Second Session of the Sixteenth Legislature of Louisiana* (New Orleans: Alexander C. Bullitt, 1844), 7.

¹¹² Buman, “Two Histories, One Future,” 273.

¹¹³ Joseph P. Reidy, “Mules and Machines and Men: Field Labor on Louisiana Sugar Plantations, 1887-1915,” *Agricultural History* 72 (1998): 184, accessed May 5, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3744378>.

¹¹⁴ Heitman, *Modernization*, 3; Sitterson, *Sugar Country*, 253.

¹¹⁵ Buman, “Two Histories, One Future,” 33.

¹¹⁶ Heitman, *Modernization*, 72.

met monthly to discuss a wide range of topics including procurement of labour, cane fertilisers and animal husbandry.

In November 1877 a group of prominent and wealthy sugar planters based in New Orleans, including the aforementioned Duncan F. Kenner, reformed the LSPA.¹¹⁷ The LSPA set itself a number of ambitious objectives in response to what planters, manufacturers and merchants had all identified as the two specific challenges facing Louisiana sugar planters in the post-Civil War era, namely competition from European-grown beet sugar, and the continental scientific advancement that had created that lead. Heitman noted that the LSPA resembled existing European beet sugar organisations, though he did not believe that the LSPA consciously modelled itself on those.¹¹⁸

In order to promote the application of science in the culture of cane and manufacture of sugar, the association developed alliances with government officials, engineers and scientists.¹¹⁹ While planters were also members of the Louisiana Grange movement, the planter associations, unlike the Grange, were not strictly non-partisan and endorsed candidates for public office, contributing to their campaigns.¹²⁰ By these means they were able to successfully lobby for protective tariffs and persuade the United States Department of Agriculture to investigate sugar cultivation and manufacturing problems.

The association's membership meanwhile, was urged to adopt not only sound business practices but scientific farming methods.¹²¹ It was assisted in this by the later establishment of the Louisiana Scientific and Agricultural Association, established in 1885 (followed in the same year by the sugar experiment station near New Orleans), and then the establishment of the Audubon Sugar School in 1891.¹²²

¹¹⁷ Louisiana Sugar Planters' Association Papers 1877-1917. LSU Libraries Special Collections, Mss 266, 1492. Biographical/Historical Note, 4. accessed March 3, 2018, <https://www.lib.lsu.edu/sites/default/files/sc/findaid/0266m.pdf>.

¹¹⁸ Heitman, *Modernization*, 77.

¹¹⁹ Kenneth Gravois, "History of Sugarcane Research in Louisiana," *LSUAgCenter Spring* (2012): unpaginated, accessed December 14, 2015, <http://www.lsuagcenter.com/en/communications/publications/agmag/Archive/2012/Spring/History-of-Sugarcane-Research-in-Louisiana.htm>.

¹²⁰ Oregon State Grange, "What is the Grange?", accessed December, 15, 2015, <http://orange.org/what-is-the-grange/>.

¹²¹ de Jong, *A Different Day*, 22.

¹²² Rightor, *Standard History*, 681-82, 684.

The LSPA quickly grew in size and significance. Parish branches were formed, the Teche Planters' Club merging with one of those regional branches.¹²³ The most active was the Ascension Branch Sugar Planters' Association (ABSPA). Unlike the LSPA which had a scientific and technical focus, the ABSPA gave neighbouring planters an opportunity to socialise and discuss politics and labour problems. By 1883 the LSPA already had 200 members, though not all large planters joined and those that did were the wealthiest and largest landholders and sugar manufacturers.¹²⁴ In 1884 the LSPA gained control of marketing mechanisms and in 1885 opened the Louisiana Sugar Exchange in New Orleans for the trade of sugar, molasses and syrup.¹²⁵ Members of the LSPA were instrumental in the formation of the Louisiana State Agricultural Society (LSAS) in 1887. Opening the first session of the society, Governor McEnery said "it is opportune, yea even a necessity for agriculture to combine."¹²⁶ Despite this pronouncement, the society was dominated by planters. Members of the Louisiana Farmers' Union, which represented the small agriculturalist, did not attend LSAS meetings or sit on the committees.¹²⁷

The LSPA promoted and rewarded invention. In 1900 it was reported to be holding in reserve a prize of \$3 500 for the invention of a mechanical cane cutter or harvester.¹²⁸ Whether the association conducted its own fair or show is unclear but sugar planters were recorded as exhibiting at annual town and city, parish, state, experiment station and world fairs.¹²⁹ The Louisiana Experiment Station too, prompted parishes to have fairs with satisfying results.¹³⁰

A weekly journal called the *Louisiana Planter and Sugar Manufacturer* advertised itself as the "official organ" of a number of sugar industry associations.¹³¹ Rightor, in his

¹²³ Heitman, *Modernization*, 253n2.

¹²⁴ "Experiment Station," *The Times-Picayune from New Orleans, Louisiana*, February 17, 1890, 7; Rightor, *Standard History*, 683-84.

¹²⁵ Rightor, *Standard History*, 682-83.

¹²⁶ Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest*, 164.

¹²⁷ Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest* 165-66.

¹²⁸ Rightor, *Standard History*, 671.

¹²⁹ *Sixteenth Annual Report of the Agricultural Experiment Stations* (Baton Rouge: The Times. The Official Journal of Louisiana, 1904), 17, accessed November 12, 2016, https://archive.org/stream/annualreportofag1896loui/annualreportofag1896loui_djvu.txt.

¹³⁰ *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Agricultural Experiment Stations* (Baton Rouge: The Times. The Official Journal of Louisiana 1906) 25-6 accessed November 12, 2016, https://archive.org/stream/annualreportofag1896loui/annualreportofag1896loui_djvu.txt.

¹³¹ *The Louisiana Sugar Planter and Sugar Manufacturer. A Weekly Newspaper Devoted to the Sugar, Rice and Other Agricultural Industries of Louisiana*, May 20, 1899, 1.

effusive way, suggested that the journal was a leader in agricultural journalism with a readership that spanned “every sugar country.”¹³² It is true that articles from that journal were republished as far afield as Australia. He attributed its success to its editor, none other than a founding LSPA member, John Dymond. Other journals were the *Louisiana Sugar-Bowl* (later the *Sugar Planters’ Journal*) published in both English and French and the *Sugar Bowl and Farm Journal*.¹³³

Another planters’ and manufacturers’ association, the American Sugar Growers’ Association (ASGA), was formed in Louisiana in 1896. It came about after a partisan split within the LSPA, motivated by a lack of political consensus and disagreement over tariff reductions in the 1890s.¹³⁴ With the fragmentation of the membership, the LSPA became little more than a social club.¹³⁵ The ASGA was founded with the mandate to secure favourable tariff legislation, and continued with the promotion of scientific and technical ideas with particular emphasis on the mechanisation of field processes. Members of the ASGA were levied 10 cents per 1 000 pounds of sugar produced, the monies raised used to finance activities of the association.¹³⁶

Agricultural historian Roy V. Scott noted that across America, after the early 1890s, many farmers turned away from political agitation to improving their farms’ productivity and efficiency.¹³⁷ He attributed the lull in this period to the effective outreach work of experiment stations, agricultural colleges, and the United States Department of Agriculture, together with enlarged expenditure by state legislatures.¹³⁸ Taylor observed that there was comparatively more political agitation in the sugar belt by planters in the same period compared to other agriculturalists across the States. He explained this by noting that despite the increasing commercialisation of agricultural activity, farmers as

¹³² Rightor, *Standard History*, 683-84.

¹³³ “Serial titles taken from The Literature of the Agricultural Sciences, Wallace C. Olsen, series editor,” accessed October 14, 2106, <http://www.crl.edu/sites/default/files/d6/attachments/pages/CHLA%20title%20list.pdf>.

¹³⁴ The reductions saw the repeal of federal tariff legislation and the Democratic party, which had previously advocated a safeguarding of protection, switching from advocating a sugar tariff to supporting duty-free sugar.

¹³⁵ John Alfred Heitman, “Organization as Power: The Louisiana Sugar Planters’ Association and the Creation of Scientific and Technical Institutions, 1877-1910,” *Louisiana History* 27 (1986): 291-93.

¹³⁶ Sitterson, *Sugar Country*, 257.

¹³⁷ Roy V. Scott, “Farmers’ Institutes in Louisiana, 1897-1906,” *Journal of Southern History* 25 (1959): 76, accessed March 7, 2018, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2954480.77>; *Ninth Annual Report of the Agricultural Experiment Stations* (Baton Rouge: Truth Book and Job Office, 1897), 5, accessed November 12, 2016, https://archive.org/stream/annualreportofag1896loui/annualreportofag1896loui_djvu.txt.

¹³⁸ Scott, “Farmers’ Institutes.”

distinct from planters were largely self-sufficient and not as preoccupied with a commercial or market regime.¹³⁹ Sugar planters on the other hand, relied on protection from market competition, economic return on their high capital investment in mills, and on maintaining the status quo when it came to land distribution and their own political, social and economic dominance. However, as Galloway pointed out, that protection had to be renegotiated at each new government term so that “lobbying Washington became a constant preoccupation of planter organizations.”¹⁴⁰

Tenant sugar farmers were unlikely to have been forming agricultural associations in Louisiana although there is debate on the matter. Historian John V. Baiamonte, Jr. and historian William Ivy Hair drew very different conclusions. Baiamonte claimed that no major farmer organisations came into being in Louisiana from the 1880s through to the Great Depression.¹⁴¹ Hair, on the other hand, described a significant burgeoning of farmers’ clubs, particularly formed by dirt farmers and small agriculturalists in Louisiana from 1881 onwards.¹⁴² Scott too, acknowledged the national farmer institute movement in Louisiana which came about from the combined efforts of the State Agricultural Society and experiment station, and the state Board of Agriculture and Immigration. The overarching aims were the promotion of agricultural education, the formation of farmers’ clubs and the improvement of farming practices.¹⁴³

According to Hair a similar flowering of farmers’ clubs did not occur in the sugar belt because the statewide agricultural organisations, dominated by the planters, “lacked either the inclination or the potency to disturb the status quo.”¹⁴⁴ It could also be speculated that the drudgery of labour and tenancy, and the control exerted by the landowners (who were often the magistrates and law enforcers), circumscribed the small farmers’ lives and curbed association, even making it dangerous to associate, particularly where their objects were considered by the landowners to be subversive.

In the Louisiana sugar belt, over the period 1872 to 1914, those who formed associations

¹³⁹ Taylor, “Farmers’ Organizations,” 131.

¹⁴⁰ Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry*, 192.

¹⁴¹ Baiamonte, “The Louisiana Farmers’ Protective Union,” 76, accessed January 11, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org.elibrary.jcu.edu.au/stable/4233903>.

¹⁴² Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest*, 163.

¹⁴³ Scott, “Farmers’ Institutes,” 73, 79.

¹⁴⁴ Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest*, 163.

and benefitted most from the “great good accomplished” were the planters.¹⁴⁵ This impression is reinforced by the reappearance of names from the sugar industry elite over generations and across associations, and the breadth of public roles they held, either simultaneously or over time.¹⁴⁶ This elite generated a widely-read literary output; encouraged agricultural innovation; actively promoted avenues of rural extension; and used their social status and economic strength to attract political favour. Alternatively, small sugar farmers were not numerous nor important to Louisiana’s sugar production. Small farmers growing other crops were encouraged to form associations but it would not be until the 1930s that small sugar farmers, including Afro-American farmers, would choose to form associations in the sugar belt to address economic inequities.¹⁴⁷

THE SUGAR ASSOCIATIONS OF BARBADOS: EXPRESSIONS OF THE BRITISH AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS

Barbados was a British colony and, with a significant number of the first planters being absentee landlords, its agricultural association movement was not only modelled on that of Britain but originated there. As in Louisiana, while planters were in a comfortable position, they did not see anything to be gained from associative action. Similarly, in Barbados, as long as the interests of the white elites of the British Caribbean and the national interests of the British government coincided, planters were successful in securing political advantages.¹⁴⁸ Therefore initially the Barbadian planters did act not as a unified group, but as individuals exploring solutions to maximise profits. They were “landlord, slaveowner, farmer, manufacturer, and merchant,” while dominating society

¹⁴⁵ Rightor, *Standard History*, 682.

¹⁴⁶ Today’s American Sugar Cane League was formed in 1922 from the inactive LSPA, the ASGA and the Producers and Manufacturers’ Protective Association. The league, a not for profit organisation, acts on behalf of the sugar cane industry in both a legislative capacity at both state and national level, and conducts research and product promotion and education. The American Sugar Cane League of USA Inc. Political Action Committee, makes contributions to federal candidates continuing a tradition of sugar planters’ associations lobbying and attempting to influence government in order to achieve desirable conditions for the sugar industry. See “American Sugar Cane League,” OpenSecrets.org. Center for Responsive Politics, accessed December 15, 2015, <https://www.opensecrets.org/pacs/lookup2.php?strID=C00081414>.

¹⁴⁷ The Afro-American farmers of Louisiana and their organisations did not receive much academic attention until scholar of race and class Greta de Jong examined the Louisiana Farmers’ Union and the African American freedom struggle of the 1930s. See Greta de Jong, “‘With the Aid of God and the F.S.A.’ The Louisiana Farmers’ Union and the African American Freedom Struggle in the New Deal Era,” *Journal of Social History* 34 (2000): 105-39.

¹⁴⁸ O’Shaughnessy, “The Formation of a Commercial Lobby,” 76.

and politics with public roles in the legislative assembly, militia and magistrate courts.¹⁴⁹ This would change as their long-time residency gave them a sense of cohesion and belonging. The locally formed associations then were exclusive, and reinforced and preserved the dominance of the planter class to the detriment of the small independent or tenant grower.

The progression from individualism to mutual cooperation is reflected in the Barbadian planters' associative movement which was two-pronged: it included membership of associations representing the wider British West Indian community and membership of their own local associations. As West Indian colonists had no direct representation in parliament, they relied on colonial agents to lobby on their behalf in order to secure those advantages. Barbados was the first of the British West Indian sugar colonies, in 1671, to send an agent to petition Westminster on behalf of the island. In 1699 a Barbadian, Sir Robert Danvers, was elected to the House of Commons, to become the first of many West Indians to secure seats in parliament.¹⁵⁰

Beginning in the 1670s in London, informal gatherings of absentee planters and merchants began occurring for both social and political benefit. The earliest examples of more formal associations were a planters' club, and an informal merchant association, both formed in the 1730s. The Planters' Club was similar to the Hawaiian Club mentioned previously. It lasted for less than 50 years and had become no more than a social group by the end. It was the threat of changing economic and social conditions that pushed merchants and planters together to associate for common purpose.

In the 1760s, a Society of West India Merchants was established and around 1772 it began to hold informal meetings driven by a programme to promote all aspects of the sugar industry. Two working groups evolved, one retaining the title of Society of West India Merchants, the other taking the name the Society of West India Planters and Merchants. Minutes of the latter organisation had been recorded separately by 1778.¹⁵¹ It was one of a number of lobby groups—comprising agents, London merchants, absentee West India

¹⁴⁹ Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 360.

¹⁵⁰ Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 72.

¹⁵¹ David Beck Ryden, *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition, 1783-1807* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 36.

planters and members of parliament with West India connections—petitioning for the islands.

By 1785 the Society of West India Planters and Merchants was a totally independent association.¹⁵² Membership was made up of the political and economic elite of the West Indies but was dominated by absentee Jamaican planters and merchants who lived in London and who took it upon themselves to lobby on behalf of all white West Indians. Such a combined group suggests cohesion, but this was not so. Many sources of tension existed including antagonism between the interest groups, between planters and merchants, between old colonies and new colonies, and between London and the colonies. These tensions were overlaid by additional ones between resident and absentee landowners, between islands, and by what has been identified as the “collective envy of all the islands towards Jamaica.”¹⁵³

The busiest period for the society was when parliament was in session, for that was when meetings were called. The society’s role went beyond conventional lobbying and included the securing of political office for society members.¹⁵⁴ The society usually conducted its business using a standing committee that coordinated the activities of various other committees. The subcommittees were appointed by the standing committee which also determined the agenda and prepared the resolutions arising from business. The standing committee instructed and dispatched lobbyists and managed the budget. Large public general meetings held in England were customary in the earlier period. Later, these were curtailed and outreach to a wider audience was then achieved by the establishment of a publishing arm in the form of a literary committee.

The interests of the society can be divided between two eras. The first was during the American Revolution when trade was restricted and the islands were under threat. The second was the period leading up to abolition of the slave trade. Publications, depositions before parliament, and direct lobbying of government ministers were used to defend the planters’ continued right to import African slaves. The society’s activities in this regard were strong up to 1807, and then went quiet after the cessation of the British slave trade with the 1807 Abolition of the Slave Trade Act. It was resuscitated in reaction to the anti-

¹⁵² O’Shaughnessy, “The Formation of a Commercial Lobby,” 80.

¹⁵³ O’Shaughnessy, “The Formation of a Commercial Lobby,” 74.

¹⁵⁴ Ryden, “The Society of West India Planters.”

slavery movement with a period of intense activity between 1830 and 1833.¹⁵⁵ During the anti-slavery period a new acting committee of elected members was created to direct the Literary Committee and form and manage parliamentary deputations. It met weekly in response to the sense of crisis. While the Barbadian planters were significant users of slave labour they were not as involved in the society in this contest as planters from other islands. Neither did they attend meetings in the numbers that others did. Ryden attributed their lack of involvement to the fact that by this time two-thirds of the Barbadian plantocracy were resident.¹⁵⁶ Barbadian Bentley Gibbs commented that they were not as involved in the crisis discussions during the anti-slavery period because they “had difficulty in seeing the implications of any change beyond the limits of their self-interest.”¹⁵⁷

Wilson observed that interest groups have more influence if, rather than effecting behaviours that are confrontational, they try to attain ‘insider’ access to ministers and civil servants.¹⁵⁸ O’Shaughnessy agreed that “‘insider’ status is the better strategy for influence.”¹⁵⁹ The Society of West India Planters and Merchants had insider status which it used to influence political decisions, but it was also compliant and avoided confrontation, clearly endeavouring not to antagonise government and therefore lose sympathy for its causes. Barbados was an exception. The Barbadian agents were opposed to the government and moreover one Barbadian was even an opposition member of the House of Commons. As O’Shaughnessy put it, “Barbados alone did not play the game and suffered accordingly.”¹⁶⁰ This did not mean that the government did not respond favourably to Barbadian demands when it suited. As O’Shaughnessy pointed out, “Lobbies frequently gain their mystique of power by apparently influencing a government which is already predisposed to act in their favour.”¹⁶¹ This is true of Barbados which was a significant source of wealth for Britain both as supplier of raw sugar and as consumer of British products. It was in the interests of the metropole to occasionally concede to demands.

¹⁵⁵ Ryden, “The Society of West India Planters.”

¹⁵⁶ Ryden, “The Society of West India Planters.”; Beachey, *The British West Indies Sugar Industry*, 126.

¹⁵⁷ Gibbs, “Establishment of the Tenantry System,” 24-25.

¹⁵⁸ Wilson, *Interest Groups*, 92.

¹⁵⁹ O’Shaughnessy, “The Formation of a Commercial Lobby,” 88.

¹⁶⁰ O’Shaughnessy, “The Formation of a Commercial Lobby,” 90.

¹⁶¹ O’Shaughnessy, “The Formation of a Commercial Lobby,” 93.

While Ryden suggested that residency made the Barbadian planters complacent about the wider West Indies' concern about the anti-slavery movement, historian F.A. Hoyos considered residency motivated an interest in cultivating the land well and cooperating with fellow planters on the island. He opined that the Barbadian planters were a "close knit group" forming local agricultural associations to promote research and experiment.¹⁶² These motives coincide with Clark's observation that the urge to form associations in the colonies was a manifestation of "The British associational world of heavy drinking, fellowship, mutual support, and personal advancement" which was "reinforced on the colonial periphery by distance, isolation, and, all too often, terrible adversity."¹⁶³ In 1839 the parish of St. Philip established a society. This was followed by several abortive attempts to form other similar district associations.¹⁶⁴ During periods of activity these associations held meetings in members' homes, conducted readings of agricultural papers, and exhibited agricultural products.¹⁶⁵ Another more enduring attempt was a general agricultural society, modelled on those of Jamaica and British Guiana. It was inaugurated on December 22, 1845.¹⁶⁶ Named the Barbados Agricultural Society (BAS), it was not until 1890 that it was given formal status by an act of parliament.¹⁶⁷

The BAS aimed to encourage the cultivation of staple crops, especially tropical ones. Premiums were awarded for innovation and excellence, and the establishment of industrial schools was encouraged.¹⁶⁸ Together with those objects it was said to aim to provide "one voice" with which to speak to government and to other farmer and non-farmer organisations.¹⁶⁹ General meetings were held each year at which there were ploughing matches and an exhibition of stock, agricultural implements and other objects of interest. The district St. Philip Society also continued to hold ploughing matches.¹⁷⁰ A

¹⁶² Hoyos, *Barbados*, 137.

¹⁶³ Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, 425.

¹⁶⁴ United Kingdom, House of Commons and Command. *Parliamentary Papers, Accounts and Papers: Colonies. West Indies and Mauritius (Immigration). Reports to the Secretary of State. Session 2* 31 May to 13 August, 1859, Vol. XX1, 76.

¹⁶⁵ Robert H. Schomburgk, *History of Barbados* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1847), 132.

¹⁶⁶ Schomburgk, *History of Barbados*, 132-33.

¹⁶⁷ Storey, "Plants, Power and Development," 112; Rebecca Porter and Jerry La Gra, *Profiles on Rural Development and Support Organizations in Barbados* (Bridgetown: IICA Office in Barbados, 1992), 8, 21.

¹⁶⁸ Schomburgk, *History of Barbados*, 133.

¹⁶⁹ Porter and La Gra, *Profiles on Rural Development*, 21. These aims are as expressed in 1992 as being 'original' but the BAS was modernised in 1974.

¹⁷⁰ Schomburgk, *History of Barbados*, 133.

monthly periodical, the *Agricultural Reporter*, and a journal, the *Agricultural Gazette and Planters' Journal*, were published and their articles reprinted as far afield as Australia.¹⁷¹ Despite these initiatives, an international observer described the Barbadian planters and their organisation in 1894 as needing “new life and vigour” and a sense of “greater union.”¹⁷²

Historian William K. Storey argued that though the Barbadian planters were never as vocal, independent or successful as their Mauritian counterparts they exhibited a significant lay knowledge of agriculture and botany.¹⁷³ It was in Barbados after all that cane growing from seedlings was first observed. There planters conducted experiments to cultivate cane from seed, but with mediocre results. Failure to interest the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew (which coordinated the colonial research gardens) in the experiments deflated the planters' enthusiasm.¹⁷⁴ In response to falling sugar prices, and concerns about the varieties of cane commonly used, the BAS embarked on renewed experimentation. In 1886 an experiment station was established by the imperial government at Dodds in response to the planters' ongoing demands for assistance to conduct experiments on the breeding of cane. The station was put under the directorship of John Redman Bovell. Both Bovell, with his lack of formal training, and the location of the station, at a boys' reformatory, aroused scepticism in the planters, yet the enterprise went on to become the centre of cane breeding research in the British Caribbean.¹⁷⁵ By 1900 there were seven subsidiary stations.¹⁷⁶

However, members of the Agricultural Society felt that they were excluded from the work of the research station. They complained that “the Society knows little, and can vouch for little, that goes on at the Station, and this is a great pity.”¹⁷⁷ Nevertheless, Bovell did exhibit his seedlings at the BAS's annual exhibition.¹⁷⁸ The BAS then went on to

¹⁷¹ Schomburgk, *History of Barbados*, 125; “Sugar Cane Planting and Sugar Making,” *Queenslander*, February 19, 1870, 5; “Phosphoric Acid in the Clarification of Cane Juice,” *Australian Town and Country Journal*, January 24, 1885, 2.

¹⁷² “The Cane Disease,” *Clarence and Richmond Examiner* May 5, 1894, 3.

¹⁷³ Storey, “Plants, Power and Development,” 112.

¹⁷⁴ Storey, “Plants, Power and Development,” 113.

¹⁷⁵ Storey, “Plants, Power and Development,” 112, 114.

¹⁷⁶ J.H. Galloway, “Botany in the Service of Empire: The Barbados Cane-Breeding Program and the Revival of the Caribbean Sugar Industry, 1880s-1930s,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 86, (1996): 687-88, accessed March 7, 2018, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2564347>.

¹⁷⁷ “Agricultural Gazette,” quoted in Storey, “Plants, Power and Development,” 114.

¹⁷⁸ Storey, “Plants, Power and Development,” 114.

endeavour, without success, to petition the imperial government to provide money to expand Dodds' research station and open another. This initiative may have been ignored because the imperial government planned to establish an imperial department of agriculture for the West Indies, with Barbados as the centre for cane breeding and agronomical studies.¹⁷⁹ This effectively centralised research and removed it from the BAS's sphere of authority. These events would suggest that the planters' united efforts were frustrated not only by their own shortcomings but by the failure of the imperial authorities to respond to the planters' agronomic needs when they were first voiced.

Social, political and economic life in Barbados from 1872 to 1914 was controlled by a minority resident planter class and it was they who formed agricultural associations. These associations succeeded in reinforcing and preserving the dominance of the planter class. The Barbadian planters formed several associations before the BAS came into existence. Its aims were the same as sugar planters' associations the world over: to encourage agriculture, to promote experimentation, and to give a united voice to planters. It used the agricultural periodical and exhibitions to reach a wider audience. In the period 1872 to 1914, the Barbadian planters were an elite white minority in a population that was predominately made up of the largely landless descendants of African slaves. There is no record of any representative association existing for, or formed by, the remnant small sugar cane growers, or the tenant growers in that period.

THE SUGAR ASSOCIATIONS OF FIJI: EXPRESSIONS OF THE BRITISH AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS

The agricultural association movement developed later in the British colony of Fiji than it did in the areas already discussed. However, it too was shaped by that of the mother society of the British Isles. Before sugar began to be grown successfully, cotton planters were forming associations for support and social contact. The first of those was formed in the Rewa district in 1867 and by 1871 there were associations in practically all the other districts. When sugar began to be grown in the early 1870s, planters turned to those associations for botanical and agricultural knowledge. The first decades of European settlement and attempts to cultivate tropical crops were trying times, for most hopeful planters knew "next to nothing about the husbandry of the sugar cane ... and other

¹⁷⁹ Storey, "Plants, Power and Development," 114, 120-21.

products of the tropics.”¹⁸⁰ On 19 December 1874, an advertisement was placed in the *Fiji Times* by the manager of the Rewa Uluicalia Planting Company. He invited his fellow planters to a meeting to be held at his residence on 2 January 1875, “for the purpose of enrolling members into the ‘Planters’ Association, and the consideration of important business.”¹⁸¹ This first attempt set the tone for the agricultural associative movement in Fiji which aimed to settle and promote a white elite as sugar planters.¹⁸²

An association, variously recorded as the Fiji Planters’ Association or the Planters’ Association of Fiji was consequently formed. Published reports detailed association business which included the encouragement of investment in sugar in Fiji, trade agreements, freight charges, road transport, and importation of suitable canes. Dissatisfaction about native land titles and access to land led the association to formulate a petition in 1879 to request an independent tribunal to address appeals by Europeans on decisions made on their land claims.¹⁸³ In that year the strength of its voice was increased with the appointment of the association’s president, J.E. Mason, to the legislative council.¹⁸⁴ There appear to have been several incarnations of this association. When it reformed in 1902 the association published, in full, its rules, constitution and by-laws providing a valuable insight into the concerns that preoccupied the planters. While several of the objects were designed to promote agriculture and other industries of the colony, the second object, which required the association “to watch over and take action in relation to any subject matter or legislation affecting them,” indicated the political nature of the association.¹⁸⁵ Membership was by ballot and was exclusively white. As was customary of associations in the British colonies, the patronage of a dignitary, in this case of the new governor, Sir Henry Moore Jackson, was secured. As the sugar industry

¹⁸⁰ A.H. Gordon, *A Year in Fiji: An Inquiry into the Botanical, Agricultural, and Economical Resources of the Colony* (London: Edward Stanford, 1881), 139.

¹⁸¹ “Advertisement. Notice,” *Fiji Times*, December 19, 1874, in John Cuthbert Potts, “Notes on the Sugar Industry of Fiji, 1869-1886.” (A compilation of extracts on the sugar industry of Fiji, transcribed from the *Fiji Times* from 1869 to 1886. The notes were gathered for a paper on the early history of Fiji’s sugar industry, which was published in the *Transactions of the Fiji Society* 7 (1959): 104-30.)

¹⁸² Claudia Knapman wrote that the idea that Fiji could be depopulated of indigenous Fijians and settled with an ongoing large-scale European migration persisted into the 1920s. European settlement was regarded as a just “destiny.” See Knapman, *White Women in Fiji*, 120

¹⁸³ T.H. Prichard, *The Land Tenure of Fiji: An Enquiry into the Correct Basis of Native Titles to Land in Fiji* (Levuka: G.L. Griffiths, 1882), 35.

¹⁸⁴ “Fiji,” *Argus*, November 4, 1879. 7.

¹⁸⁵ *Rules and Constitution of the Planters’ Association of Fiji* (Suva: G.I. Griffiths, 1903).

advanced, five branches of the Fiji Planters' Association were formed: Southern Districts, Ba, Labasa, Nadi, and Savu Savu.

The Agricultural and Industrial Association of Fiji was formed in 1887 at the instigation of the manager of the Rewa Sugar Company. Though the association was preoccupied with issues of labour, it also held exhibitions of agricultural produce.¹⁸⁶ Sugar planters were strongly represented in its membership, and Sir John Bates Thurston, Governor of Fiji from 1888 to 1897, was invited to be patron.¹⁸⁷ He had no high opinion of the planters' associations, claiming that they "never did anything for planters and were led by a ... miserable clique headed by Parr and their organ the *Fiji Times*," yet nonetheless he gave his patronage to this association.¹⁸⁸ His opinion was undoubtedly coloured by knowledge of the experiences of Governor Arthur Gordon, who had arrived in Fiji in June 1875, some five months after the Planters' Association of Fiji was formed. Throughout his administration, William Fillingham Parr was reported to have attacked the governor so persistently, with opinions "so one-sided, so injudicious, and so easy of refutation ...," and with a voice "so loud, and its roaring so continuous," that he came to be considered by the outside public, rightfully or wrongfully, "as the mouthpiece of the Fiji planters."¹⁸⁹ Governor Thurston, though, was not above replying with vigour.

In Fiji there was a voluminous reportage of planters' concerns with associations' proceedings, events, fears and opinions voiced not only in local publications but in press far afield. In 1868, before sugar was established as a viable crop, a *Fijian Weekly News & Planters Journal* was published at Levuka. Of a short duration, it was replaced by the *Fiji Times* in 1869. The *Suva Times* (formerly the *Fiji Gazette*, and later *Fiji Argus*) and *Fiji Times* (with Parr as its editor) faithfully documented sugar industry matters and the concerns of the white settler planters. The two however, as rival publications, documented events with very different bias. The Fiji Planters' Association published its

¹⁸⁶ Diane Mitchell, *A Planter's Lament*, 161.

¹⁸⁷ "Fiji Agricultural Society," *Australian Town and Country Journal*, May 14, 1887, 23, and "Our Fiji Letter," *Sydney Morning Herald*, February 20, 1888, 9. Diane Mitchell mentioned a Plantation and Agricultural Society of Fiji with its headquarters in Rewa. This was more likely to have been the Agricultural and Industrial Association. Mitchell, *A Planters' Lament*, 52-53.

¹⁸⁸ Correspondence from J. Thurston to Kew, November 20, 1888, Fiji Islands Botanic Stations 178 1860-1900, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, in Mitchell, *A Planters' Lament*, 163.

¹⁸⁹ "Fiji," *Sydney Morning Herald*, May 26, 1883, 5. An example is a pamphlet, authored "By a Colonist," and entitled *Fiji: Remarks on the Address delivered by Sir Arthur H. Gordon G.C.M.G., at the Colonial Institute, March 18, 1879* (Levuka: 1879), accessed February 17, 2017, <http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/167135>.

own *Fiji Planters' Journal* where minutes of regular monthly meetings and of executive committee meetings of the association were recorded. Its publication was financed by members' subscriptions, advertising revenue, and a subsidy of £50 each from CSR and the government.¹⁹⁰

The introduction of foreign labour was a matter of vital concern to the early associations. The need for united action regarding labour became urgent when, in late 1881, the government withdrew from the procurement of Pacific Island labour, leaving it to the individual planters to charter ships on their own cognisance. Not enthusiastic about the solution offered—the importation of Indian indentured labourers—their fears were realised when the Indians were recruited in such numbers that the white planters became a numerical minority. As a minority, they felt themselves to be in a tenuous position and took all measures to preserve and protect their interests.¹⁹¹ Despite their efforts, their numbers further declined, and the role of the planter associations diminished accordingly. This trend was intensified as CSR became the dominant miller and took sugar cane from Indian tenant farmers. CSR enforced sound agricultural practice on its Indian tenants and Fijian and white planter suppliers, and penalised those who did not comply.¹⁹² There was no place in that arrangement for farmer education by association.

The indenture system ended in 1916 and the first Indo-Fijian was nominated for the legislative council in the same year. Agricultural associations were not formed by Indian sugar growers until 1919. This does not mean that there was not associative behaviour before this. The Indian settlers formed associations that have been identified as being of three types: the cane gang, the school committee and the settlement association.¹⁹³ The earliest associations identified by name include a British Indian Association of Fiji (1911) followed by the Indian Cane Growers Association in 1919. The first, though generalist in nature, petitioned on behalf of the indentured sugar workers. Lacking electoral franchise until 1929, effective participation and lobbying were inhibited.

¹⁹⁰ "Collection DOC 455 - Fiji Planters Journal," Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, accessed November 14, 2016, <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/pambu/catalogue/index.php/fiji-planters-journal;isad>.

¹⁹¹ Robert E. Nicole, "Disturbing History: Aspects of Resistance in Early Colonial Fiji, 1874 – 1914" (PhD diss., University of Canterbury, 2006), 43n40.

¹⁹² Moynagh, *Brown or White?*, 52-64.

¹⁹³ Adrian C. Mayer, "Associations in Fiji Indian Rural Society," *American Anthropologist* 58 (1956): 97-108.

In analysing why the occasions of collective resistance taken by Indian indentured workers in Fiji were so infrequent, Indo-Fijian historian Brij V. Lal made observations about Indian migrants' associative behaviour that can be extended to Fijian Indian workers or farmers. Firstly, he identified a lack of common perceptions, interests and values. He attributed that to the diverse cultural and social backgrounds from which they originated. The traumatic recruitment journey itself fragmented traditional values, especially that of group solidarity. Indenture forged new values which stressed individual achievement and personal survival. Secondly, he identified the youthfulness of the average indentured labourer and their lack of education, status and unpreparedness for leadership, all deficiencies exacerbated by the trauma and disorientation of the journey to Fiji. Lastly, what leadership there was in their midst, was not good leadership. The *sidar*, or Indian foreman, was a henchman of the planter, and worked for the planter's goals, using dubious means to achieve compliance and the desired level of work from the indentured labourers he supervised. Once in Fiji, the physical distances between estates and the exertion of control through the breaking up of old connections and relationships by enforcing new social groupings further impeded associative behaviour.¹⁹⁴ Lal's observations substantiate the thesis of Gilbert Etienne, an authority on development economics, that the poor "are not easily 'clubbable'" due to factors which include competition, class or caste division and conflicting allegiances.¹⁹⁵

The first planter association, the Fiji Planters' Association, had similar preoccupations to planter associations elsewhere that were founded by colonising Europeans. The association was founded to promote plantation agriculture, procure suitable labour, and maintain a privileged position for white planters. By means of a voluminous publishing output it aired planters' concerns and sought to influence governors. It held exhibitions, though the most serious efforts to ensure sound agricultural practice were carried out by CSR. Political lobbying to shore up the fragile white presence in Fiji was a preoccupation. With the end of indenture, cultivation was relinquished to Indian tenant farmers. Associative tendencies within the indigenous Fijian and Indian farmer communities were complicated by disparate cultural and ethnic backgrounds and the powerful control exerted from above by an elitist miller group. This succeeded in thwarting any formation of small grower associations. Once Indian tenant farmers were 'free,' the self-protecting

¹⁹⁴ Lal, "Nonresistance," 190-93, 213.

¹⁹⁵ Gilbert Etienne as quoted in Guy Hunter, ed. *Enlisting the Small Farmer*, 16.

docility could be abandoned and, with enough unity of purpose and spurred on by vocal leaders, a local small grower associative movement emerged to challenge CSR and the government.¹⁹⁶

CONCLUSION

The impetus for associative behaviour in the countryside gathered momentum in the nineteenth century in the British Isles, the United States and on the continent. Meanwhile a similar flowering was occurring in the sugar growing areas of Brazil, Hawai'i, Louisiana, Barbados and Fiji. In all regions the interest in agricultural improvement and research began with the elite and filtered down to the small landowning farmers or tenants, reaching those with varying degrees of success and benefit. While landowners formed agricultural associations, governments too, as in Portugal, could impose agricultural associations on rural areas. Print was used to diffuse agricultural information. This generated a lively exchange not only within home societies, colonies and territories, but between them. In recognition that many farmers were illiterate, associations held exhibitions, shows or fairs to introduce innovation and encourage excellence. To this end associations also promoted the establishment of rural schools and experimental farms. Most claimed that it was not their object to participate in overt political activities; nevertheless, they found much of their effort directed towards political lobbying in order to influence public policy in their favour.

Neither the predominance of plantation agriculture conducted by large landholders, companies, tenant farmers, nor the insignificant numbers of independent, small landholder populations in Brazil, Hawai'i, Louisiana, Barbados and Fiji in the years 1872 to 1914, were conducive to volunteer organisation by smaller growers. In every case the planter was white and owned large tracts of land. The type of agricultural associations that were typical in that period were unabashedly white planter associations that originated in times of crisis such as the end of bonded labour, market challenges from beet sugar, challenges from more technologically advanced competitors, and threat from plant disease. The associations strove to preserve the power and position of the planter class in those areas. The following chapter will examine how the worldwide agricultural

¹⁹⁶ Lal, "Nonresistance," 190-93, 213; K.L. Gillion, *The Fiji Indians: Challenge to European Dominance 1920-1946* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1977), 50-51; Ali, *Plantation to Politics*, 74-77.

association movement manifested in Australia. The way that it developed in the tropical north Queensland plantation district of the Herbert River Valley will be given particular scrutiny.

CHAPTER 4

THE PLANTERS OF THE HERBERT RIVER VALLEY AND THEIR AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS

The predominance of plantation agriculture conducted by large landholders, companies, tenant farmers or insignificant numbers of independent landholders (in Brazil, Hawai'i, Louisiana, Barbados and Fiji) in the years 1872 to 1914 was not conducive to volunteer organisation by smaller growers. In those areas it was the planter class that established agricultural associations and it used those associations to preserve its own power and position. The first associations formed were the generalist associations modelled on home country antecedents. Similarly, the first agricultural associations in Australia were generalist associations which looked to those of the British Isles as standards to aspire to. However, with crop specialisation, farmers of a particular crop had a focused collective need to access technical information and to keep their industry in the minds of legislators. To achieve their objectives, they formed commodity associations. One industry that had a particularly strong focused associative movement was sugar.

Both generalist and commodity agricultural associations were global, multi-faceted organisations; historian Janice Wegner identified their roles as educational, experimental, political and industrial.¹ In Australia, as elsewhere, they provided agriculturalists with the means to be improvers and innovators, and to speak with a collective voice. However, within the associative impulse in Australia there were social dichotomies between large landowner and tenant, squatter and crop farmer, and planter and small farmer. There were also tensions and dissension over the proper role of agricultural associations, resulting in a blurring of lines between agricultural associations, pastoral and agricultural associations, farmers unions, and farmers and settlers' associations. The agricultural association, in both its improving and political roles, embodied the fault lines that divided and preoccupied opposing groups as they negotiated their common ground, the land. This chapter will examine how the worldwide agricultural association movement was initiated first in wider Australia, and then by the sugar planters on the Herbert River in tropical north Queensland.

¹ Wegner, "Hinchinbrook," 167.

THE ORIGINS

As a colony of Britain, Australia inherited British cultural traditions. Amongst those traditions was the agricultural association and its associated undertakings. Economist Geoff Raby suggested that the associations' focus on applied research, with its potential for short-term practical benefits and improved commercial returns, rather than generalist theoretical research, might have appealed to small farmers with few resources and little leisure.² As in England, private individuals who considered themselves gentry spearheaded the associative movement. The purpose and membership of those associations were similar not only to each other but to associations in the British Isles and members attempted to embody the mental and moral improvement traditions of those British societies.³

The first agricultural association in the Australian colonies was not formed until 30 years after the first European settlement. Initial efforts to form agricultural associations were thwarted by the authoritative powers of the colonial governor which extended to the right to grant permission, or otherwise, for the establishment of associations. Governor Lachlan Macquarie frustrated the first attempt to establish an agricultural association around 1819, because he objected to the fact that admission to membership by ballot might exclude convict farmers.⁴ Governor Brisbane succeeded Macquarie, assuming the position of governor of the NSW colony in December 1821. As an amateur astronomer, fellow of the Royal Society of London, and president of the Philosophical Society of Australasia, he favoured the formation of agricultural associations, and they began forming immediately after his appointment. Raby estimated that in southeast Australia by the late 1850s, few farming or pastoral districts did not have an agricultural association.⁵ This gives some idea of the value that newly-settled communities put on those associations. The years between 1875 and 1900 saw a burst of associative behavior

² Raby, *Making Rural Australia*, 115.

³ Michael White, "Agricultural Societies," 4, accessed November 8, 2016, doi: 10.1080/004676000284463.

⁴ John Thomas Bigge, *Report of the Commissioner of Inquiry on the State of Agriculture and Trade in the Colony of New South Wales*, 151; John Ritchie, *The Evidence to the Bigge Reports: New South Wales under Governor Macquarie*, vol. 1 (Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1971), 88-90.

⁵ Raby, *Making Rural Australia*, 127-28.

which corresponds with the opening of agricultural land (including land in the tropics) to yeoman farmers on favourable terms by the colonial governments.⁶

Table 2: Founding Agricultural Association Australia

FOUNDING ASSOCIATION	COLONY	FOUNDING YEAR	LAST YEAR TO FUNCTION (CIRCA*)
Van Diemen's Land Agricultural Society	TASMANIA	1822	1826
Agricultural Society of New South Wales in Sydney	NEW SOUTH WALES	1822	1836
Western Australian Agricultural Society	WEST AUSTRALIA	1831	*1846
South Australian Agricultural Society	SOUTH AUSTRALIA	1838	*1842
Australia Felix Pastoral and Agricultural Society	VICTORIA	1840	1842 alternatively 1875
Northern Districts' Agricultural and Pastoral Association (later referred to as the Moreton Bay Agricultural Society)	QUEENSLAND	1854	*1854
Northern Territory Agricultural Association	NORTHERN TERRITORY	1895	*1895

In the more temperate climate of NSW several production modes for sugar were practised. From 1868 CSR took the initiative there and established central mills. As a result, sugar grown by white tenant and independent farmers prevailed. In contrast, once the colony of Queensland was opened up to European settlement, there was an expectation from the imperial government that tropical plants that could be successfully grown as cash crops on plantations would be identified and then cultivated. Therefore, plantations were the dominant mode of production in Queensland and in 1885 the number of plantations reached a maximum of 102.⁷ This occurred because Queensland had a more liberal land policy, freedom to use indentured coloured labour, and an absence of local capital coupled with access to metropole capital. In addition, small selectors were deterred by the lack of an established transportation network and the small number of surveyed towns and ports. As a result, Queensland had fewer settlers with “petit

⁶ Graham, *The Formation of the Australian Country Parties*, 47. See the comments regarding European settlement, agricultural communities, group awareness and wheat farming in Graham, 31. See also Bruce R. Davidson, *European Farming in Australia: An Economic History of Australian Farming* (Amsterdam; New York: Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company, 1981) for a discussion of the challenges of establishing small farming in Australia.

⁷ Griggs, *Global Industry, Local Innovation*, 75, table 6.1.

bourgeoisie” aspirations to contest the plantation and its authoritarian social structure.⁸ Furthermore, in NSW and southern Queensland the propensity for monoculture was less than in the tropical north. Farmers could small crop there more reliably. The different demographics and scope of agricultural pursuits meant that in southern Queensland and NSW small selectors appear to have been the founders of the first agricultural associations, whether generalist or sugar.

Within 45 years of the formation of the first agricultural association in the Australian colonies, the Van Diemen’s Land Agricultural Society, the first sugar industry associations were formed on the northern rivers of NSW. Their names—the Clarence River Sugar Growers’ Association (1867) and the Richmond River Sugar Planters’ Association (1868) are ambiguous. Though the latter used the name ‘planter,’ newspaper reports attest to it being formed by farmers.⁹ The use of the word ‘planter’ was most likely an associative reflex because the farmers were experimenting with the planting of sugar, a plantation crop.

With the growing of plantation crops such as cotton and sugar, the word ‘planter’ began to appear in the vernacular. For a short period in Australia the two words, ‘planter’ and ‘farmer,’ were used interchangeably and indicated the crop grown, rather than a size of holding or a particular social standing. However, in actual fact, planters and small sugar farmers formed separate associations, and the way those associations were named (including subsequent name changes) indicates change in membership and acknowledgement of prevailing production systems. Once farmers began to form associations of their own, they sported a varied nomenclature even substituting cane growers for farmers and so disassociating themselves from other agriculturalists.

Associations for sugar farmers and planters made their first appearances in the colonies of NSW and Queensland in the same year. In southeast Queensland there was the East Moreton Farmers’ Association (1867) and the Wide Bay Farmers' and Planters’ Association (1867). By 1872, people who genuinely aspired to be planters like the Hon.

⁸ Higman, “Sugar Plantations and Yeoman Farming,” 718-19, accessed February 22, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2561714>.

⁹ “Lower Richmond River,” *Clarence and Richmond Examiner and New England Advertiser*, August 11, 1868, 2.

Table 3: Founding Sugar Association

NAME OF FOUNDING ASSOCIATION (WITH A SUGAR FOCUS)	SUGAR DISTRICT	FOUNDING YEAR (CIRCA*)	LAST YEAR TO FUNCTION (CIRCA*)
NEW SOUTH WALES			
Clarence River Sugar Growers' Association	Clarence River NORTHERN NEW SOUTH WALES	1867	-
Richmond River Sugar Planters' Association	Richmond River NORTHERN NEW SOUTH WALES	1868	1868
Planters' Association	Tweed River NORTHERN NEW SOUTH WALES	1874	-
SOUTH QUEENSLAND			
East Moreton Farmers' Association	East Morton QUEENSLAND	1867	1868*
Wide Bay Farmers' and Planters' Association	Mary River QUEENSLAND	1867	1885*
Southern Queensland Agricultural Society	Logan and Albert Rivers QUEENSLAND	1872	-
Maryborough Planters' Association →Maryborough Planters and Farmers' Association	Maryborough QUEENSLAND	1872* -	Still extant in 1889 -
Bundaberg Planters' Association →Bundaberg Planters' and Farmers' Association	Bundaberg QUEENSLAND	1887 1892 (reconstitution) 1898	1896 -
CENTRAL QUEENSLAND			
Mackay Planters' Association →Mackay Planters and Farmers' Association)	Mackay QUEENSLAND	1875 1882	1897 (merged with Pioneer River Farmers' and Graziers' Association)
Pioneer River Farmers' Association →Pioneer River Farmers and Graziers' Association)	Pioneer River QUEENSLAND	1888	1915 (became a Show Association)
Proserpine Farmers and Settlers' Association	Proserpine QUEENSLAND	1896	1911*
Lower Burdekin Farmers' Association	Ayr	1892?	1952*
Inkerman Farmers' and Graziers' Association	Burdekin River Delta QUEENSLAND	1912	Absorbed into Queensland Cane Growers' Council created 1926

Claudius Buchanan Wish, MLC, owner of Oaklands Plantation, Caboolture, were forming their own associations. He was chairman of a very short-lived Queensland Planters' Association, Brisbane (1872).¹⁰ This was followed by the Maryborough Planters' Association in Maryborough and then by the Mackay Planters' Association (MPA) in 1875, in what would often be referred to as the "Aristocratic corner of Queensland," Mackay, in central Queensland.¹¹

Elsewhere in Australia, the earliest examples of agricultural association were generalist associations formed by squatters. In the sugar plantation districts of central and northern tropical Queensland the first sugar associations tended to be founded by planters. Agronomist K.P. Barley commented that when the colonists moved beyond the immediate pressure of finding ways to meet "day to day needs," they found space in their workaday lives to recreate "the social forms of their old environment."¹² Those social forms included not only the agricultural associations but other traditional practices, such as the cattle show, the fair and the ploughing match. Institutional arrangements replicated those of either home country or local metropolitan antecedents.¹³ Although the founding impetus of the first associations may have come from the squatters and planters, as in other Australian colonies, the momentum of the associative movement was provided by the farmer who self-consciously replicated those traditional practices and institutional arrangements. Once small selectors embarked on sugar cane cultivation and formed associations in the tropics, the hegemony of the planters began to be challenged.

THE FOUNDING OBJECTS: IMPROVEMENT AND POLITICAL LOBBYING

As with the generalist associations across the Australian colonies the sugar industry associations engaged in both farmer education and political lobbying. The exhibition or show was a popular way to promote farming skills and innovation. When the first association to advance the cultivation of sugar was formed in the Clarence River district in 1867 there had just been formed an organisation called the Clarence Pastoral, Agricultural and Horticultural Association. It conducted ploughing matches and

¹⁰ Theophilus P. Pugh, *Pugh's Almanac and Directory* (Brisbane: Thorne and Greenwell, 1872), 115.

¹¹ Moore, "Whips and Rum Swizzles," 122.

¹² K.P. Barley, "A History of Two Victorian Farmers' Organizations: The Royal Agricultural Society and The Chamber of Agriculture" (M. Agr. Sc. thesis, University of Melbourne, 1950).

¹³ Tribe and Peel, "Innovation, Science and Farmer," 9, online version 2000 accessed January 23, 2017, <http://www.austehc.unimelb.edu.au/tia/009.html>.

exhibitions of local produce including sugar.¹⁴ One hundred people attended the first meeting of the Clarence River Sugar Growers' Association. By the end of the meeting 40 had joined up and paid their membership of 5s., indicating that those individuals believed a dedicated sugar growers' association could meet their needs in a way the Pastoral, Agricultural and Horticultural Association could not.¹⁵ This is consistent with what was happening across the Australian colonies at the time. The farmer associations and the agricultural and pastoral associations with their shows were beginning to part ways and farmer associations' rules did not necessarily include the obligation to conduct shows.

Pastoral and agricultural associations and agricultural associations would compete for the same audience if both conducted shows. Moreover, as more shows were conducted, the quality deteriorated and the emphasis changed from rural extension to entertainment.¹⁶ As a result, agricultural associations tended to abandon the conduct of a show and look to other means to help farmers access agricultural information. Political lobbying for rural extension facilities such as agricultural schools and experimental farms became a strategic focus of the associations. Lectures by local and visiting experts, the public reading of agricultural literature, membership of an acclimatization society, liaising with that body and the botanical gardens, the setting up of cooperatives to access the latest machinery and most appropriate fertilisers, formulating district wide schemes to eradicate pests, and attending agricultural conferences were all used by the associations to assist their members access rural extension.

It was customary across the Australian colonies for agricultural associations to seek the patronage of members of legislative councils or assemblies. It was also usual for particularly capable individuals to take on dual roles as members of associations and legislative bodies. The political nature of generalist agricultural associations has been examined by historians Michael White and Brian K. de Garis. White opined that agricultural associations were at the centre of nearly every controversy in the developing colonies.¹⁷ De Garis, writing of Western Australia (WA), went so far as to suggest that of all the voluntary organisations in the first decades of European settlement there, the

¹⁴ "Clarence Agricultural Association," *Clarence and Richmond Examiner and New England Advertiser*, September 25, 1866, 2.

¹⁵ "New South Wales," *Brisbane Courier*, August 23, 1867, 3.

¹⁶ Richard Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid: A Social and Cultural History of Rural Australia* (Freemantle: Curtin University Books, 2005), 158-59.

¹⁷ White, "Agricultural Societies," 4.

agricultural associations were the most important “politically.”¹⁸ Both historians emphasise the political nature of those early associations. In the formative years, before non-official members could sit on the Western Australian Legislative Council, associations were made up of the wealthier, powerful landholders who could see themselves as virtual alternative ‘parliaments’.¹⁹ In the colonies, the most effective way of gaining the ear of government before responsible self-government was instituted, was to ask a member of the council to be a patron of an association. With self-government, association members recognised as “local opinion leaders” (those who by education, inclination and reputation were the most qualified), were encouraged by their communities to put themselves forward for parliamentary positions. Because of the small population base from which to draw willing participants, invariably influential individuals were members of the associations and held parliamentary positions.²⁰

In the tropical sugar belt, prominent planters continued to wield the same sort of political influence as the wealthy pastoralists had done before them in the other colonies. Mackay Planters and Farmers’ Association (MPFA) was one planters’ association that made good use of its connections. It addressed numerous petitions both to parliament and to the colonial secretary, while more powerful and connected planters wrote letters directly to the Earl of Derby, secretary of state for the colonies. Others went so far as to visit England, or persuaded influential friends to speak on their behalf in the British Houses of Parliament. The more connected planters included Sir John Bennet-Lawes, a wealthy English baronet, agricultural investor and an absentee landlord of several properties in the Mackay area; John Ewen Davidson, planter, miller and community leader who was also a member of the association; and Henry Ling Roth, author of *A Report on the Sugar Industry of Queensland*, and renowned anthropologist, author and museum curator.²¹ With such social standing and connections, and having the ear of British Member of Parliament Hon. Harold Finch Hatton, the Mackay planters seemed a force to be reckoned with. Zoë Laidlaw, writing of colonial lobbyists and pressure groups, suggested that the exploitation of such connections was typical. They strove to effect favourable outcomes

¹⁸ De Garis, “Political Tutelage,” 313.

¹⁹ De Garis, “Political Tutelage,” 313.

²⁰ Geoffrey R. Bartlett, “Political Organization and Society in Victoria 1864-1883” (PhD diss., Australian National University, 1964), 316-17.

²¹ Honorary secretary of the Association from 1881 to 1884. See Roth, *A Report on the Sugar Industry in Queensland*.

by developing networks and using either well-connected metropolitan representatives or colonial expatriates to argue their causes.²²

There was a very practical reason why the pastoral and agricultural associations and agricultural associations might develop as separate entities in the tropics. The growing of sugar on plantations in the tropical north presented growers with enormous challenges: labour procurement, land distribution, land leasing and purchasing obligations, and transport and communication requirements. But, given that the planters were complying with imperial imperatives to garrison a strategic defence outpost and produce cash crops for economic development, they expected some political concessions. As a result, there was more emphasis on engaging in political lobbying than there was on staging shows or ploughing matches. Small associations, as political scientist L.F. Crisp observed, also acted as pressure groups, and as such served as intermediaries between the individual and the processes of government, helping to develop a collective consciousness.²³ Planter associations and small farmer associations alike, therefore, showed little propensity for (or success at) conducting shows, and their objects could be transparently political. The decades long contretemps, between planters' and farmers' associations on one side and the wider public and the government on the other, over the use of indentured labour, and the central mill debate and negotiations, were all unabashedly conducted in the political arena using every petitioners' tool available.

For over 60 years, before their memberships were absorbed by local branches of statutory bodies, the planter and small sugar industry associations, as quasi-pressure groups, served as intermediaries between the individual and the processes of government, and helped to secure satisfactory and enduring arrangements for the sugar industry. Ironically, some agricultural associations latterly reinvented themselves as pastoral and agricultural associations when their lobbying roles were assumed by the statutory primary producer bodies.

Associations could promote rural extension but the ability to set up agricultural extension facilities was limited by lack of funds. Political lobbying was particularly effective in achieving rural extension funded by government. However, planters were not perceived

²² Zoë Laidlaw, *Studies in Imperialism: Colonial connections, 1815-45: Patronage, the Information Revolution and Colonial Government* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 128.

²³ L.F. Crisp, *Australian National Government*, 159.

by their contemporaries to be aware of their responsibility as improvers assisting small farmers.²⁴ Not all planters were open to experimentation or to changing their means of cultivation, and with access to plentiful finance, land and labour, they had the option of clearing more land to bring it under production, rather than improving their cultivation methods. Decades of overcropping and failure to apply fertiliser had depleted the soil, resulting in a low sugar yield per acre. They did not plough deeply, put in proper drainage or rotate crops. Nor did they routinely weed or trash the cane.²⁵ Scientists, agricultural experts and agricultural literature alike decried the deficiencies of such farming and warned of the consequences.²⁶ Oblivious, planters chose to invest most of their most scientific efforts and advancements in their milling concerns.

If planters decided to take a more scientific approach to the cultivation of sugar, they had the resources to access relevant scientific knowledge. Small farmers on the other hand did not.²⁷ Farmers indicated repeatedly in many different forums that they knew nothing of sugar farming. The choice of which cane varieties to plant and how to deal with diseases, such as ‘gumming’ and ‘rust’, and pests, such as cane beetles and grubs, were all rather hit and miss.²⁸ For instance, with no supervision or restrictions on importation of cane in pre-quarantine days, nearly all the serious cane diseases of the sugar growing world arrived on Australian shores.²⁹ Farmers knew even less about how to nurture the soil and their cane plantings. Small farmer associations were proactive in the face of self-acknowledged ignorance.

From within the association movement and outside it was recognised that associations had the potential to “promote the welfare of the farmer.”³⁰ Sociologist Alan W. Black and business scholar Russell A. Craig argued that Australian associations’ extension visions were largely unfulfilled and only came to fruition through other agencies. However, contrarily it could be argued that agricultural associations, despite their

²⁴ Craig, “The Sugar Industry,” 60.

²⁵ Graves, *Cane and Labour*, 25-26. Trashing: see Glossary.

²⁶ A. Meston, “Report on the N.S.W. Sugar Industry and the Lessons it Teaches” and “A History of Sugar and Sugar Growing,” 1895, Series ID 6041 Item ID 90317, Queensland State Archives, Brisbane.

²⁷ Moore, “The Transformation of the Mackay Sugar Industry, 1883-1900,” 104.

²⁸ Gumming or gummosis. A bacterial disease affecting sugar cane which destroys the stalk cells in sugar cane by filling them with a gummy fluid causing death of the stalk and rust and rust disease (so-called) affecting cane crops in the 1870s. A disease of sugar cane caused by the fungus red rot. See Griggs, *Global Industry, Local Innovation*,” 142-44.

²⁹ Henzell, *Australian Agriculture*, 183.

³⁰ “Bundaberg,” *Queenslander*, September 9, 1876, 7.

limitations, were still effective, and enabled small farmers to access rural extension at minimal cost and at a time it was needed most. They were therefore important, as Raby claimed, as an intermediate stage between the innovative efforts of individuals and government-formulated responses to rural education and extension in agriculture, and government-funded centralised agricultural research.³¹ Moreover, though situated on the periphery, the associations connected small farmers with an emerging international network that created, diffused and sped up the circulation of technical information to the colonies.³²

Moore explained that it was not only in Queensland that the government appeared slow to appreciate the value of a scientific approach to sugar cane cultivation, but that Queensland reflected a disproportionate emphasis on the legislative and monetary aspects of sugar production worldwide.³³ Only after director of the HSPA Walter Maxwell visited Australia at the suggestion of the Bundaberg Planters and Farmers' Association (BPFA), was the publicly funded Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations (BSES) established in 1900. On Maxwell's recommendations scientific agricultural methods were comprehensively applied to sugar growing, and small farming progressed. Moore suggested that Maxwell's visit stands as the starting point of the modern-day Australian sugar industry.³⁴ It also underscores the initiative of the early sugar agricultural associations such as the BPFA and the weight of their legacy.

The ability to effect initiatives across the sugar growing districts was hampered by settlement being scattered across a vast area. Not even local interests within districts necessarily coincided when there were several modes of production operating at the same time. If associations were to have influence in a wider forum, they needed to be aware of each other's existence and make the effort to communicate with each other. One early writer summed the situation up neatly: "Everyone has not the time to travel 1,000 miles in order to make himself acquainted with the results of his neighbours' work, and the small farmer of the Herbert and the Barron is almost as ignorant as a Londoner of what

³¹ Raby, *Making Rural Australia*, 136; Black and Craig, *The Agricultural Bureau*.

³² Raby, *Making Rural Australia*, 15, 136.

³³ Moore, "The Transformation of the Mackay," 122.

³⁴ Moore, "The Transformation of the Mackay," 126. See in addition Karen Mason's assessment of Maxwell's personal contribution. Karen Mason, "Dr Walter Maxwell and the Queensland Sugar Industry 1899-1908. A Study of a "Public Service"," (B. Arts thesis, University of Queensland, 1987).

is being done in Bundaberg and Mackay.”³⁵ By the late nineteenth century, telegraphy, postal services and a rich print media made it possible for Queensland associations to be aware of each other’s existence and communicate profitably on common interests. In this way associations not only accessed agricultural knowledge but invited other associations to support them in their political lobbying efforts.

In an endeavour to build unity and effect broader influence, associations conducted correspondence with other associations up and down the coast. Associations’ objects and rules, their business and letters were published in newspapers. Dedicated sugar journals began to be published. To what extent these were read, especially by farmers, is not known. Griggs concluded that farmers probably did not read those publications.³⁶ However, this cannot be necessarily attributed to illiteracy. Rather, it may have been because of lack of time to read, or inability to access, such publications. He suggested that the agricultural associations may have been a way by which farmers were exposed to the available literature.

The interrelationships between newspapers produced in sugar areas and those involved in the sugar industry in one capacity or another was complex. For instance, the editorial of the *Mackay Mercury and South Kennedy Advertiser* clearly favoured Samuel Griffith whose vision for the sugar industry was one conducted by yeomen farmers. It is no surprise then that its editor W.O. Hodgkinson went on to be special commissioner for the proposed government-subsidised central sugar-mills. A rival newspaper, the *Standard*, was established by H.B. Black whose brother, M.H. Black, was a member of state parliament from 1881 to 1893 and Minister for Lands under Sir Thomas McIlwraith. The *Standard*’s editorial was biased towards the conservative planters of the district and it was disparaged as the “planters’ rag.”³⁷ Likewise, in Rockhampton, the *Bulletin* was conducted by a cousin of Sir Thomas McIlwraith, W.H. McIlwraith, and was not unexpectedly pro-McIlwraith and anti-central mill. The editorial banter of these newspapers, representing opposite ends of the political spectrum, could be venomous.

³⁵ *The Sugar Question in Queensland*, 9.

³⁶ Peter Griggs, “Improving Agricultural Practices: Science and the Australian Sugarcane Grower, 1864-1915,” *Agricultural History* 78 (2004): 13, accessed: September 27, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3745088>.

³⁷ K.W. Manning, *In Their Own Hands: A North Queensland Sugar Story* (Farleigh: Farleigh Co-op Sugar Milling Association Ltd., 1983), 161.

Beginning in 1882, farmers were able to obtain specific agricultural advice from a dedicated journal, the *Planter and Farmer*, whose contributors claimed to be “well known and recognized authorities.”³⁸ George G. Perkins, who used it to familiarise himself with the sugar industry when he visited Mackay, described it as “a useful little Journal” and “a monthly six-pennyworth full of valuable information, and practical suggestions.”³⁹ Its focus was on tropical and semi-tropical agriculture, particularly sugar, and it was published by a colourful and controversial character, Ebenezer Thorne.⁴⁰ J. V. Chataway established the *Sugar Journal and Tropical Cultivator* in 1892. His brother, T.D. Chataway later became editor and manager of both the *Mercury* and the *Sugar Journal and Tropical Cultivator*, both of which promoted progressive policies of agricultural reform. Later the national commodity associations would each have a journal of their own. However, the United Cane Growers’ Association (UCGA) and the Australian Sugar Producers Association (ASPA) were antagonistic to each other and that antagonism can easily be detected in their journals, the *Producers’ Review* (official journal of the UCGA) and the *Sugar Journal* (official journal of the ASPA).

Contributors to the agricultural press were particularly insistent on the need for the sugar industry to be represented by national associations. Not all planters in the plantation districts of Queensland seemed to feel the urge to unite as a group or organise themselves, as will be seen later in this chapter. Furthermore, the antagonism between planters and farmers, and then millers and farmers, marred attempts at unity, particularly those efforts to form overarching state or national associations. With the emergence of the small farmer associations there was a more concerted effort to reach as many farmers as possible. This was achieved through branches. Branch association enabled farmers to look after their local interests and gave them a sense of local cohesion. Representation in districtwide associations facilitated forceful negotiation on matters where a result might better be achieved if the district spoke with a single voice. As a result, farmer associations achieved direct representation in parliament and on local bodies, met with premiers and members of parliament, gave evidence at royal commissions, and convened conferences in cooperation with chambers of commerce and divisional boards.

³⁸ “Local News,” *Mackay Mercury and South Kennedy Advertiser*, May 10, 1882, 2.

³⁹ Perkins, *Mackay*, 62.

⁴⁰ “Local and General News,” *Warwick Examiner and Times*, February 15, 1882, 2.

With the end of the plantation mode of production, planter associations disbanded or merged with farmer associations. The new unity was only superficial. The proliferation of local and regional associations, generalist and commodity, led to suggestions that national bodies be constituted. Though all those involved in the sugar industry appreciated that an industrywide association would be more effective in convincing the government that the issues being put before it by local associations were universal and significant to the functioning of the industry as a whole, the ongoing animosity between planter/millers and farmers made unity difficult to achieve. Early attempts at an industrywide association resulted in the formation of the UCGA and the ASPA which only reinforced the divide. Those fault lines that divided and preoccupied the planter and small selector groups as they negotiated their common ground can be understood by exploring the Herbert River Valley, the first area where sugar cane was crushed in tropical north Queensland.⁴¹

HOW PLANTERS CAME TO THE HERBERT RIVER VALLEY

As discussed in chapter two, the initial impetus to make plantations in tropical north Queensland was a liberal land policy, principally the 1864 Sugar and Coffee Regulations. In 1859 and 1860 George Elphinstone Dalrymple led two overland parties into northern Queensland to survey and report back on lands favourably commented on by a succession of explorers. His and successive accounts described what would come to be known as the Herbert River Valley, in the northern Kennedy District, as a 'vale', rich open country, comprising rolling, grassy plains on both sides of the river. The wooded areas were scattered, and only thick along the watercourses. These accounts gave legislators the impression that the region would be suited to the growing of sugar, cotton and coffee.⁴² Such land was attractive for tropical agriculture as it would not require the arduous clearing work of areas covered in thick tropical rainforest. It could be more speedily occupied and developed. Its immediate potential however was regarded as being for pastoral use, because, contrary to Dalrymple's favourable report, Walter Hill, the

⁴¹ See Map1, xii for accepted division of sugar districts and Courtenay, *Northern Australia*, 133-40.

⁴² Correspondence from George Elphinstone Dalrymple to Georg Bowen, August 1, 1864, letter reprinted in "The New Settlement at Rockingham Bay," *Brisbane Courier*, August 6, 1864, 5.

government botanist, had only observed “very scattered” areas of good agricultural land.⁴³

After being appointed Chief Commissioner for Crown Lands, Dalrymple was charged with overseeing the opening of the district for grazing leases. Such leases required an accessible port to service them. Dalrymple, along with Arthur Jervoise Scott, forged a track from the new port, named Cardwell, over the Seaview Range, into the hinterland to the Valley of Lagoons, a property Dalrymple and Scott owned in partnership as Scott Bros. Dalrymple and Co., with silent partner Robert George Wyndham Herbert, colonial secretary, later Queensland’s first premier.⁴⁴ The fertile appearing river valley that had been glimpsed on a previous expedition was again sighted. This time, Dalrymple named the river running through the valley the Herbert in honour of Premier Herbert.⁴⁵ Once the track was formed into a trafficable road and the Vale of Herbert waystation established in 1865, the Lower Herbert Valley (extending from the Seaforth Delta to the junction of the Herbert with the Stone River) would be opened to European incursion by pastoralists and pastoral workers, planters, tradesmen, store keepers and hoteliers.⁴⁶

The Herbert is a river 340 kilometres long, beginning at the confluence of the Millstream and Wild Rivers in the Great Dividing Range west of Herberton and north of Ravenshoe, reaching the sea at the Seaforth Delta.⁴⁷ Because of the river’s length it was demarcated into two areas, upper and lower. The first land taken up for agricultural crops, including sugar, was in the low coastal reaches of the Herbert around what would become the town of Halifax. Once Ingham became the administrative centre for the Herbert River Valley, Lower Herbert came to mean the reach of the river between Ingham and its mouth at

⁴³ “Report of Selector of Agricultural Reserves upon Meunga Creek, Rockingham Bay, River Mackay, River Macalister, Valley of the Herbert, and Sea View Range,” *Queensland Times, Ipswich Herald and General Advertiser*, August 8, 1865, 4.

⁴⁴ Named by Ludwig Leichhardt in 1845 because of its impressive chain of waterholes. It was he who proposed that it would make ideal grazing country for both sheep and cattle.

⁴⁵ After Robert George Wyndham Herbert, first colonial secretary and first Premier of Queensland.

⁴⁶ Not to be confused with Seaforth, Mackay. See Robert Arthur Johnstone’s description of name changes of port at mouth of the Herbert River. Johnstone, *Spinifex & Wattle*, 91. The mouth of the Herbert River today is at Seaforth Channel.

⁴⁷ According to John Ewen Davidson’s own account he was the first to have found the mouth of the Herbert and navigated up the river to the Vale of Herbert waystation. “News of the Week,” *Queenslander*, July 13, 1867, 5.

Seaforth, rather than the coastal plain. The Lower Herbert's major business centre became Halifax.⁴⁸

The Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1868 followed the 1864 Sugar and Coffee Regulations. A land rush followed and within a year, on the Herbert, 5 000 acres had been selected.⁴⁹ The surveyor, stationed firstly at Bowen, and then at Cardwell, had trouble keeping up with the flood of applications. By 1871 it was reported that all of the riverfront land had been alienated in this way, to the chagrin of genuine settlers.⁵⁰

The first plantings of sugar north of the 19th degree south latitude were not in the Lower Herbert, but on Bellenden Plains, north of Cardwell in 1866, by John Ewen Davidson. Misfortune robbed him of the chance to be the first to crush sugar cane commercially in tropical north Queensland. He planted 90 acres with cane, built a mill house and laid foundations for machinery. The mill machinery was not installed before the plantation was abandoned and finally put on the market circa 1869.⁵¹

The honour of the first plantings of sugar is generally awarded to a party which ventured into the Herbert River Valley: licenced surveyor, Maurice Geoffrey O'Connell, his brother John Geoffrey O'Connell and William McDowall (also McDowell).⁵² Only Maurice O'Connell's selection was described as a 'sugar lease' though a newspaper article of November 1868 reported enthusiastically that both cotton and sugar were sprouting on blocks of land being worked by O'Connell and McDowall.⁵³ Maurice O'Connell and McDowall are credited with planting the first acres of sugar cane in the Valley, though McDowall is specifically credited with planting an experimental block of

⁴⁸ Wegner, "Hinchinbrook," 105n70.

⁴⁹ "A Visit to Cardwell, Rockingham Bay," *Brisbane Courier*, August 6, 1870, 2.

⁵⁰ William's brother, Archibald, was the land commissioner for the Kennedy District at the time that the three took up their land in 1868 and 1869. "New Caledonia," *Sydney Morning Herald*, November 6, 1871, 5.

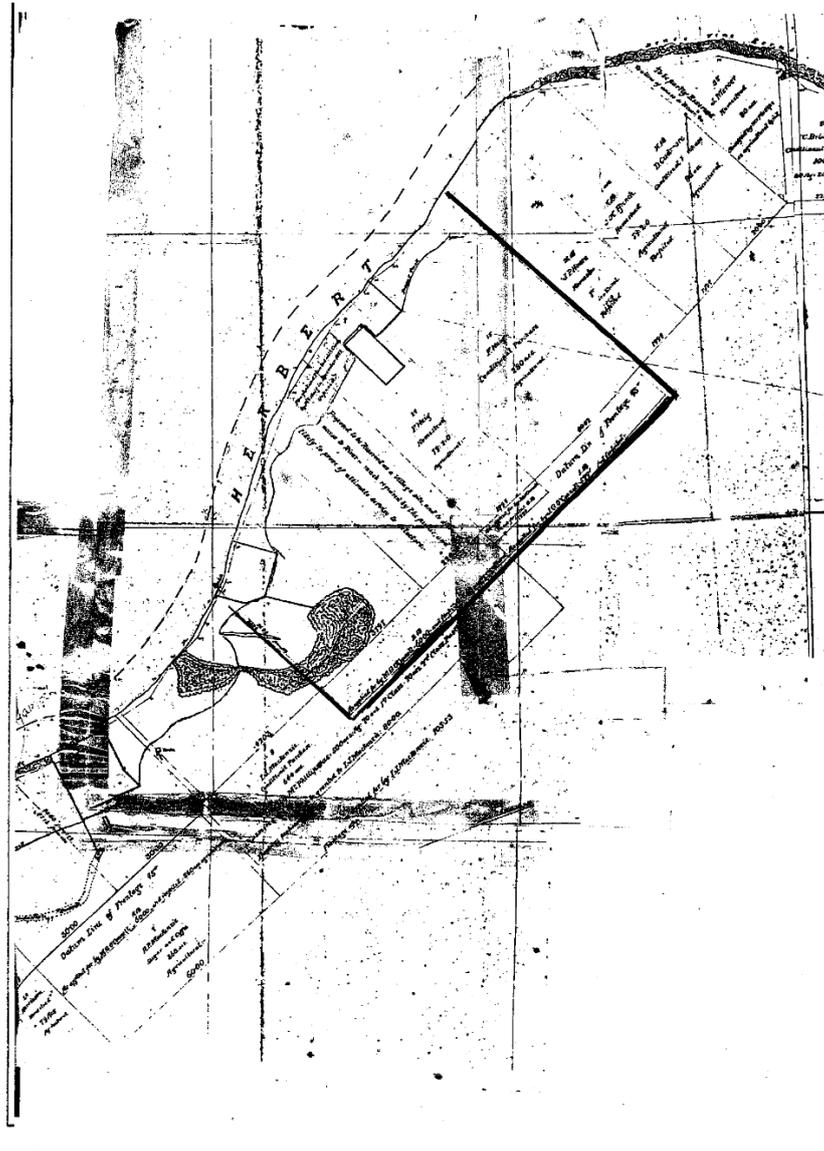
⁵¹ C.T. Wood, "The Queensland Sugar Industry as Depicted in the Whish and Davidson Diaries," *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, 3 (1965): 579; "Classified Advertising: Bellenden Plains Sugar Plantation, Rockingham Bay," *Brisbane Courier*, September 1, 1869, 1; Jones, *Cardwell Shire Story*, 112.

⁵² Queensland Government, *Queensland Government Gazette* vol. X, January 1 to December 31, 1869, 361; Douglas R. Barrie, *Minding My Business: The History of Bemerside and the Lower Herbert River District of North Queensland Australia* (Ingham: Douglas R. Barrie, 2003); Vidonja Balanzategui, *The Herbert River Story*. Both Barrie and Vidonja Balanzategui document the events that saw plantations established in the Herbert River Valley beginning with Maurice O'Connell's incursion into the district.

⁵³ *Queenslander*, October 17, 1868, 11; Queensland Government, *Queensland Government Gazette* vol. X, January 1 to December 31, 1869, 361; "Cardwell," *Mackay Mercury and South Kennedy Advertiser*, November 18, 1868, 3.

four or five acres of sugar cane.⁵⁴ By 1869 the O'Connell's venture had been abandoned and their lands forfeited. McDowall left in 1870.

Map 2: Land applied for and forfeited by M.G. O'Connell and J.G. O'Connell. Became part of the landholdings of Mackenzie family of Gairloch Plantation (L.J. Mackenzie being Isabella Janet) and F. Haig.



Source: Plan showing frontages to Herbert River from selection 19 to 64, both inclusive designed strictly in accordance with the original applications and the Land Act of 1868. November 7, 1871.

⁵⁴ R. L. Shepherd, "The Herbert River Story: Land Demand Begins," *Herbert River Express*, January 7, 1992, 7; Barrie, *Minding My Business*, 20-21; John Pearson, *Men of the Herbert: A History of the Herbert River Farmers' League Ingham* (Ingham: unpublished, n.d.), 6.

Clearly the O'Connells and McDowell had not given much thought to what they were going to do with their cane once it grew. Like so many others they had selected "land in isolated positions", had been smitten "with the fever of sugar-growing", and "planted cane without exactly calculating the chances of getting rid of it."⁵⁵ Without the prospect of labour, given that the use of Melanesians was not officially sanctioned by the Queensland Parliament until 1868, or a mill, the enterprise had no possibility of expanding and their cane had no market.

The land in the lower Herbert area, in contrast to other parts of the Herbert, was thickly timbered and grass grew long and high, especially after a good wet season. The land had to be cleared by hand before work could start, a laborious and time-consuming task. While the ground was still littered with large stumps it could not be worked by a plough. Setts or stalks of cane would therefore be planted around the rotting stumps by hand, in holes dug with a hoe. The prospective planters may have had the foresight to have brought cane plants with them, but these would have been well travelled, and so there was no guarantee that they would take. Cultivation of the plant cane, chipping weeds and trashing cane as it grew, all had to be done by hand. The labour-intensive tasks all limited the acreage planted to the amount of labour available.⁵⁶

Arriving as the O'Connells and McDowell left was the Mackenzie family, the first of the planters who, unlike the O'Connell party, had more concrete plans. The family is credited with the establishment of the first plantation and mill in the Herbert River Valley. James Mackenzie, an engineer by trade, appears to have been the driver of this venture. He arrived in 1868 and travelled via Mackay where he first helped to set up Pleystowe Mill. He then proceeded to the Herbert in 1869 to secure blocks with river frontage on the south bank of the Herbert River. These selections included the area formerly leased by Maurice O'Connell.⁵⁷ The grass huts O'Connell had erected were used by the Mackenzie family.⁵⁸ The blocks were registered in the names of brother and sister, Alfred and Isabella Mackenzie, and the property named Gairloch after their family home in Scotland. Once a number of the family arrived in the Valley (including Alexander who had had some

⁵⁵ The Sugar Crop of 1867-8," *Sydney Mail*, June 19, 1869, 8.

⁵⁶ Arthur Neame, *The Diary of Arthur Neame, 1870-1897*, ed. Sydney May, (Aitkenvale: Terry Lyons, 2003), 28 and *passim*.

⁵⁷ See Map 2, 169.

⁵⁸ Barrie, *Minding My Business*, 37; "The Case for the Sugar Planters," *Brisbane Courier*, February 8, 1890, 7.

plantation experience having grown coffee in Wynaad, southern India), planting began in earnest. Fortunately some of the land had been cleared by the O'Connell party so a visitor in 1871 commented that they could see not only virgin soil being broken up but cross ploughing, drilling and planting of cane being conducted.⁵⁹ The plantation made use of both indigenous Aboriginal and indentured Melanesian labourers.⁶⁰

Successful colonization and development of the tropical north depended not only on intrepid and entrepreneurial Europeans and Anglo-Australians but also on a multiplicity of peoples of non-European origins. The sugar industry on the Herbert was begun with the labours of both indigenous Aboriginal and indentured Melanesian labourers. Europeans who wished to use indigenous labour were caught between the policy of keeping them away from European settlement areas yet wanting to let them in to use them as a desperately needed labour source. The former course seemed justified as the Njawaygi, the Wargamay and the Bandyin peoples began to react violently to the incursion of Europeans as they appreciated the significance of that incursion. Letting in occurred as their 'will to resist' was broken and they resorted to reliance on the goodwill of the Europeans.⁶¹ Those who used indigenous labour paid them in kind with tools, tobacco and food; flour, tea sugar and meat but had mixed satisfaction with their efforts.⁶² One plantation that commented favourably was Gairloch which stated that they were proving "under proper direction to be a valuable addition to the labouring population."⁶³

Regardless of the efficacy of their employment, numerically it was unsustainable to rely on their labour. In 1876 Gairloch employed 35 indigenous persons but their labour requirement would have been at least four times that and have included both white men and Melanesian labourers.⁶⁴ By 1884, Gairloch was employing 270 Melanesian indentured labourers and 35 Chinese, but no indigenous labourers.⁶⁵ The significance of

⁵⁹ "Cardwell and the Vale of Herbert," *Queenslander*, September 23, 1871, 10; Barrie, *Minding My Business*, 37-39.

⁶⁰ "Utilizing the Blacks," *South Australian Register*, September 30, 1874, 5; "A Visit to the Herbert River," *Brisbane Courier*, June 5, 1875, 3.

⁶¹ Henry Reynolds, "Settlers and Aborigines on the Pastoral Frontier," in *Lectures on North Queensland History* (Townsville: James Cook University, 1974), p.61.

⁶² "Utilizing the Blacks," *South Australian Register*, 5; and Lumholtz, *Among Cannibals*, 89.

⁶³ "Correspondence relating to Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the records of the Colonial Secretary's Office and the Home Secretary's Office, 1859-1896," Series ID 5253 Item ID 846958 76/2917, Queensland State Archives, Brisbane.

⁶⁴ "Correspondence relating to Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, Queensland State Archives.

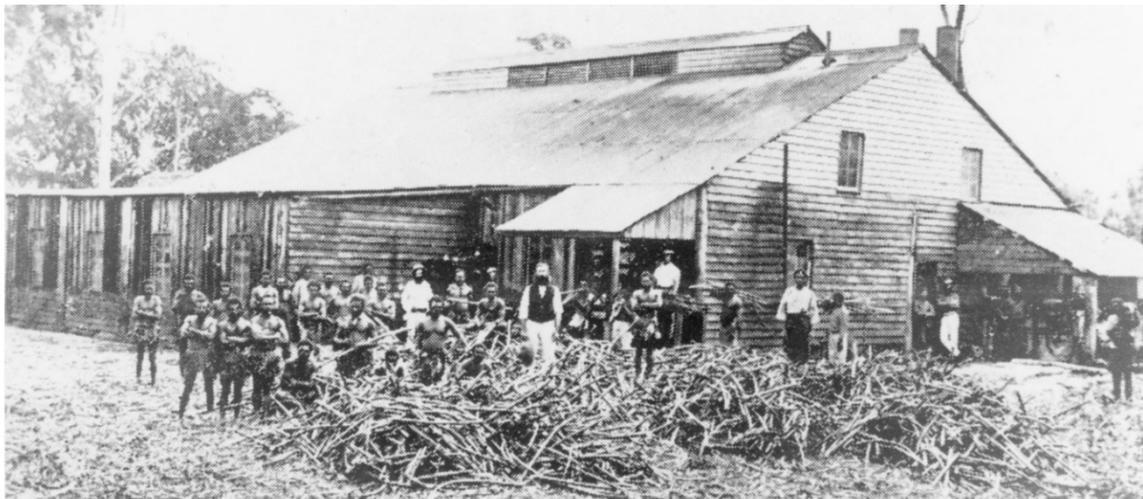
⁶⁵ "Queensland Sugar Industry and the Labour Question," *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, October 18, 1884, 791.

the Melanesian labour force to the nascent Australian sugar industry is indicated by the fact that between 1863 and 1904, 61 160 Melanesian labourers were recruited.⁶⁶ The first of those obtained by Herbert planters was in 1871 for the Gairloch plantation. The first female Melanesian labourers arrived on the Herbert in 1882. On the Herbert plantations indentured labourers enabled the clearing of land, and planting of the first crops and conducted the consequent field work. Women did similar field work to the men including planting and cutting cane, the latter which they were described to perform “very deftly.”⁶⁷

As early as 1871, and before either Melanesians or Europeans had acclimatised to the tropical climate or the local environs, deaths on the plantation began to occur. Common causes were dysentery, fever, lung disease and being taken by crocodiles.⁶⁸

Image 10: Gairloch Mill: the first in tropical north Queensland, circa 1872.

(Source: State Library of Queensland. (2013). Image number: 157978)



The Gairloch Mill was constructed with machinery purchased from Claudius Whish after he abandoned his Oaklands Plantation and Mill in Caboolture. This colonially-manufactured machinery was shipped to the Valley on board the steamer the *Dawn* and installed at Gairloch.⁶⁹ The mill crushed for the first time on Monday 7 October, 1872, the first mill to do so north of the 19th degree south latitude.⁷⁰ So auspicious was this

⁶⁶ Patricia Mary Mercer, “Pacific Islanders in Colonial Queensland 1863-1906,” in *Lectures on North Queensland History* (Townsville: James Cook University, 1974), 101.

⁶⁷ “Queensland Sugar Industry and the Labour Question,” *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, 791.

⁶⁸ Vidonja Balanzategui, *The Herbert River Story*, 75-85.

⁶⁹ “Telegraphic,” *Maryborough Chronicle, Wide Bay and Burnett Advertiser*, May 22, 1867, 2; The Lower Herbert,” *Brisbane Courier*, April 13, 1872, 5; Barrie, *Minding My Business*, 38.

⁷⁰ “Cardwell,” *Queenslander*, November 9, 1872, 10.

event that the Governor of Queensland, His Excellency the Marquis of Normandy, officially opened the mill by passing the first sticks of cane through the rollers.⁷¹ With around 100 to 200 acres of land under sugar cane, in its first years its 10 horsepower mill produced around two tons of raw sugar per acre, which was average production for that time.⁷² This sugar was described as having a light straw-like colour, and being a “good, dry long-grained article,” without “the soft appearance of some colonial sugars.”⁷³ That its quality was given such approval was a credit to the sugar boiler, whose skill at that time was guided by intuition rather than science.⁷⁴ Gairloch’s machinery must not have been much improved upon in the years following establishment; of the three mills operating in 1876 it made the least return, and its mill was described as “not nearly so complete as either of the other two.”⁷⁵ The Gairloch venture was followed by others, both estates without mills and plantations with mills.

Image 11: Travelling sugar mill, Walrus, on the Albert River. Converted to become the Bemerside Mill, circa 1870. (Source: State Library of Queensland. Boag, W. (2004) Image number: 189994)



⁷¹ “Cardwell,” *Brisbane Courier*, November 4, 1872, 3.

⁷² “The Herbert,” *Mackay Mercury and South Kennedy Advertiser*, April 3, 1875, 3; Griggs, *Global Industry, Local Innovation*, 176, table 8.2.

⁷³ “Lower Herbert,” *Brisbane Courier*, June 7, 1873, 5; “Cardwell,” *Brisbane Courier*, November 4, 1872, 3; “The Cardwell Sugar Lands,” *Telegraph*, January 3, 1873, 3.

⁷⁴ “Old Colonials. The Sugar-Boiler,” *Queenslander*, November 13, 1875, 13; Wegner, “Hinchinbrook,” 104; “Progress of Settlement on the Herbert River Kennedy District,” *Brisbane Courier*, March 8, 1879, 6.

⁷⁵ “Agriculture on the Herbert River,” *Queenslander*, March 4, 1876, 22.

The second plantation and mill of significance was Bemerside. In 1869 Ferrand Haig, together with Henry Miles, made the selection that would become Bemerside Plantation and Mill. Returning in 1870 to take up residence on the selection, Haig travelled to Cardwell on the *Mary Jane*, the same boat as the Mackenzie family. The first block selected was around 350 acres on the south bank of the river but eventually the plantation came to straddle the river and at its greatest extent it totalled 2 919 acres. It took its name from the Haig family estate, Bemersyde, in Scotland.⁷⁶ Haig must have been the more visible partner in the Bemerside operation for little reference is made to Henry Miles in local accounts. In his memoirs, planter Arthur Neame talked primarily of Haig with whom he seemed to have had a genuine friendship which continued after Haig had to relinquish Bemerside.

Haig and Miles immediately set to constructing a mill house which in comparison to others of the era was relatively simple. In keeping with their birth and aspirations though, they constructed a large plantation house. Centrally located, and featuring suitable accrements, it was considered fit to host Bishop Stanton when he visited the Valley in 1879 to conduct services and baptisms.⁷⁷ On all plantations much attention was given to the gardens and the planting of edible plants. In 1871 the grounds of Bemerside were described as “tastefully laid out and planted with trees and shrubs.”⁷⁸ Fruit of many kinds, particularly exotic tropical fruits, grew well on the plantations, and planters like Haig and Miles planted a great variety and shared the fruits and cuttings with their neighbours.⁷⁹ However, there was a paucity of vegetables, and the health of the first planters suffered as a result.

Indentured Melanesian labourers were employed from the outset. They cleared the land, put in the first crop, and carried out all consequent fieldwork. The mill that Haig and Miles installed had been called the ‘Walrus’. In its previous incarnation the Walrus was a flat-bottomed stern-wheel steamer equipped with a mill capable of crushing two tons of sugar cane a day. The mill machinery was made at the Queensland Foundry, by Messrs. R. R. Smellie and Co. for the Floating Sugar Mill Company. Drawing up at accessible

⁷⁶ Vidonja Balanzategui, *The Herbert River Story*, 32.

⁷⁷ Vidonja Balanzategui, *The Herbert River Story*, 54-55, 90; Bianka Vidonja Balanzategui, *Portrait of a Parish: A History of Saint Patrick’s Church and Parish Ingham 1864-1996* (Ingham: St. Patrick’s Parish, 1998), 3.

⁷⁸ The Herbert River, “*Maryborough Chronicle, Wide Bay and Burnett Advertiser*, September 19, 1871, 4.

⁷⁹ Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, 38-39.

jetties along the Brisbane River and other rivers in the Beenleigh district, it would crush the cane of adjacent farms.⁸⁰ It was an early, if unsuccessful, attempt at central milling. Assembled at Bemerside on dry land, the mill first crushed there in 1873. It was neither sophisticated nor large. A visitor tactfully described it as having an “economy of arrangement.”⁸¹ There was no vacuum pan nor did the crushing plant have cane carriers, so the cane was carried in drays to the rollers where it was fed in by hand, which could, and did, result in workers’ hands being caught in the machinery.⁸² There were, on average, around 150 acres under cane in the plantation’s first years. The 10 horsepower mill had the potential to produce 150 tons a season but produced 70 tons in the 1874 season and had hopes of producing 200 tons in the following year which would have been comparable to the output of Gairloch.⁸³ A significant feat achieved by Haig and Arthur Neame was the construction of a large sugar store shed on a sand bank at the mouth of the Herbert River. The pair named it Dungeness after Dungeness in the Strait of Dover, England.⁸⁴ From there, their bagged raw sugar was transported by steamers to southern markets and refineries.

Haig and Miles employed a manager, John Thomson Arnot, until 1874. He faced any number of troubles. Indentured labourers absconded, and others died from illness or misadventure.⁸⁵ While planters or their managers became adept at mending broken equipment it was not always possible to do so and distance from major centres where parts could be sourced meant great lengths of unproductive and costly downtime.⁸⁶ While a neighbouring planter acknowledged the effort put in by Haig, Miles and Arnot, he thought they had underestimated the cost of running a mill and that the underpowered machinery was not up to the work required of it.⁸⁷

Macknade Plantation and Mill was the third plantation and mill established. Brothers Frank and Arthur Neame in partnership with brothers Edwin Sheppard and Onslow Frederick Waller took up selections on the north side of the river which was bounded by

⁸⁰ “The Floating Sugar Mill,” *Queenslander*, April 17, 1869, 10.

⁸¹ “Progress of Settlement on the Herbert,” *Queenslander*, March 8, 1879, 314.

⁸² Barrie, *Minding My Business*, 40.

⁸³ Barrie, *Minding My Business*, 40; “A Visit to the Herbert River,” *Brisbane Courier*, June 5 1875, 3.

⁸⁴ Barrie, *Minding My Business*, 42-43

⁸⁵ Barrie, *Minding My Business*, 43; Correspondence from Farrand Haig to Colonial Secretary’s Office, August 17, 1871, Series ID 5253 Item ID 846891, Correspondence – inwards, Letter number 2738 of 1871, Queensland State Archives, Brisbane.

⁸⁶ Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, 53.

⁸⁷ Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, 57.

two watercourses, the Herbert River and the Anabranh, and the ocean. The initial selection was 1 280 acres. They selected it on their second visit to the Valley in May 1871 after their first visit to the Valley earlier in the same year accompanied by James Mackenzie, had been unsuccessful.⁸⁸ They named their selection after Macknade near Faversham from where they originated. Arthur Neame recorded that:

I have laid out the plantation so that each block measures ten acres, the road around each being 15ft. in width, a block on the river bank is reserved for the mill house, and most of the buildings for the men, the overseers and the staff, and cottages for the married people will be around this block.⁸⁹

This arrangement was customarily determined by status with different ethnic groups housed separately and designated specific roles. The housing of different Melanesian groups discretely was necessary given inter-tribal violence which was not infrequent on the plantations of the Herbert River.⁹⁰ This violence could result in injury, even death.

Image 12: Melanesian workers at Macknade and overseer Mr E.L. MacDonald. Their daily regime was ruled by the clock and the bell, n.d. (Source: Hinchinbrook Shire Council Library Photographic Collection)



⁸⁸ Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, 17-23.

⁸⁹ Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, 39.

⁹⁰ Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, 91.

The erection of the mill and all the requisite buildings, the clearing of the land, and the initial plantings and cultivation on Macknade Plantation provided employment for both white and Melanesian labourers who together, one visitor eulogised, made the plantation “a scene of busy industry and hum.”⁹¹ The mill first crushed in 1873 and made 140 tons of sugar from 70 acres of cane.⁹² The mill, imported from Glasgow, had a 20 horsepower capacity and was described as “a first-class plant and mill replete with all the modern improvements.”⁹³ It had larger and heavier rollers than either the Bemerside or Gairloch Mills which gave it a much greater capacity to crush heavier crops.⁹⁴ The installation of an electric plant in the mill house enabled crushing around the clock. By 1875 there were 210 acres under cane and the capacity of the mill had been upgraded. The prospects for both planters and settlers in the Valley in that year were forecast as being “exceedingly bright.”⁹⁵

Notwithstanding the period when the plantation mill was assumed by Edward Fanning, Thomas NanKivell and Sons, this enterprise was a successful one, outlasting Gairloch and Bemerside, and surviving to be purchased as a still working mill by CSR two and half decades later.⁹⁶ The Neame brothers were not only hard workers but also prudent. They invested in improved facilities for their mill and employed good cultivation techniques. They also divided the plantation work according to their skills. Arthur by his own admission was not good at the bookwork and so Frank took responsibility for correspondence and the accounts. Onslow Waller looked after the stock and did the butchering. Edwin Waller was responsible for the cultivation, while Arthur superintended fieldwork and work in the mill house and much else. In the absence of a reliable doctor he did all the doctoring on the plantation with the aid of a medical manual. They considered themselves benevolent and enlightened employers. Arthur recorded that he “took a lot of trouble to see that the boys (Kanakas) were well cared for, and knew every boy by name, even when there were nearly 150 on the place.”⁹⁷ Later, on their return to the Valley in 1886, the Neames were proactive in the face of the dearth of Melanesian

⁹¹ “Lower Herbert,” *Brisbane Courier*, June 7, 1873, 5.

⁹² Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, 42-43.

⁹³ “The Herbert,” *Mackay Mercury and South Kennedy Advertiser*, April 3, 1875, 3; “The Herbert,” *Brisbane Courier*, October 19, 1872, 6.

⁹⁴ Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, 57.

⁹⁵ “The Herbert,” *Mackay Mercury and South Kennedy Advertiser*, April 3, 1875, 3.

⁹⁶ Consequently referred to as Fanning, NanKivell and Sons. The spelling of the NanKivell name varies. See de Vries, *Blue Ribbons, Bitter Bread*, 343 endnotes Chapter 1, fn1.

⁹⁷ Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, 91, see note.

labour. They procured Chinese, Malays ((Malaysians and Indonesians) and Japanese labourers and offered tenancy arrangements.

These labourers, along with others from Sri Lanka, Java and the Philippines were employed to meet the ongoing demand for labour on the plantations, which could not be met by Melanesian labourers alone. Of those the Chinese, who had already arrived in Queensland following the discoveries of gold, and who were accustomed to farming, were employed in good numbers on the plantations in the 1880s, not only as field workers but in the mill.⁹⁸ They undertook other jobs off the plantations which included laying tramways, draining fields, building roads, clearing land and contracting to small farmers to cut their cane. They also established themselves as storekeepers, market gardeners, and farmers. Chinatowns developed at Halifax and Ingham and by 1885 the Chinese population was described as both “numerous and prosperous”.⁹⁹ Those who secured contracts to farm and supply sugar mills for processing of their cane, did so for a limited time until discriminatory legislation prevented them from settling permanently on the Herbert.

There were others in this founding period who hoped to establish mills. William Bairstow Ingham took up a selection of 700 acres that had been previously selected. Similarly, others selected not inconsiderable properties. They planted cane with the anticipation that they could install a mill at a later date, or with the hope that the neighbouring mills would crush their cane, or that they could dispose of their holdings to new hopefuls in secret deals made contrary to the provisions of the land legislation. James Atkinson of Farnham Estate began with 640 acres.¹⁰⁰ He planted about 20 acres with cane but because of the inability to secure adequate crushing arrangements around half of it had to be disposed of by burning and the balance he managed to have taken by Gairloch Mill for crushing.¹⁰¹ Others like Arnot, who had managed Bemerside Plantation for Haig and Miles, hedged their bets. While Arnot selected 600 acres and had them cleared by settler Harald Hoffensetz, he worked as postmaster and mill agent at the port of Dungeness.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Wegner and Robb, “Chinese in the Sugar,” 5.

⁹⁹ Wegner and Robb, “Chinese in the Sugar,” 7-9; “A Winter Tour in Queensland,” *Argus*, October 34, 1885, 4 and Finlay Skinner, “Memories of Early Halifax,” unpublished text, January 1979.

¹⁰⁰ Barrie, *Minding My Business*, 22 and 24.

¹⁰¹ “Agriculture on the Herbert River,” *Queenslander*, March 4, 1876, 22.

¹⁰² Barrie, *Minding My Business*, 40.

Selecting land in the period 1872 to 1876 was difficult and confusing. Because the Lands Office was not located in the Valley, daring dashes had to be made by horse to reach the office first to lodge a claim. Confusion arose because of administrative misunderstanding of the laws and failure to police regulations assiduously. This meant that there was potential and temptation for selectors to circumvent the laws. Moreover, given that means of communication were limited, unless the lands commissioner visited the community personally, there was little individuals could do to get answers to land questions and dilemmas.¹⁰³ However, that foundational plantation period in the Herbert River Valley was tame compared to the incestuous web of financial relationships, driven by greed and governed by shady dealings and posturings of the new planters, that characterised the period that began in 1876, when the Queensland Crown Lands Alienation Act opened up more land in the tropical north.

Speculative selection over and above what had ensued with the 1868 Act followed, while dummyming enabled circumvention of the tight limits established by the act.¹⁰⁴ By 1882 it was reported that there was “no land available anywhere near the navigable waters of the river, and [that] selections extend as far as the Herbert Vale run a distance of forty miles up the river.”¹⁰⁵ With landholding acreages and mill output capacities 10 times that of the earlier mills, these were truly ambitious enterprises.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ “The Herbert,” *Brisbane Courier*, October 19, 1872, 6; “Lower Herbert,” *Brisbane Courier*, May 20, 1872, 3; Barrie, *Minding My Business*, 25.

¹⁰⁴ Queensland Parliament, “Crown Lands Alienation Act 1876.”

¹⁰⁵ “The Lower Herbert,” *Brisbane Courier*, April 29, 1882, 6. Vale of Herbert or Herbert Vale was established by the Scott Brothers of Valley of Lagoons around 1865 as a half-way house between Valley of Lagoons and Cardwell. Henry Stone took up residence and management of Herbert Vale in 1867.

¹⁰⁶ *Pugh’s Almanac and Queensland Directory*, 1884, 2; notes from Mr. C.H. O’Brien’s typescript re Central Mills, N305-D.1.0-4 8, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

Image 13: Second Gairloch Mill being built for Fanning, NanKivell and Sons, circa 1881. (Source: State Library of Queensland. APO-22 Album of Views of Townsville and Herbert River. Image number: 235402)



In January 1880 Charles Léon Burguez began negotiations with Henry Henderson Drysdale, a warehouse keeper in Melbourne, for the purchase of Gairloch mill and plantation which had been resumed by the Bank of New South Wales. The plan was that Drysdale would own a one-third share and Burguez two thirds. Burguez reneged on the plan and the arrangement was “cancelled by mutual consent.”¹⁰⁷ Drysdale then learnt that Burguez had secured Gairloch by the financial backing of Fanning, NanKivell and Sons, a company with a Melbourne business base of ships and warehouses.¹⁰⁸ Burguez installed himself as manager and by agreement with Fanning, NanKivell and Sons ordered a new modern mill fitted out with an impressively powerful set of machinery manufactured by A. & W. Smith, Glasgow. Crushing began in 1882. Meanwhile Henry Drysdale, realising that he had been divested of his share by subterfuge, initiated legal action. Burguez quickly divested his share to Fanning, NanKivell and Sons but all found themselves respondents in a case which Drysdale went on to win. Fanning, NanKivell and Sons were obliged to make a settlement of £5 730 in damages and costs; Burguez left the district

¹⁰⁷ “The Gairloch Partnership Dispute,” *Queenslander*, May 27, 1882, 661.

¹⁰⁸ “The Gairloch Partnership Dispute,” *Queenslander*, June 10, 1882, 1; “Supreme Court” *Brisbane Courier*, May 30, 1882, 3.

disgraced; and Fanning, NanKivell and Sons retained Gairloch, installing W.P. Canny as manager. The company also acquired Macknade Plantation Mill trading as the Macknade Sugar Company as the Neame brothers had decided to return to England in 1883.¹⁰⁹ J.E. Hammick was installed as resident manager.¹¹⁰

Meanwhile, Bemerside, which had been repossessed by the Queensland National Bank, was upgraded and the mill became noted for high performance, winning prizes at the Sydney International Exhibition for sugar quality.¹¹¹ In 1881 Fanning, NanKivell and Sons purchased Bemerside plantation and mill.¹¹² Though “well-nigh worn out” the mill was pressed into service while the new Gairloch Mill was being built.¹¹³ It then ceased operations in 1882 when its plantation lands were absorbed by Gairloch Plantation and its cane transported by river punts to Gairloch Mill for crushing.

Fanning, NanKivell and Sons, having taken over two struggling plantation mills, found other properties within their speculative reach. On properties formerly owned by Henry Miles, Maria Mackenzie and her husband Robert Lyall, the company commenced another enterprise, the Hamleigh Plantation and Mill using the business name Hamleigh Sugar Company. The state-of-the-art mill began crushing in 1883. Typical of all these ventures, investment was high in the milling side of the enterprise and managers installed innovative processes. However, supply, and how that would be secured, were not given the same attention.¹¹⁴ This could be put down to poor management. Arthur Neame described one of the Gairloch managers, William Canny, as having “a great reputation,” lots of “self-assurance” but being “no good,” thinking “more of spending money than of making it.”¹¹⁵ Others, such as the sons of Thomas NanKivell, were installed as managers of Farnham, Gairloch, Macknade and Hamleigh courtesy of nepotism rather than

¹⁰⁹ Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, 100, 108.

¹¹⁰ “Supreme Court,” *Telegraph*, June 1, 1882, 2; Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, 100.

¹¹¹ “Lower Herbert, Kennedy District,” *Brisbane Courier*, April 21, 1880, 6; “Queensland National Exhibition,” *Northern Star*, August 30, 1879, 3.

¹¹² “Local & General news.” *Capricornian*, January 22, 1881, 10.

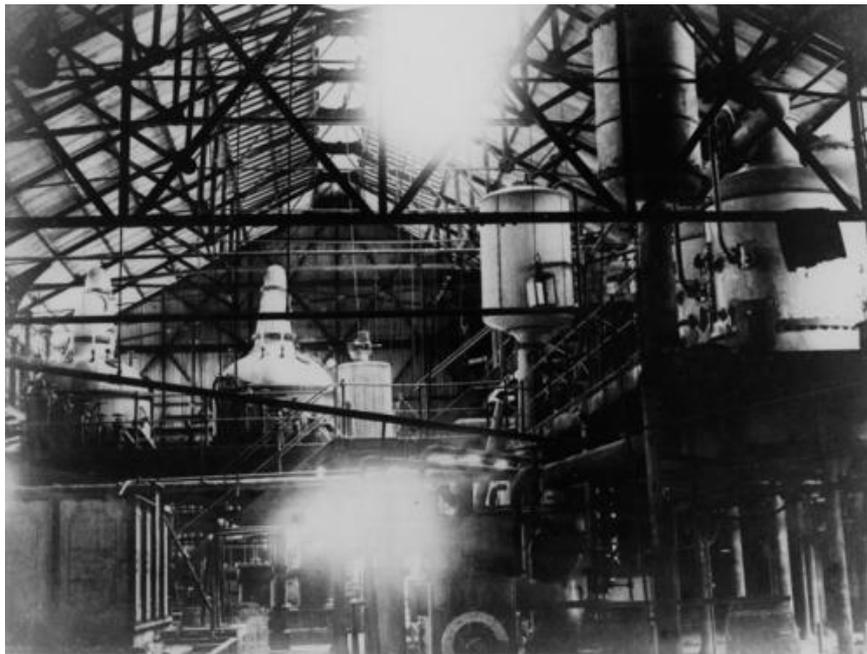
¹¹³ “The Lower Herbert. Our Sugar Circular,” 1881, Press Cuttings, 48, Deposit 142/3579, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

¹¹⁴ Where it was normal practice to remove dried sugar from the centrifugals by means of boxes or trucks placed underneath them, the manager of Hamleigh “adapted to this purpose an archimedian screw, which, turning horizontally carries the sugar into a trough whence it is taken by a travelling belt direct to the sugar room.” *The Sydney Mail*, October 18, 1884, 791. Similarly, the mill experimented with the use of a ‘degibreur’ that was designed to tear the cane into pieces before it passed through the rollers. “Queensland Sugar Industry and the Labour Question,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, September 23, 1884, 5. Later that process became a customary one across other mills with the Krajewski crusher.

¹¹⁵ Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, 100.

experience.¹¹⁶ In contrast, a manager of high repute was Alfred S. Cowley, who managed Bemerside and then Hamleigh and its associated estates until he became member for the new electorate of Herbert in 1888.¹¹⁷ Arthur Neame thought that if Cowley had been the manager, Fanning, NanKivell and Sons would have made a success of the new Gairloch Plantation.¹¹⁸

Image 14: Planters invested in the latest mill technology to the detriment of cultivation of the crop. Interior of the Hamleigh Sugar Mill, Ingham, Queensland, circa 1888. (Source: State Library of Queensland. Image number: 1107756)



Fanning and NanKivell's valley-wide reach was unsustainable, given that its properties were 80 percent mortgaged. While figures vary, these properties were inarguably huge, but the ratio of land put under cane compared to unproductive land was small. In 1882 Macknade was 6 000 acres with 400 acres ready for harvesting; Gairloch was in excess of 3 200 acres with 700 acres ready, while Hamleigh was 4 600 with only 40 acres planted and hopes to put in 400 acres.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ de Vries, *Blue Ribbons, Bitter Bread*, 13.

¹¹⁷ Vidonja Balanzategui, *The Herbert River Story*, 31-33.

¹¹⁸ Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, 108.

¹¹⁹ "The Lower Herbert," *Brisbane Courier*, May 20, 1882, 6.

Image 15: A ‘classic plantation’ and longest operating of the now defunct mills. Ripple Creek Mill, 1884. (Source: Hinchinbrook Shire Council Library Photographic Collection)

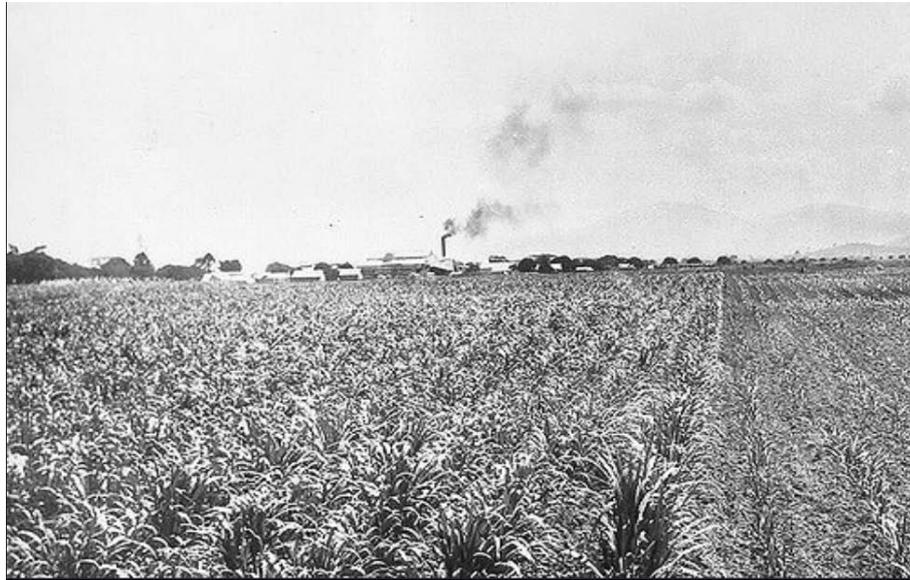


Image 16: The 100 horse mill stables, Ripple Creek, n.d. (Source: Hinchinbrook Shire Council Library Photographic Collection)



When Robert Mitchell Boyd and John and Joseph Wood from NSW acquired Arnot’s 600 acre selection on Ripple Creek in 1882, their venture became the Ripple Creek Plantation and Mill. Installing machinery obtained from Mirrlees, Watson and Co., Glasgow, it first crushed in 1883.¹²⁰ Despite its late start it operated the longest of the now defunct mills. Its strengths were that its owners were experienced sugar growers, it was a private concern, it was not overcapitalised, and it used a good proportion of the available plantation lands for growing sugar cane. It also took cane from independent and

¹²⁰ “The Ripple Creek Mill,” *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, August 28, 1907, 4.

tenant growers. It had a large annual production of refined white sugar achieved by a sulphitation process, which gave it independence of those few companies that monopolised refining, the largest of which was CSR. By 1906 it had grown to 3 580 acres.¹²¹ In every respect it was the epitome of the classic plantation, essentially a self-sufficient community. The substantial plantation house was surrounded by a luxurious tropical garden and featured a tennis court. Besides the sugar mill, there was also a saw mill and a manure ‘mill’. There were stores, a post and telephone office, a school, hospital, a blacksmith’s shop, implement shed, stock yard, slaughter yard and stables for over 100 horses. As well there were officers’ houses and workers’ cottages and barracks. It had its own tramway system and a wharf on the Seymour River.¹²²

The Victoria Plantation and Mill, a venture of CSR and its subsidiary, the Victoria Sugar Company, also began crushing in 1883. As Queensland’s production of sugar increased it competed with CSR’s production in NSW. The company’s move into both Fiji and Queensland was a response to that competition and a strategy to weather international market fluctuations of raw sugar prices. The raw sugar manufactured in Queensland and Fiji would be refined at the CSR and Victoria Sugar Company Refineries.¹²³

Victoria Plantation was established with the Government conniving at breaking its own laws. A cousin of Alfred S. Cowley, Ebenezer Cowley, who had been in the employ of CSR managing two of their plantations and mills in Fiji, arrived in the district around 1878. Ostensibly he came to the Herbert to join his cousin in sugar farming. In reality, he and a number of others were commissioned to make conditional purchases on behalf of CSR, which planned to build a mill in the district and conduct it as a vertically integrated operation, using indentured labour (unlike its NSW ventures).¹²⁴

According to the preferential conditions of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company’s Act of 1881 passed by the Queensland parliament, selectors could be authorised by CSR “to transfer their Selections to such Trustees notwithstanding that they may not have obtained

¹²¹ “Ripple Creek Plantation,” *Queenslander*, June 8, 1901, 1110.

¹²² “Ripple Creek Sugar Plantation, Herbert River, Ingham,” *Queenslander*, May 12, 1906, 24; “Advertising,” *Macleay Chronicle*, July 23, 1908, 8.

¹²³ “Events leading to the establishment of Homebush and Victoria Mills in Queensland: Extracts from CSR Board Minutes,” 1880, April 6, N305-C.3.0-1 23, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

¹²⁴ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 26.

Certificates of Fulfilment of Conditions.”¹²⁵ Some landholders took advantage of CSR’s offer to purchase land from them. They either agreed to fulfil conditions on behalf of the company at the company’s expense, or the land was transferred without conditions fulfilled, and an amount sufficient to cover the cost of conditions and the balance still owing to the government deducted from the purchase price.¹²⁶ These preferential arrangements which enabled CSR to acquire land in northern Queensland for the purpose of growing and milling sugar cane also required CSR to agree to finance the construction of a mill and manage it.¹²⁷ Other hurdles that had to be negotiated were obtaining access through government and private land for tramways and riverside receiving stores and wharves. By July 1881 Ebenezer had been appointed Victoria Mill manager and sent south to Brisbane to make the necessary purchase of supplies and to hire labourers while CSR ordered mill machinery.¹²⁸ Workers then began to clear land on the banks of Palm Creek for a state-of-the-art mill.

Not until 1881 with the establishment of the Innisfail Estate Sugar Mill did sugar begin to be cultivated successfully north of the Herbert. Nevertheless, even in 1882 the Herbert River was regarded as the “furthermost point where any important operations are being carried out.”¹²⁹ For over 10 years those who ventured north to the Herbert were a minority and for good reason. The district was very difficult to access, and even though ASN tenders plied the route from Townsville to Dungeness they were considered a disgrace, neither a comfortable nor convenient way to travel.¹³⁰ Meanwhile the north was a dangerous and inhospitable, if breathtakingly exotic and beautiful, place for white people

¹²⁵ Queensland Parliament, “Colonial Sugar Refining Company’s Act 1881,” 85, 91.

¹²⁶ Memorandum of instructions to the Manager of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company’s plantation on the Herbert River as to performance of Conditions on the Company’s Conditional selections in Cardwell District, July 4, 1882, Deposit N305-D3-0-1 16, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra; and Correspondence from indecipherable to Parbury, Lamb and Co, Brisbane, October 20, 1881, Deposit N305-D3-0-1 13, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

¹²⁷ Colonial Sugar Refining Company was formed in Sydney in January 1855. In 1857 when the company extended its refining operations into Victoria, the business was conducted in that colony as a separate company called the Victoria Sugar Company. The joint management continued until 1887 when the companies merged to become a single company, the Colonial Sugar Refining Company Limited, in July 1887. See Griggs, *Global Industry, Local Innovation*, 262; Griggs, “The Decline of Competition: The Emergence of a Duopoly in the Australian Sugar Refinery Sector, 1841–1915,” *Australian Geographer* 32 (2001): 359-376, accessed February 24, 2015, doi 10.1080/00049180120100077.

¹²⁸ Correspondence from E.W. Knox to Parbury Lamb and Coy, Brisbane, July 19, 1881, Deposit N305-D3-0-1 13, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

¹²⁹ “Scenery on the Herbert River,” *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, November 25, 1882, 937.

¹³⁰ “Scenery on the Herbert River,” *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, November 25, 1882, 937.

to live and work. Who then, were those intrepid individuals who were the vanguard of northern development?

WHO WERE THE PLANTERS?

John Hinchcliffe, admittedly a little tongue-in-cheek, wrote that sugar planters were popularly perceived as “connected with success, wealth, intelligence, refinement and honour” and their plantation activities as “the very highest in the whole scope of an agricultural profession.”¹³¹ While he was, in fact, recommending the planting profession to small farmers he did, nevertheless, hit on an undeniable fact that planters were perceived, and perceived themselves, as a class apart. There was a social divide between planters and farmers, making for a not always amicable or unified approach to their shared industry.

After the Herbert River Valley was opened up to European settlement, land was taken up by speculators who became absentee landholders. Like their global counterparts they were drawn to sugar growing by the promise of the quick fortunes to be made. In contrast, there were others who, though they might have aspired to establish for themselves a privileged life as sugar planters, were nonetheless fully cognizant of the dangers and discomforts they would encounter.

The plantations established on the Herbert in the first stage, prior to the 1878 Land Act, were smaller and required much smaller amounts of capital than was required after the act. Those first plantations were founded by wealthy individuals, or family partnerships, financed by either private wealth or by colonial banking institutions.¹³² Plantations in the speculative phase were increasingly owned by joint stock companies with access to Victorian capital which was underpinned by British finance. The withdrawal of the Herbert Valley’s first planters, often associated with the repossession of their enterprises, paved the way for new speculative investors and concentrated ownership. So it was that Fanning, NanKivell and Sons could monopolise the Herbert River Valley for a time. The concentrated ownership streamlined administration and afforded the potential of efficiency through economies of scale.¹³³ However, as Neame found on his return to

¹³¹ Hinchcliffe, *The Sugar Cane of Queensland*, 3.

¹³² Griggs, “Sugar Plantations in Queensland,” 632-33.

¹³³ Griggs, “Sugar Plantations in Queensland,” 633.

Macknade, extravagance both in what the company had spent on the Valley plantations and the NanKivell sons on their planter lifestyle, had negated that potential.

The planter group was a highly mobile one, venturing freely between sugar growing districts, to the British Isles and wherever opportunity would take them.¹³⁴ The scholarship of Griggs, Moore and Saunders provides us with a comprehensive picture of the aspirations, life and economic activities of the planter class that emerged in Queensland in the second half of the nineteenth century.¹³⁵ The Herbert River Valley offers an opportunity to examine a microcosm of the planter experience in tropical north Queensland. This examination is assisted by the diaries, memoirs and recollections of Arthur Neame, J.A. Boyd and Robert Arthur Johnstone.

Australian planters, both owners and managers, were rarely native-born Australian. Some arrived from other British sugar growing colonies, but some from even further afield. For example, Charles Edward Lacaze, sugar chemist, mill manager and later planter in his own right who was of French Mauritian origin.¹³⁶ His brother Henry also came to the Valley and was both a farmer and an inventor having devised a megass dryer which CSR agreed to invest in.¹³⁷ The corpulent and wily Charles Léon Burguez, mentioned earlier, was another Mauritian.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ Moore, "Whips and Rum Swizzles," 120-21.

¹³⁵ Examples of such work include Griggs, "Sugar Plantations in Queensland"; Moore, "Whips and Rum Swizzles"; Saunders, *Workers in Bondage*.

¹³⁶ "A Pleaser Sugar Man," *Townsville Daily Bulletin* February 2, 1922, 7; M. Casolin, "The Contributions of Early French Settlers to the Sugar Industry in North Queensland," in *Early French Settlers in North Queensland*, S. Riviere ed. (Townsville: Department of Modern Languages, James Cook University, 1989), 19.

¹³⁷ Casolin, "Contributions of Early French Settlers," 26-27.

¹³⁸ These were not the only French Mauritians in the district. Casolin mentioned that Lacaze had invited a C.G. Sauzier to join him in the Valley. See Casolin, "Contributions of Early French Settlers," 23. Unlike Lacaze, who moved to Innisfail where he continued farming, and died in France, and Burguez who left the Valley after a very brief interval and lived his last days in Wynnum, Brisbane, Sauzier continued to farm at Macknade and died in 1914 in the Ingham Hospital. See "Herbert River Notes," *Cairns Post*, February 12, 1914, 7.

Image 17: The large Gairloch plantation house. Charles Léon Burguez on horseback, circa 1880-1882. (Hinchinbrook Shire Council Library Photographic Collection)



More generally planters were well-heeled Englishmen or Scotsmen, frequently of aristocratic or upper-middle class birth. Some were of the merchant class, others were retired military officers, while a good many were adventurers. Not infrequently they were not first sons, so could not rely on family fortunes or inheritance for a future in England. As Arthur Scott of Valley of Lagoons wryly expressed it, “the way to make a fortune is to find a want and supply it. Now the great want of the Upper Classes is how to dispose of its sons without a great outlay of capital. This is the want which Queensland is adapted to meet.”¹³⁹ Sons too, for want of knowing what to do with themselves in the home country, thought to try their luck in a young and undeveloped colony like Queensland. Shepherding on a station belonging to an acquaintance of the family was the accepted way of gaining colonial experience for new-chums. Such was the experience of Arthur and Frank Neame, who, on arrival in Australia, went shepherding on a sheep station in western Queensland.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Arthur Scott, letter to Charles Scott, February 18, 1865 as quoted in Mike Rimmer, *Up the Palmerston: A History of the Cairns Hinterland up to 1920*, vol. 1 (Bundaberg: Michael Robin Rimmer, 2004), 108.

¹⁴⁰ Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, 4-15.

Illustratively, Ferrand ‘Fern’ Haig of Bemerside came to the Valley at age 26 in 1869.¹⁴¹ From a large family of an aristocratic Scottish line, he inspired the observation by a contemporary that he “had left his country for his country’s good.”¹⁴² Perhaps that individual had been on the receiving end of Haig’s reputed “violent and hasty temper.”¹⁴³ Similarly, Henry Robert William Miles was aristocratic, one of 12 children, and around 28 years old when he arrived in the Valley soon after Haig.¹⁴⁴ He maintained a better local reputation as, on his return to England, he married Frank and Arthur Neame’s younger sister Mary in 1882. His father, Sir William Miles, incidentally, was a notable member of the Bath and West Society and wrote a treatise about the way that local societies could use shows to provide rural education.¹⁴⁵ There is no indication that his son was similarly enthused about promoting local societies and shows in his time in the Valley.

Upriver from Bemerside was Gairloch where the Mackenzies lived. The family consisted of mother, father and 10 adult children though only five children, James, Alfred, Isabella, Maria and Alexander spent time in the Valley.¹⁴⁶ The father, William, was a retired Presbyterian Minister who, on his arrival in the north, was given official sanction to perform marriages and officiated at the weddings of three of his children.¹⁴⁷

The family invested heavily in the district beyond the Gairloch plantation and mill. Alfred secured a steam launch from the south and converted it from a pleasure lugger to a working cutter which he used to convey mail from Cardwell to Lower Herbert fortnightly.¹⁴⁸ Maria and her husband Robert Lyall selected land upriver. But with the

¹⁴¹ Frost, Gilchrist and related families, “Thomas Haig,” accessed June 20, 2017, <http://frostandgilchrist.com/getperson.php?personID=I23846&tree=frostinaz01>; *London Gazette*, March 29, 1861, 1374; and May 10, 1864, 2517.

¹⁴² Lloyd Rees, *Peaks and Valleys: An Autobiography* (Sydney: Collins, 1985), 19.

¹⁴³ Johnstone, *Spinifex & Wattle*, 111. This was a reminiscence originally published in the *Queenslander* on 30/7/1904.

¹⁴⁴ The Peerage, “Person Page – 23254,” accessed March 23, 2018, <http://www.thepeerage.com/p23254.htm>; and Barrie, *Minding My Business*, 48.

¹⁴⁵ Hudson, *Patriotism with Profit*, 59-60, 62-63.

¹⁴⁶ Alexander Mackenzie, *History of the Clan Mackenzie. With Genealogies of the Principal Families of the Name* (Inverness: A. & W. Mackenzie, 1879), 325, accessed June 22, 2017, https://archive.org/stream/historyofclanmac1879mack/historyofclanmac1879mack_djvu.txt; Barrie, *Minding My Business*, 37.

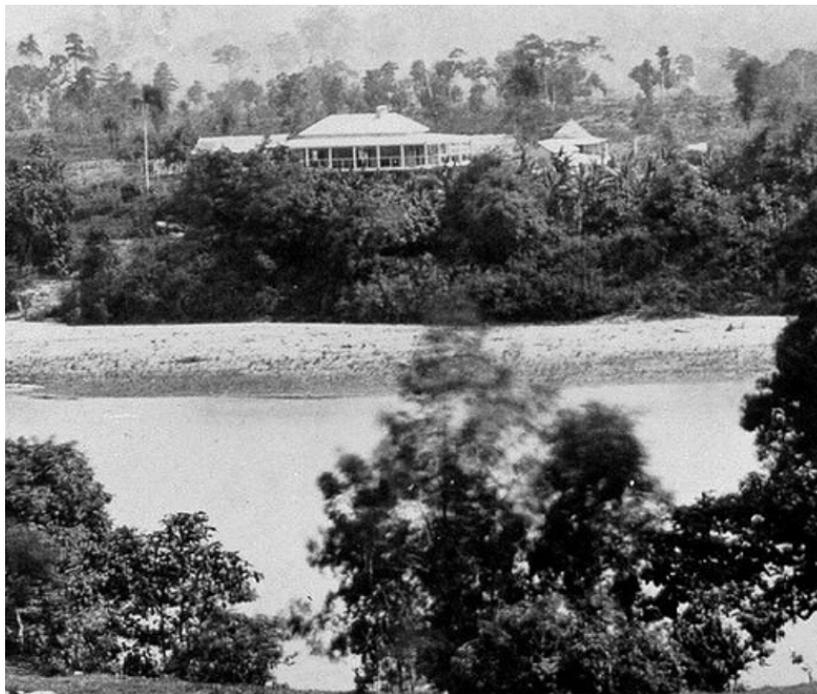
¹⁴⁷ “Cardwell,” *Mackay Mercury and South Kennedy Advertiser*, July 9, 1870, 3; “Official Notifications,” *Brisbane Courier*, August 1, 1870, 2; deaths and marriages verified by newspaper entries and Queensland Government, “Births, Deaths, Marriages and Divorces: Family History Research,” records.

¹⁴⁸ “A Venturesome Cruise,” *Brisbane Courier*, July 8, 1871, 4; “Government Notifications,” *Queenslander*, August 26, 1871, 3; “The Mail Service,” *Brisbane Courier*, November 13, 1871, 2.

dispersal of the family after the sale of Gairloch Maria, Robert and William departed for Scotland in 1882.¹⁴⁹

Arthur and his younger brother Frank Neame of Macknade plantation came from the large family of English gentleman Frederick Neame of Macknade Estate, Faversham. Arthur was older than Frank by two years. They travelled to Australia on the same ship as Edwin and Onslow Waller whom they had known previously. Unlike absentee and speculative selectors, they came to the Valley and explored it first, only selecting their 1 280 acre block after climbing a tree in order to better survey a suitable piece of land.¹⁵⁰

Image 18: Waller's Cordelia Vale homestead: former Gairloch house, typical Queenslander style with wide verandahs, 1883. (Source: Hinchinbrook Shire Council Library Photographic Collection)



The financial arrangement with the Wallers dissolved in 1879. That the Wallers had not been able to contribute any funds further than their original investment of £4 000 was one of several issues that caused the relationship to break down. Despite new, powerful machinery, a reliable, sober labour force, and the latest technology, Arthur Neame admitted candidly that “had it not been for father’s help we should have become bankrupt and lost everything.”¹⁵¹ By 1878 their father had advanced them £12 000. The Neames

¹⁴⁹ “A High-class Pianiste,” *Queenslander*, May 20, 1882, 619.

¹⁵⁰ Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, iv Neame genealogical tree, 17-18, 22-23.

¹⁵¹ Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, 45, 92, *passim*; Wegner, “Hinchinbrook,” 104.

kept the mill and all the plantation lands on the north side of the river while the Wallers took land on the southern side of the river.¹⁵² The Wallers did not leave the Valley but transferred a former Gairloch plantation house to their property, Cordelia Vale, and from there invested in cattle, established a butchery, and farmed sugar cane which they supplied to CSR's Victoria Mill.¹⁵³ A snapshot of the Neame brothers' lives illustrates their mobility. Both brothers went back and forth to England several times and even had their siblings visit them. The brothers married in England. Arthur left Frank to manage Macknade on his own when he went home to England in April 1882. During that visit he married Jessie (nee Harrison) and together they returned to Macknade three months later. Both of Arthur and Jesse's children, Godfrey (1886) and Arthur (1888), were born in England. Two of Frank and Louisa (nee Bennet)'s children, Harold and Marjorie, were born at Macknade while Gerard was born in Surrey in 1885.¹⁵⁴

Image 19: Ing's Plantation, Ingham Queensland. W.B. Ingham with back to camera. Huts built, land cleared, but no mill ever erected, circa 1881. (Source: State Library of Queensland. APO-22 Album of Views of Townsville and Herbert River. Image number: APO-022-0001-0044)



The story of William Bairstow Ingham, the most famous planter of the Ingham district, is a pertinent illustration of the origins of the first planters, their hopes, dubious land titles,

¹⁵² Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, 86, 92.

¹⁵³ Barrie, *Minding My Business*, 47, 49; "Some Northern Sugar Plantations." *Queenslander*, December 31, 1887, 1071.

¹⁵⁴ "Arthur Neame" and "Frank Neame," Neame Family, accessed June 22, 2017, <http://www.neamefamily.com/tree/getperson.php?personID=I1354&tree=neame>; Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, *passim*.

and the tenuous nature of their enterprises. This colourful and charming character arrived in the Valley in 1873. His exploits there, and later elsewhere, assumed legendary proportions and the scholarly research of Moore has since sifted fact from fiction.¹⁵⁵ Ingham was the fourth son of a substantial English landowner and stockholder. Prior to leaving for Australia he spent some time at university, and possibly in the Royal Navy. He was 23 years old when he joined his brother Thomas Lister Ingham at his property in Tasmania in 1873. However, he quickly moved on to settle on the bank of the Herbert River on a property he called Ings, but for which he neglected to secure the title. There he planted cane, built first a humpy and then a two-roomed cottage and laid out an extensive garden. He also acquired a flat bottom stern-wheel steamer, the *Louisa*, to ferry his supplies. While he had cane planted, and mill equipment purchased and on the ground by late 1874, his mill was never erected.¹⁵⁶ Had the mill got started the *Louisa* would also have been used to cart cane and sugar. The principal township of the Herbert River Valley, Ingham, was named after him, not because he was the founder of the town and most certainly not because he was a successful planter, but because of a lingering memory of a young man who was an "extremely nice fellow, strong, courageous, cheerful and universally esteemed" who met a particularly nasty ending.¹⁵⁷

Lewis Cowley's story is another that pays witness to the mobility and interconnectedness of planter families, not just within localities but between sugar growing districts. Nephew of Alfred, he first managed Gairloch and then assisted in the management of Hamleigh.¹⁵⁸ With his marriage in 1893 to Isabel (Isabella) Black, daughter of the Hon. Maurice Hume Black, sugar planter and politician from Mackay, the plantocracies of Mackay and the Herbert were connected. After the wedding ceremony in Brisbane, they returned to the Valley to live on his property, Bronte, where several of their children were born before they left the district. He later managed the Moreton Central Sugar Mill in Nambour, southern Queensland.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ Clive Moore, "The Life and Death of William Bairstow Ingham: Papua New Guinea in the 1870s," (presentation, meeting of the Society, May 23 1991), 415, accessed June 22, 2017, https://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:204477/s00855804_1992_14_10_414.pdf.

¹⁵⁶ Lower Herbert," *Queenslander*, October 24, 1874, 10.

¹⁵⁷ Moore, "The Life and Death of William Bairstow Ingham" 415, accessed June 22, 2017, https://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:204477/s00855804_1992_14_10_414.pdf.

¹⁵⁸ Vidonja Balanzategui, *The Herbert River Story*, 31-33.

¹⁵⁹ "Double Weddings," *Telegraph*, January 25, 1893, 6.

Not only were Australian sugar planters enmeshed by a complex web of family interrelationships but also by friendships and investment arrangements. All four of Thomas NanKivell's sons were said to have resided on the Herbert though little is known of them apart from George and his wife Edith and their two children who occupied Farnham.¹⁶⁰ Author Susanna de Vries stated that the family would journey as far north as Cairns to Hambledon plantation, owned by Swallows, whose home and lifestyle was as lavish as that of the NanKivell's, in order to socialise with fellow Melbournians.¹⁶¹ William Fanning was a founding director of CSR while Frederick Fanning was also a director after William. Thomas J. NanKivell was a founding shareholder.¹⁶² R.M. Boyd was a former employee of CSR and a friend of E.W. Knox.¹⁶³ This meant that the planters on the Herbert were very supportive of each other, in and out of each other's homes as Neame recorded it, always willing to help each other.¹⁶⁴ J. A. Boyd's diary also recounted that he and Robert (Mike) were frequently dining with or visiting with the Neames, Fanning, Canny and other planters and plantation managers.¹⁶⁵ Despite the familiarity on a personal level, CSR Head Office cautioned its local manager and officers to ensure that planters did not presume on CSR's generosity: "our first care must be for our own interest."¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁰ Vidonja Balanzategui, *Herbert River Story*, 30-31,

¹⁶¹ de Vries, *Blue Ribbons, Bitter Bread*, chapters 1 and 2; Joice would go on to be lauded as "one of the most significant women of the twentieth century," Vidonja Balanzategui, *Herbert River Story* 52, 65n17.

¹⁶² "Colonial Sugar Refining Company," *Daily Mercury*, August 9, 1910, 7; A.G. Lowndes ed., *South Pacific Enterprise: The Colonial Sugar Refining Company Limited*, Appendix 7, 418-19.

¹⁶³ GEORGE STANLEY NEWTON & ISABELLA SPROTT CONNOR, 6, accessed March 24, 2018, <https://connorhistorycom.files.wordpress.com/2017/12/george-stanley-newton-and-isabella-sprott-connor.pdf>.

¹⁶⁴ Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, 46.

¹⁶⁵ JAB Diary, "Robert Mitchell Boyd (1849-1912)," WordPress.com, accessed March 24, 2018, <https://connorhistorycom.files.wordpress.com/.../boyd-robert-mitchell-boyd-1849-1912-references.pdf>, *passim*.

¹⁶⁶ Correspondence from E.W. Knox to E. Cowley, February 20, 1883, Deposit 142/1546, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

Image 20: Visiting fellow Melbournians: the Swallow children at Hambledon Plantation (Joice NanKivell, second child from left), with Melanesian staff circa 1891. (Source: State Library of Queensland. APU-25 Hambledon Sugar Plantation Photograph Album. Image number 172486)



Across the sugar growing world, wherever there were plantations, small cliques of wealthy white people dominated nearly all aspects of life. Writing of Louisiana, Greta de Jong said that in the rural parishes the prominent men in local politics were likely to be the same as those who headed sugar and cotton concerns, or to be related to planters through business or family ties. These were rich white men, whose interests shaped public policy. They controlled police juries, school boards and the courts, while law enforcement officers frequently acted as if they were the private employees of plantation owners rather than public servants who should have been protecting the whole community.¹⁶⁷ The factors offered a similar scenario in Hawai'i. In the sugar districts of Queensland, where plantation agriculture took hold, a similar tendency emerged. On the Herbert, planters, with their pretensions to wealth, status and entitlement, for a short time dominated the political, economic and social life of the Valley. They were the magistrates and the justices of the peace.¹⁶⁸ Many prominent names in Queensland politics were planters and it was a local plantation manager, A.S. Cowley, who went on to be elected to a

¹⁶⁷ de Jong, *A Different Day*, *passim*.

¹⁶⁸ Newspapers and the Queensland Government Gazette record these appointments.

parliamentary position. The Herbert River Pastoral and Agricultural Association (HRP&AA) was founded in 1883 and supported by the planters and plantation managers as was the Herbert River Jockey Club.¹⁶⁹ In the same year that the HRP&AA was founded, a public hospital (with special wing for the indentured labourers) was also established. The board and trustees of that establishment were all prominent officials and businessmen, and planters and plantation managers.¹⁷⁰ Planters were elected to a building committee delegated to put forward a proposal for two provisional schools for the Valley.¹⁷¹

When the first local government, the divisional board, was created in 1879 the economy was controlled by the plantations. Frank Neame was elected chairman of the divisional board while Arthur was a founding councillor as was Edwin Waller.¹⁷² For the first 10 years of the board's existence it was influenced by planters' priorities even though the plantations were confined to a small geographical area within the divisional boundaries and, as small self-sufficient communities, were uninterested in works outside of their own landholdings. For instance, when the Victoria Mill management was approached to donate money towards a school in the lower Herbert, Knox advised the acting manager that CSR was "disinterested" and "disinclined" to donate unless other planters did as well or unless children from the Victoria plantation would be attending the school.¹⁷³

The Hinchinbrook Division was made up of three subdivisions, but it was only division 1 that could usually muster enough candidates for elected positions. Distance, poor roads, and limited means of communication meant that divisions 2 and 3 had difficulty both attracting nominees and sustaining candidates' attendance at meetings. Division 1 candidates tended therefore, to dominate the board. Between 1880 and 1883, of the 16 members, nine were planters or plantation managers, and only one was a farmer. Even after 1884 when subdivisions 2 and 3 were excised to become the Cardwell Divisional Board, and new subdivisions were created in the Hinchinbrook Division, the planters and pastoralists still controlled the board, with planters contributing £808 of the £1 328 raised

¹⁶⁹ JAB Diary, "Robert Mitchell Boyd (1849-1912)," *passim*; Wegner, "Hinchinbrook," *passim*.

¹⁷⁰ JAB Diary, "Robert Mitchell Boyd (1849-1912)," quoting from "Ingham," *Brisbane Courier*, July 14, 1883, 3; JAB Diary, "Robert Mitchell Boyd (1849-1912)," *passim*.

¹⁷¹ *Halifax State School Centenary 1883-1982* (Halifax: Halifax State School, 1983), 7, 47.

¹⁷² Wegner, "Hinchinbrook," 594.

¹⁷³ Correspondence from E.W. Knox to Mr. Wolseley, September 29, 1884, Deposit 142/1547, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

in rates between 1884 and 1887.¹⁷⁴ That their control went beyond the divisional board to other areas of community affairs was alluded to in an acerbic comment about a contretemps over the stipend to be paid to a minister whose services were secured by E.S. Waller: “the managers of the principal plantations are of other denominations; but as they have already exclusive control of the divisional board, river trust, and hospital they might very properly leave the management of the Church of England business to the members of that Church.”¹⁷⁵ In 1888 there was a very real changing of the guard when W.T. White, a farmer, became chairman. But even then, the remaining planters, the Neames, Woods and Boyd, and the CSR management, still retained disproportionate control of the board and it was not until after the turn of the century that their hold was loosened.¹⁷⁶

While the first planters may have come from privileged or comfortable backgrounds, their new lives in the Valley required fortitude. Labour was scarce, particularly skilled labour. A particular want was those with carpentry skills. Planters themselves had to cut the requisite timber, saw it, and then make everything from scratch: houses, wharves, fences, dining room tables, and other furniture.¹⁷⁷ Construction methods were experimented with, as adaptations were made to a tropical climate.

Image 21: Neame's residence on Macknade Plantation, Ingham Queensland, circa 1881. (Source: State Library of Queensland. Unidentified. (2004). APO-22 Album of Views of Townsville and Herbert River. Image number: 100170)



¹⁷⁴Wegner, “Hinchinbrook,” 267.

¹⁷⁵ “Country News,” *Queenslander*, March 22, 1884, 447.

¹⁷⁶ Wegner, “Hinchinbrook,” 253.

¹⁷⁷ Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, 29, 30, 32, 38, 43.

Thatching and shingles were initially used for roofs. The first ‘big’ house on Macknade was shingled and then later the shingles were covered with galvanised iron. Houses were raised on high stumps and the upper story was often surrounded with a verandah which provided a covered passage around the entire house. The detached kitchen was accessed by a covered walkway.¹⁷⁸ Placing a house on high stumps or piles not only raised it above the threat of high flood levels, but out of the miasmas that were thought to cause fevers.¹⁷⁹ Thus a visitor on the river in 1871 described Daniel Cudmore’s house on the Avoca Estate as having 10-foot stumps in order “to get the sea breeze and to avoid miasma.”¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, as with Arthur Neame’s second ‘big’ house, underneath the house could be enclosed for dining room, bathroom and pantry.¹⁸¹ Gardens were attended to by indentured labourers, while not only Melanesian women, but also Chinese and Aboriginal workers were employed to do housework and childcare.

Image 22: Both men and women Indigenous and Melanesian workers were employed at Gairloch Planation, 1888. (Source: State Library of Queensland. Image number: 16952)



¹⁷⁸ Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, 22-24, 114.

¹⁷⁹ Frost, “The Queensland High-Set House.”

¹⁸⁰ “Cardwell and the Vale of Herbert,” *Queenslander*, September 23, 1871, 10.

¹⁸¹ Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, 111.

Image 23: At this stage indigenous people were still curious and willing to assist the Europeans. Horsemen at Aboriginal camp on Gowrie Creek, 1874. (Source: Hinchinbrook Shire Council Library Photographic Collection)



The Herbert Valley was often hostile to new arrivals. All the first selectors bathed, swam, and washed clothes in the rivers and streams of the Valley until they realised that they were crocodile infested.¹⁸² The Njawaygi, the Wargamay and the Bandyin peoples, while initially curious, became increasingly belligerent as they realised that their lands and way of life were becoming irrevocably disrupted. The climate was extreme, with periods of drought alternating with floods and cyclones. Bouts of fever were common until a level of acclimatisation was attained. Medical expertise was scant and maternal, infant and child mortality was high. Drunkenness was rampant. Neighbours may have only lived a number of miles away but to visit entailed a perilous journey which had to be planned carefully, as tracks wound their way through dense forest, high grass, swamps, creeks and gullies.¹⁸³ Clothing made little accommodation to climate with women still wearing corsets and form-fitting long-sleeved, floor-length gowns, though men did make concession to the heat by going jacketless.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, 43.

¹⁸³ Anonymous, *Missing Friends*, 131-58. Chapter VI being his adventures on the Herbert River.

¹⁸⁴ J.A. Nilsson, "Mackay in the Nineteenth Century: How a New Frontier was Opened" (paper read to a meeting of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland, March 25, 1964), 365, accessed August 25, 2018, https://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ.../s00855804_1963_1964_7_2_355.pdf.

Image 24: Even Melanesian field workers were required to wear unsuitable European clothing. Melanesian labourers chipping at Mona Vale, Halifax, 1899.
(Source: Hinchinbrook Shire Council Library Photographic Collection)



The planters' lifestyle and their homes on the Herbert in the speculative stage were very different to the huts and cottages erected by the O'Connells and Ingham and the exertions of Neame and Haig as they constructed the first infrastructure. Commodious homes featured large verandahs accessed by French doors to catch available breezes. Ample rooms, including a dining room and drawing room were all genteelly furnished. Mixed tennis and croquet parties were enjoyed of a weekend, while the menfolk also went off on fishing and shooting expeditions and indulged in horseracing. Elegant leisurely dinners were followed by dancing and conversation. Ladies adorned in pearls and diamonds and dressed in silk or satin, wafting imported French perfume, waltzed across polished wooden floors to the accompaniment of one of the planters' wives or daughters on the grand piano. Horses and canopied buggies were available for the planters' wives to visit each other on their plantations.¹⁸⁵ Artist Lloyd Rees recalled his grandfather Burguez's houses as "a haven of graciousness, with life both inside and out, regulated to meet the climatic conditions."¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ de Vries, *Blue Ribbons, Bitter Bread*, 13-15.

¹⁸⁶ Frost, *East Coast Country*, 193.

Image 25: Tennis party at Gairloch Plantation house, 1875. (Source: State Library of Queensland. Image number 10269)



With their large landholdings, combined with access to capital, Herbert River planters and plantation managers aspired to a lifestyle that, if not quite matching the extravagance of sugar planters of Louisiana, was nevertheless, with their large breezy Queenslander houses, manicured gardens, tennis and golf courts, and 100-horse stables, in stark contrast to the cottages of the small settlers.¹⁸⁷ That contrast was noticed too in relation to the houses provided for the CSR management. The living arrangements for CSR's staff on its estate were spacious, breezy houses, surrounded by broad verandahs, shielded by blinds and lined with hammocks and cane chairs: "a suburb of private residences, quite different to the ordinary bush houses of Australia," as one writer put it.¹⁸⁸

THE PLANTERS' AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS OF THE HERBERT RIVER VALLEY

In the decade following the Gairloch Mill's first crushing, the planters gave no indication of having felt the urge to combine and cooperate for common ends. The only mention of planters meeting in the first years of the opening up of the Herbert was in February 1875,

¹⁸⁷ Vidonja Balanzategui, *The Herbert River Story*; Vidonja Balanzategui, "Material Aspects."

¹⁸⁸ "Townsville to the Herbert," *Argus*, February 23, 1884, 4.

when both planters and squatters gathered at Gairloch to discuss “the advisability of allowing or repelling the ‘Myalls’ in to the river.”¹⁸⁹ It took two meetings to reach a not unanimous agreement to not let them in. Just as in sugar industries across the world, it was not until the Herbert River planters felt that their backs were up against the wall and their profitability threatened that they combined to form an association.

There is a report of the planters of the Herbert having written a letter to John Murtagh Macrossan MLA in 1874 with a petition on labour which was tabled in parliament on 7 April, 1874.¹⁹⁰ Their actions may have been prompted by the planters of another district as, in the later discussion that went on in parliament, the Mackay planters were also referred to as asking the government for consideration of the same matter.¹⁹¹ The petition read:

Petition from certain employers of labour resident in the Kennedy district of North Queensland, representing the advantages of importing coloured labour to assist in rendering productive vast tracts of agricultural lands in the northern districts, which from heat of the climate and other causes cannot at present be successfully cultivated.¹⁹²

Further to that petition, the planters requested that the impediments which were perceived to be preventing the recruitment of Indian indentured labourers under the Coolie Immigration Act of 1864 be addressed.¹⁹³ Premier Arthur Macalister responded that there was no intention on the part of the government to agree to the introduction of any labourers other than those of European origin.¹⁹⁴

Like planters’ associations the world over, both the local and the broader attempts at an industrywide planters’ association were precipitated by either a perceived need to protect and promote the sugar industry, or by crisis. In 1876 it was suggested that a Queensland planters’ association be formed. It was put forward as a new idea, and no mention was

¹⁸⁹ “Lower Herbert River,” *Telegraph*, March 4, 1875, 3. Myalls – indigenous peoples of Australia living in a traditional way on Country. Derived from the Aboriginal Dharug language, *mayal* a stranger. *Macquarie Dictionary Third Edition* (Sydney: Macquarie Library, 1997), 1422.

¹⁹⁰ “Complimentary Dinner to Mr. Macalister,” *Northern Miners*, September 12, 1874, 3.

¹⁹¹ Queensland Parliament, “Legislative Assembly” [Hansard], July 7, 1874, 911.

¹⁹² Queensland Parliament, “Legislative Assembly” [Hansard], Register of Tabled Papers, First Session, Seventh Parliament, April 7, 1874, 84.

¹⁹³ Queensland Parliament, “Legislative Assembly” [Hansard], July 7, 1874, 907-25.

¹⁹⁴ Correspondence from J. Macrossan, T. Fitzgerald and W. Hodgkinson to Colonial Secretary, January 21, 1874, as quoted in “A Northern Manifesto,” *Brisbane Courier*, February 2, 1874, 4. Correspondence from A. Macalister to J. Macrossan, T. Fitzgerald and W. Hodgkinson, April 13, 1874 as quoted in “The Northern Manifesto,” *Brisbane Courier*, April 15, 1874, 3.

made of Whish's earlier 1872 attempt. It was thought that such a body could secure cane plants and new field inventions, and not only conduct shows but "deliberate on matters appertaining solely to their own peculiar industry. They might elect a few delegates—one from each district—to whose care might be confided the whole interests of the sugar producing districts."¹⁹⁵ The idea did not go away. In 1881 farmers and planters at Beenleigh formed a southern branch of the so-called Queensland Planters and Farmers' Association. The account of the formation indicates that those in attendance did not approach the task enthusiastically.¹⁹⁶

The first impetus to form an agricultural association on the Herbert came from another district. In March 1878 the MPA forwarded an abridged report of their meeting proceedings and requested the "Cardwell" planters "co-operate by forming similar associations in their districts. It was further suggested that the leading members of such associations be enrolled as honorary members of the Mackay Planters' Association."¹⁹⁷ Nothing came of that request.

Image 26: Samuel Griffith on an electioneering tour to the Herbert. Pictured with local landowners and businessmen including Lewis and Alfred Cowley, Frank Neame, Farrand Haig, and Charles Watson (a member of the HRFA), 1883. (Source: Hinchinbrook Shire Council Library Photographic Collection)



¹⁹⁵ "Far West Notes," *Brisbane Courier*, December 2, 1876, 5.

¹⁹⁶ "Planters' and Farmers' Association," *Week*, April 23, 1881, 7.

¹⁹⁷ Mackay Planters' Association 1st Minute Book, Special Meeting, March 29, 1878, Special Collections James Cook University, Townsville.

Two major crises galvanised the Herbert planters. The first was when the ministerialist government under Premier Thomas McIllwraith was replaced in 1883 by a liberal government under the leadership of Samuel Griffith. The former favoured the importation of coloured labour while the latter opposed it. The Herbert was included on Griffith's electioneering trail. The other crisis was peculiar to the Herbert: the locust plague of 1883-4. By early 1884 it was realised that Victoria and Hamleigh mills were not going to crush because their crops had been demolished by locusts which had swept "into the valley on a front extending over several miles ... The flights literally blackened the sky and the locusts ... [ate] everything before them."¹⁹⁸ Ripple Creek and Macknade escaped the scourge while Gairloch was affected in a minor way.¹⁹⁹

The next opportunity to associate occurred in 1884 when another suggestion was made to form a Queensland Planters' Association, and again the incentive was the ability of such an association "to exert influence on all matters affecting their interest."²⁰⁰ Though the Herbert River planters may have been responding to that rally-to-arms, it is more plausible that it was the locust plague crisis that precipitated a meeting held in March 1884. It may have been convened by Robert M. Boyd as it was held at the main house on Ripple Creek Plantation. Those attending were mostly planters and managers, CSR officers and Bryan Lynn, the Shire Clerk.²⁰¹

In July 1884 though, another meeting was held, this time of the 'Herbert River branch' of a planters' association. Curiously, a week later it was bemoaned in the *Queensland Figaro* that while there were southern planters' associations, there were none in the north and that there in "the great land of sugar, the planters remain supine."²⁰² This comment indicates that a broader affiliation of northern planters was struggling to get off the ground.

¹⁹⁸ Robert L. Shepherd, "The Macknade Sale: The Herbert River Story," *Herbert River Express*, January 25, 1992, 11.

¹⁹⁹ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 46. Common Mynah birds from India had been released the previous year at Hamleigh by Alfred Cowley in an attempt to control locusts and cane beetles with dubious success. Vidonja Balanzategui, *Herbert River Story*, 33.

²⁰⁰ "In Northern Queensland," *Argus*, March 15, 1884, 4.

²⁰¹ JAB Diary, "Robert Mitchell Boyd (1849-1912)," March 13, 1884.

²⁰² "Will Sugar-Planters Wake Up?" *Queensland Figaro*, July 19, 1884, 8.

Those attending this meeting on the Herbert were again planters, estate owners and managers.²⁰³ There are two interesting things to note about the meeting. In the first place the newspaper report noted that “There were very few of the outside public present, as until the eleventh hour the general impression was that the affair was private.”²⁰⁴ Was this inadvertent, or intentional, so as to exclude small selectors? The second thing of note is that a committee was formed to come up with ways to combat the locusts and Ebenezer Cowley read a long paper on 'The Locusts'.²⁰⁵ Organisation and information would have benefited small farmers of any of the crops as well as planters, but given that planters regarded themselves as a superior class it is not surprising that the small farmers were excluded from the meeting.

Several meetings were held in quick succession, hosted by planters in turn at their plantations.²⁰⁶ At those meetings, a subscription amount was settled on, a large group of indentured workers organised to conduct a raid on the locusts at Stone River where the insects were driven into pits and burned. Letters were written to the colonial secretary requesting that the Native Birds Extension Act be applied to the Herbert district, that birds which fed on locusts be exempted from extermination, and that a local pound be granted.²⁰⁷ These actions confirm that the issue of locusts was a preoccupation of the new planter’s association, and with reason, given that they had brought the largest mill, CSR’s Victoria Mill, to a standstill.

One of the Boyds of Ripple Creek seems to have been the instigator driving the formation of the planters’ association and one of them was credited with wanting to form a planters’ association for the exhibition of sugar.²⁰⁸ It is not clear whether that was through a desire

²⁰³ “The Recidiviste Question,” *Brisbane Courier*, July 2, 1884, 6; “Planters' Troubles on the Herbert,” *Queenslander*, July 12, 1884, 68.

²⁰⁴ “Planters' Troubles on the Herbert,” *Queenslander*, July 12, 1884, 68.

²⁰⁵ “Planters' Troubles on the Herbert,” *Queenslander*, July 12, 1884, 68.

²⁰⁶ JAB Diary, “Robert Mitchell Boyd (1849-1912),” August 4, 1884.

²⁰⁷ *Brisbane Courier*, July 19, 1884, 5; “Sugar Industry,” *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, October 18, 1884, 791; “Planters' Troubles on the Herbert,” *Queenslander*, July 12, 1884, 68.

²⁰⁸ “Will Sugar-Planters Wake Up?” *Queensland Figaro*, July 19, 1884, 8; “Townsville,” *Brisbane Courier*, June 16, 1884, 5 as quoted in JAB Diary, “Robert Mitchell Boyd (1849-1912).” More likely to have been Robert Mitchell who was the active business partner. John Archibald, while assisting his brother as manager, enjoyed the lifestyle of the Valley and hunting and boating trips with his Melanesian and Indigenous companions. He is now recalled as a collector of artefacts and natural specimens. See Rosita Henry, “John Archibald Boyd,” *Objects of Possession: Artefacts Transactions in the Wet Tropics of North Queensland: Providing the first Systematic History of Ethnographic Collecting in the Rainforest Region of NQ, Australia*, accessed August 12, 2017, http://www.jcucollections.org/?page_id=143.

to exhibit the quality of their product or an inclination to promote sound cultivation. It is doubtful whether discussion about a separate show society to exhibit sugar in Townsville after the crushing season would have been enough to bring planters and plantation management from across the Valley to a meeting when there were greater issues facing them. After all, the HRP&AA had already held its first annual show in 1883, and W. Canny, a driving force in the formation of the Herbert River Planters' Association, had played a prominent role in the establishment of the HRP&AA. The locust plague, and not another show society was almost certainly the motive driving the formation of a planters' association.

Profitability was also threatened when the world sugar price dropped in 1884 due to the flooding of the British and American markets with European beet sugar. Also in that year, the first of the Pacific Island Labourers Amendment Acts was passed which restricted, whereby Melanesian labour could be employed, foreshadowing the eventual elimination of indentured labour. The legislation caused such alarm that a credit squeeze resulted.²⁰⁹ That a labour issue provided the crisis that prompted the planters to try to present a united front, and to which they directed all their associative energies, is probably because, as Wegner suggested, it was the one issue that they thought they could control.²¹⁰ Certainly the MPFA, which persistently enjoined the Herbert planters to form an association or affiliate with them, or at least support them in petitions, was particularly active. When the amended Immigration Act of 1884 was passed in Queensland, allowing planters to sponsor the travel of European indentured labourers, the MPFA put together a pamphlet which outlined for prospective labourers the conditions under which they would be working. This described climate and wages, and outlined what prospects of farm ownership were available after they had completed their indentures.²¹¹

In 1885 a segment of the rules and objects of what was claimed to be the Herbert River Farmers' Association were published in the *Capricornian*. That the rules and objects of the HRFA would have been published in 1885, three years after the formation of that

²⁰⁹ Wegner, "Hinchinbrook," 123.

²¹⁰ Wegner, "Hinchinbrook," 123-25.

²¹¹ Queensland Parliament. "Immigration Act of 1882 Amendment Act of 1884," 1643. The original act, and its subsequent amendment, were formulated to encourage and regulate the flow of suitable European immigrants into Queensland and direct them to appropriate employment; "Queensland as a Field for European Immigrants," *Maryborough Chronicle, Wide Bay and Burnett Advertiser*, November 15, 1884, 5; Queensland Legislative Assembly, "Hansard Parliamentary Debates," 19 November 1884, 1480-82.

small farmers' association, is perplexing but not impossible to explain. If they are in fact the rules and objects of the Herbert River Planters' Association, the misnaming of the association in the report can be attributed to the fact that newspapers regularly confused the names of associations. The published segments were practically word-for-word the revised objects and rules of the MPA when it rebranded as the MPFA in 1882.²¹² Given that four years earlier the MPA had contacted the Herbert planters and suggested that they form an association, it would be perfectly normal for them to request the rules and objects of the MPFA to model theirs on. The rules and objects stated the association's intent to be both a lobbying body and a means to access rural extension; to cooperate with kindred associations; and to protect sugar interests, though all agricultural endeavours (not only sugar) would be encouraged.²¹³

The planters' determination to secure legislation that favoured coloured or cheap labour saw that group use the separation movement as a platform to further the labour cause.²¹⁴ The next evidence of the Herbert River Planters' Association was a letter to *The Times of London* on 25 January, 1886. This letter repudiated the idea that Queensland sugar growers were participating in and promoting an exploitative labour traffic and justified the northern separation movement. The letter was signed by The Planters' and Farmers' Associations of North Queensland for the Herbert River Planters' Association (W. Canny, Chairman), the Herbert River Farmers' Association (Harald J. Hoffensetz, Chairman) and the Mackay Planters' and Farmers' Association (M.R. McCrae, Chairman).²¹⁵ The letter strongly articulated the difference in interests between southern and northern farmers and planters in regard to labour needs indicating the impediments faced by those who sought to form a planter body that represented all sugar districts.

Rockhampton's *Morning Bulletin* reported in early July 1886 that Wood Bros. and Boyd were circulating a petition written on behalf of all those with interests in the sugar

²¹² Mackay Planters' Association 1st Minute Book, Meeting of Revision Committee of Mackay Planters Association, July 18, 1882, Special Collections James Cook University Townsville; Mackay Planters' and Farmers' Association. Objects of Association and Rules, Deposit 142/3579, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

²¹³ "Northern Mail News," *Capricornian*, May 9, 1885, 16.

²¹⁴ "Northern Queensland and the Labour Traffic," *Times*, January 25, 1886 responding to an article published in the *Times*, June 18, 1885; "Political Banquet," *Queensland Figaro and Punch* April 14, 1888, 15; Moore, "The Transformation of the Mackay," 18.

²¹⁵ "Northern Queensland and the Labour Traffic," *Times*, January 25, 1886 responding to an article published in the *Times*, June 18, 1885.

industry and were asking for signatures. It was planned that the petition would be sent on to parliament. Whether this was being done in the name of the Herbert River Planters' Association is unknown. The petition covered a number of issues including bonuses, labour and competition from European beet sugar.²¹⁶ CSR's general manager, E. Knox, wrote to Boyd in July 1886 that he could not sign a petition which requested reciprocity with Victoria because of CSR's sugar business in NSW. It was also his opinion that any attempt to obtain an export bounty would be fruitless.²¹⁷ Nevertheless, in 1887 J.L. Knox is recorded as accompanying a deputation which met with the Queensland chief secretary to request reciprocal arrangements for the sugar industry with Victoria. The deputation included eight members of parliament, five members of the Bundaberg Planters' Association (BPA), two representatives of the Herbert River Association and representatives of various chambers of commerce.²¹⁸ While other planters attended the meeting as delegates of associations, CSR distanced itself from those groups.

CSR management was careful to only participate in, or encourage, proposals that suited its business plan. It tended to stand aloof from such associations. Always secretive, its distance did more to hinder than aid planters' endeavours to present a unified front. CSR's cold, reserved manner was experienced by an agricultural reporter writing for the *Queenslander* who visited the Herbert in 1887. He found CSR's Victoria Plantation a "pretentious sugar estate" when he went there hoping to talk to the manager about central milling and Victoria Mill's arrangement of taking cane from small growers. To his chagrin he was received with "decided discourtesy" by the manager, the kind of which he said he had never before encountered in any of his dealings with squatters, other sugar planters or the "humblest struggling homestead man."²¹⁹

Several delegations from the Herbert met with government representatives and petitions were formulated from 1886 to 1888 relating to parochial matters. Causes petitioned for were an Asiatic wing for the Ingham hospital, means to connect Ingham with the north

²¹⁶ *Morning Bulletin*, July 6, 1886, and correspondence from R. M. Boyd to Editor, *Queensland*, July 10, 1886 quoted in full in JAB Diary, "Robert Mitchell Boyd (1849-1912)."

²¹⁷ Correspondence from E.W. Knox to R.M. Boyd, July 8, 1886, Deposit 142/1048, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

²¹⁸ *Weekly Times*, August 20, 1887, 14; "The Sugar Industry. Reciprocity with Victoria," *Week*, August 20, 1887, 23; Pugh, *Pugh's Almanac and Queensland Directory 1887*, 77, 429.

²¹⁹ "Some Northern Sugar Plantations," *Queenslander*, December 31, 1887, 1071.

side of the river, and a railway to be built from Dungeness via Halifax to Ingham.²²⁰ Whether the idea of petitioning the government on these matters came from meetings of the planters' association cannot be known, but certainly planters were amongst the petitioners.

With the return of the Neame brothers to the Valley, the idea of an industrywide planters' association was rekindled. In correspondence between Knox and C.E. Forster in early November 1888, Knox referred to a previous communication from Forster in which he had mentioned a "movement ... initiated by Mr. Neame." What can be construed from this communication is that the 'movement' was some form of plan to present a united planter petition to government regarding the perceived labour problems. Neame had written to Knox about the possibility of holding a conference in Townsville but Knox was not keen, preferring for the planters to first present their views as evidence to the commission. He felt the findings of the commission, should they be in accord with the views of the witnesses, would carry more weight than those tabled at a planters' conference.²²¹

The press announced in March 1889 that a Queensland-wide planters' association was about to be formed.²²² Meanwhile, in the same month, Frank Neame was writing to the colonial secretary in his capacity as honorary secretary, Queensland Planters' Association.²²³ Knox's view must have prevailed because a newspaper article recorded that the planned original meeting had been deferred upon the appointment of the royal commission. In 1889, CSR officer C.E. Forster, as a member of the planters' association, attended the inaugural meeting of this association in Townsville on 29 April, 1889 to represent all of CSR's mills.²²⁴ Planters from Mackay northwards attended the planters' conference. Frank Neame and Robert M. Boyd attended on behalf of the Herbert River

²²⁰ "Ingham Requirements," *Brisbane Courier*, March 8, 1886, 5; Queensland Government, "Parliamentary Debates" [Hansard] Legislative Assembly, October 20, 1886, 1307; Pugh, *Pugh's Almanac and Queensland Directory* 1887, 482; Queensland Parliament, "Arthur Neame, Petition: Proposed Railway from Dungeness to Ingham, Herbert River, 1888," Legislative Assembly 129-1888, Parliamentary Library, Brisbane.

²²¹ Correspondence from E.W. Knox to C.E. Forster, November 27, 1888, Deposit 142/1549, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National Archives, Canberra.

²²² "Telegraphic Intelligence," *Northern Miner*, March 8, 1889, 3.

²²³ Correspondence from Frank Neame to the colonial secretary, March 29, 1889, Correspondence-inwards, Letter number 3073 of 1889, Series ID 5253, Item ID 847306, Queensland State Archives, Brisbane. See Appendix 2.

²²⁴ Helen Irvine, "A Genealogy of Calculations at an Early Queensland Sugar Mill," *Accounting History* 17 (2012): 193-219, accessed August 11, 2017, <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/50560/>.

mills (other than Victoria). It was unanimously decided to form a central association “to conserve and promote the interests of tropical agriculturalists throughout the colony.”²²⁵ To begin with, a board of advice was formed; members would be representatives of those planter associations in existence, and representatives of areas where there was no planter association. Frank Neame was elected as the president of the board.

That this should be an exclusively planters’ conference is perplexing on several counts. That Neame would represent the planters’ association in a public forum is understandable in the sense that he was first and foremost a planter. But he was also the president of the HRFA, and that association was no longer the only small sugar farmers’ association in Queensland’s sugar districts. As seen with the letter to *The Times of London*, it was not unprecedented for planters and farmers to combine forces. Why Neame, who was supposed to have initiated the planter ‘movement’, did not see fit to make it a planters’ and farmers’ movement is perplexing.²²⁶ Furthermore, a united front of planters and farmers would be numerically more powerful and have greater resonance. Wegner commented that the farmers “had little to do with the 1890 Planters’ Association.”²²⁷ It would seem that they were not even invited.

Those attending the Townsville Planters’ Conference discussed the central mill system and while supporting it in principle, decided that it was too early to settle unequivocally on that system. Rather it was suggested that indentured labour should be extended, and planters should explore alternative plantation crops.²²⁸ The activities of this planters’ association can only be lightly tracked through newspaper reports. In 1891, the association, identified as a “new society” whose founders were James Mackenzie, Frank and Arthur Neame amongst others, was said to be still looking for labour solutions to ward off the demise of the plantation system. The association proposed that Italians and Germans could be encouraged to immigrate as an alternative labour supply and that its

²²⁵ “A Sugar Planters’ Conference,” *Toowoomba Chronicle and Darling Downs General Advertiser*, May 4, 1889, 4.

²²⁶ See Wegner, “Hinchinbrook,” 126n65, who also regarded it as ironic that he was a member of both the farmers’ and the planters’ associations simultaneously.

²²⁷ Wegner, “Hinchinbrook,” 165.

²²⁸ “A Sugar Planters’ Conference,” *Toowoomba Chronicle and Darling Downs General Advertiser*, May 4, 1889, 4.

members would guarantee to provide work to Piedmontese immigrants who would arrive in 1891 on the *Jumna*.²²⁹

The successful incursion of small farmers, formation of small farmers associations, and government support for central mills were overwhelming evidence that a sugar industry in tropical north Queensland worked by small farmers supplying to central mills would progress. It was patent that Queensland's plantation days were numbered, yet perversely, the planters when faced with the labour crisis locked ranks as a class across the sugar districts rather than working with all the stakeholders. The 1889 planters' meeting in Townsville, and the resulting plans to form an industrywide planters' association, illustrate this point. Nevertheless, as can be observed, CSR management was reticent about participating or encouraging the suggestions made by fellow planters, preferring to negotiate directly with government. In 1892, for instance, Knox met personally with Samuel Griffith to advise him that should the importation of Melanesian labour be renewed, the company would pledge to continue their operations in the Herbert Valley.²³⁰ This was despite the fact that planters and farmers were making group representations.

CSR management prompted the forming of the HRFA and the company agreed to take smallholders' cane in 1884. The Neames were early supporters of the concept of farming by smallholders and of smallholders' empowerment through association, with Frank Neame accepting presidency of the HRFA. However, when he requested, on the pretext of ill health, that meetings be held in the more formal surroundings of a hotel rather than the homes of the small settlers, he robbed the meetings of one of their valued benefits: the opportunity for the farmers' wives and children to also gather together for the rare pleasure of a meal, conversation and play. On the other hand, Arthur Neame, who seemed very at home in the Valley, was not above calling in on small farmers on his journeys from one plantation to another.²³¹ A reading of Arthur Neame's diary and Knox's letters quickly reveals that the Neames and Knoxes were very different kinds of men, yet, as

²²⁹ "Indented Foreign Labor," *Daily Northern Argus*, July 16, 1891, 2. The *Jumna* immigrants were brought to Australia under a scheme to replace Melanesian labour with European labour. See F. Galassi, *Sotto La Croce del Sud Under the Southern Cross: The Jumna Immigrants of 1891* (James Cook University: Townsville, 1991).

²³⁰ Correspondence from E.W. Knox to W.A. Farquhar, February 18, 1892, Deposit 142/1550, CSR Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

²³¹ Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, 78.

was seen in relation to the planters' associations, Frank identified first and foremost as a planter.

Planters continued to make ad hoc individual efforts to promote and protect the local industry. For instance, CSR manager G.B. Forrest and other planters met with Minister of the Department of Agriculture, A.J. Thynne, in Halifax in May 1897 to discuss a government experimental farm that was being proposed for the north. The planters suggested to Thynne that the farm be located on the Herbert.²³² J.A. (Archie) Boyd remarked that planters would have been happily relieved of having to use their own land, money and time in experimenting.²³³ It does not appear that they made representation through an association but were happy to allow the CSR manager and some of their number to make the approach for an experimental farm on their behalf.

If planters had combined, Moore has observed, the outcome for them might have been very different.²³⁴ Perhaps the Herbert planters' efforts to form either a local or an industrywide planters' association were half-hearted because their privileged social and financial positions made them complacent. Many of their number were personally acquainted with legislators, and their industry was highly valued for the product it provided and for its strategic location in the tropical north. Another reason why the Herbert planters failed to form a viable association could be the absentee nature of ownership in the speculative period. While de Vries indicated that four NanKivell sons were managing mills or estates there is no evidence that they were involved in the associative efforts. The other NanKivell plantation managers were, but they were landowners in their own right and therefore had a self-interested connection to the Herbert. Another potent reason for the failure of the Herbert River planters to present a united front was that the most powerful of their number was CSR. One contemporaneous writer opined that planters as a class were "well able without combination to protect themselves against whatever adverse influences may be brought to bear on that industry."²³⁵ While this may have been true for sugar industries in other parts of the world, the planters in those areas did not have to contend with a landowning, white, small

²³² "Ingham Notes," *North Queensland Register*, May 12, 1897, 32.

²³³ JAB Diary, "Robert Mitchell Boyd (1849-1912)," correspondence JAB to Joseph Wood, April 22, 1887, letter no. 153.

²³⁴ Moore, "The Transformation of the Mackay," 69.

²³⁵ "Co-operation Amongst Farmers," *Queenslander*, January 3, 1880, 17.

farmer class. On the Herbert, when the planters attempted to unite, they did it as a class rather than combining as an industry with the small farmer associations. In fact, they were pitted against the small farmers, who astutely used their association to align themselves with the planter who was most likely able to weather all the crises. Ultimately, the failure to combine successfully, either as a class or with the small farmers was the planters' undoing.

THE DEMISE OF THE PLANTER

The reasons for the ultimate demise of the planter in the Australian sugar industry, and the means taken to successfully transform the industry's production unit, have been succinctly elucidated by Moore, Griggs and Shlomowitz. Their analyses show that the Herbert's planters succumbed to the same forces that challenged the plantation mode of production elsewhere in the world. However, elsewhere planters formed powerful associations and the plantation mode of production was not always defeated. Moore suggested that the Australian planters' failure to form effective associations like those of the small farmers may have contributed to their demise, while Graves argued that the small farmer pressure groups contributed to the demise of plantation production.²³⁶ Beyond Moore's hint that the Australian planters' failure to form effective associations may have been a factor in their demise, the scholarship has not explored regional examples of planters' and small farmers' agricultural associations in order to implicate the strengths or weaknesses of those association as determining factors taking the Queensland sugar industry from plantation to small farming.²³⁷ Nor have small farmer agricultural associations been explicitly attributed.

Labour troubles, 'rust' disease, grubs, locusts, poor soils, low prices, drought, poor management and over-capitalisation all challenged the Australia plantation enterprises. This thesis argues that on the Herbert, a further challenge was a viable small settler group with strong associative tendencies. Shlomowitz proposed that the strongest impetus for

²³⁶ Moore, "The Transformation of the Mackay," 69; Graves, "The Abolition of the Queensland Labour Trade," 48.

²³⁷ Bill and John Kerr have written about the sugar associations in the various sugar districts in the context of those districts' histories. A particular example is Bill Kerr, *Stand Together: The Story of Cane Grower Representation at Mackay* (Mackay: Mackay Canegrowers Limited, 2009). He identified the Pioneer River Farmers' Association and the later Pioneer River Farmers' and Graziers' Association, emphasising those associations' importance in maintaining the momentum of small farming after 1892, Kerr, *Stand Together*, 34-36.

change was labour.²³⁸ Griggs suggested that the precipitating event was the drastic fall in sugar price after 1884.²³⁹ The Herbert River planters were not able to weather the price collapse because of the economic inefficiencies of their plantation-produced sugar, which included over capitalisation, unsustainable debt levels, wasteful use of labour and speculative holding of thousands of acres of unused land. Moore emphasised that globally at the same time, sugar industries were adopting the latest developments in milling technology and scientific analysis, and economies of scale in all facets of sugar production.²⁴⁰ If Australian planters were to compete, they would have to do likewise. In the Herbert River Valley, CSR was the only planter in a position to effect the appropriate economic efficiencies. It was also the only planter enterprise that the white small selectors had confidence in.

In Australia, in contrast to other sugar growing areas of the world, the untenable position of the planters was further exacerbated by government policy. Government supported the creation of a yeoman class of European farmers for social and political reasons and in order to stimulate agricultural production.²⁴¹ In the tropical north there was strong motivation to promote settlement for economic development and defence. On the Herbert there were small settlers who aspired to the yeoman ideal of land ownership. They also determined that sugar farming would offer them the best chance of making a living from the land. Government went so far as to legislate to provide funds to erect farmer-owned cooperative mills and for protection of the domestic market from cheap, overseas imports.²⁴² Though the small famers on the Herbert rejected the proposal of a cooperative mill, they used their association to negotiate with CSR to take their crops. Government also legislated for a cessation of the use of indentured labour and the repatriation of remaining labourers. As a result, on the Herbert, sugar farms came to be worked by families assisted by gangs of white labour during the harvest.

The demise of the planter can be charted chronologically beginning with the ‘rust’ disease of 1875 and 1876, the fall in the world sugar price in 1884, and the worldwide depression of 1891 to 1893. The years of 1875 and 1876 were bad ones for ‘rust’ disease across the

²³⁸ Shlomowitz, “The Search for Institutional Equilibrium,” 91-123; Shlomowitz, “Melanesian Labor,” 327-61.

²³⁹ Griggs, “Origins and Early Development,” 57.

²⁴⁰ Moore, “Queensland Sugar Industry,” 46; Moore, “The Transformation of the Mackay” 156.

²⁴¹ Griggs, “Origins and Early Development,” 57; Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid*, 25.

²⁴² Griggs, “Origins and Early Development,” 57; Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid*, 25.

Australian sugar industry. The Valley was particularly hard hit with entire cane crops decimated by the disease.²⁴³ While cane disease was to blame, there were other equally cogent reasons why ventures failed on the Herbert in those years. Lack of experience and knowledge of tropical agriculture, a reliance on capital either borrowed or advanced by family, outdated mill machinery, and insufficient knowledge of the technology of sugar milling were all significant contributing factors which were further compounded by the fall in sugar price and worldwide depression. However, it was also in 1876 that land legislation enabled small selectors to take up land on favourable conditions on the Herbert.

The first wave of planters was replaced by companies with access to prodigious amounts of capital who could build large, sophisticated mills. However, they were using money borrowed on mortgage at high rates of interest when the economy was buoyant. Their monopolisation of the industry was brought to a sudden halt when the world sugar price tumbled by a third due to massive dumping of European beet sugar on the British and American markets in 1884. Foreclosures resulted.²⁴⁴ Furthermore, the unsustainability of the vertically integrated mode of production was further impressed on planters as Melanesian labour became increasingly difficult to procure, expensive, and its use unpalatable to the broader Australian community. Planters had little choice but to consider ways to adapt.²⁴⁵ One adaption was leasing land to small growers. White, small growers on the Herbert rejected the idea of leasing and had little faith in the speculative planters who operated on the Herbert in that second wave of plantation enterprise.

Though there were planters who, even in the boom period, accepted cane from outside growers, there were those who resisted change and the challenge to their hegemony. The sugar industry was already in a phase of protracted depression when the worldwide economic depression of 1891 to 1893 further exacerbated the planters' untenable position. In Queensland, the effects were felt through reduced export income for sugar and a reduced flow of credit, which was critical for those operations that were carrying high levels of debt. The Pacific Island Labourers Extension Act 1892 gave temporary

²⁴³ See Griggs, "Rust' Disease Outbreaks," 413-37, for a thorough discussion of 'rust' disease and its effects on the nineteenth-century Australian sugar industry.

²⁴⁴ Roy Connolly, *John Drysdale and the Burdekin* (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1964), 31-33.

²⁴⁵ Legislative Acts: beginning with Queensland Parliament, "The Pacific Island Labourers Act of 1880 Amendment Act of 1884"; "The Pacific Island Labourers Act of 1880 Amendment Act of 1885"; "The Sugar Works Guarantee Act of 1893."

relieve to both planters and small farmers.²⁴⁶ This was greeted unfavourably by the wider population and elements of the labour movement. A florid poem published in the *Worker* in April 1892 commented critically on the planters of the Herbert and their continued use of indentured labour.²⁴⁷ Regardless, the act did provoke a hastening in the pace of plantations being sold and the construction of, or conversion to, central mills. This resulted in an increase in the acreage under cane and cane produced per acre by small farmers.

It is difficult to establish from this distance of time who of the very first group of planters initially intended staying on the Herbert, and whether they would have if disastrous events had not befallen them. After all, when their plantations and mills floundered and were repossessed by the banks, they were not always in a hurry to leave the district. Considering the first would-be planters, for instance, we see that William McDowall, as a grazier, took up several properties west of Ingham. He was a speculative purchaser with a good eye for land and stock and bought pastoral property after pastoral property.²⁴⁸ His penchant for property purchase prompted the tongue-in-cheek comment that “For an hour or two Mr. McDowall was also the owner of Springfield...”.²⁴⁹ His descendants are even today still well-known names in the pastoral industry. The O’Connells did not promptly leave the north either, though Maurice was dead by mid-July 1869, having taken his own life when he and his group ran out of water on an exploratory venture, undertaken when he was commissioner of crown lands.²⁵⁰ His brother John was still resident on the Herbert at the time of Maurice’s death and with the forfeiture of their properties registered as a licenced surveyor.²⁵¹

William Bairstow Ingham’s disastrous venture, Ings, was said to have cost him £60 000 of which he was reputed to have recouped only £600, though Moore doubted the veracity of the investment amount.²⁵² Attempting to ward off inevitable losses he converted his

²⁴⁶ Queensland Government, “Pacific Island Labourers (Extension) Act of 1892.”

²⁴⁷ See Appendix 2.

²⁴⁸ “William McDowall,” *Pastoral Review*, 16 September 16, 1918, 84.

²⁴⁹ “Some Tableland Stations,” *Northern Miner*, February 24, 1910, 2.

²⁵⁰ “Bowen,” *Warwick Argus and Tenterfield Chronicle*, January 20, 1869, 2; “Brisbane,” *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, January 19, 1869, 4; Queensland Government, *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol. X January 1 to December 31, 1869, 35.

²⁵¹ Queensland Government, *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol. X January 1 to December 31, 1869. 652, 812, 848, 1758.

²⁵² Moore, “The Life and Death of William Bairstow Ingham,” 415; Barrie, *Minding My Business*, 69-78.

machinery to function as a steam sawmill sawing the prized red cedar and plied the *Louisa* as a tender to coastal steamers. Moore described Ingham as “typical of small-time frontier entrepreneurs,” optimistic but often naive, attempting ventures beyond their capabilities.²⁵³ Seeking adventure and another outlet for his enthusiasm and enterprise he locked up his cottage, leaving all his personal possessions behind, and sailed away to the Trinity Inlet and the new settlement of Cairns. He was lured to New Guinea by the discovery of gold there, and in 1878, while acting as an unofficial government agent, he met his death at the hands of a group of inhabitants of Brooker Island.²⁵⁴ While Ingham may have hoped to advance from cottage to spacious Queenslander, and a manner of life befitting “William Ingham J.P. planter of the Herbert River, son of the squire of Blake Hall,” it evaded him.²⁵⁵

Similarly, for the Mackenzies, the Wallers, and Haig and Miles, wealth and prosperity did not materialise with the sugar plantation life. The effects of the ‘rust’ outbreak were devastating and contributed to the Mackenzies being forced off Gairloch. With the threat of the Bank of New South Wales foreclosing, James relinquished the postal service in 1875 and took a position as district roads inspector, leaving Isabella together with her husband and her brother Alfred to manage Gairloch as best they could.²⁵⁶ The mill and plantation were still at work when the entire operation was offered for sale in November 1875.²⁵⁷ Once it was repossessed by the bank, Alfred moved to Townsville where he married Helen Elliott, daughter of police magistrate Gilbert W. Elliott, and became the manager of the Joint Australian Stock Bank.²⁵⁸ William and Isabella tried to continue farming for a period, dabbling in coffee, but consequently may have returned home to Scotland.²⁵⁹ After his stint as district roads inspector, James returned to sugar planting. His property, called Seaforth, located in the Lower Burdekin River area, was to prove no more successful for him than Gairloch.²⁶⁰ Alexander went on to work at Marian Mill and,

²⁵³ Moore, “The Life and Death of William Bairstow Ingham,” 416, 431n17.

²⁵⁴ Moore, “The Life and Death of William Bairstow Ingham,” 425-26.

²⁵⁵ Moore, “The Life and Death of William Bairstow Ingham,” 416.

²⁵⁶ “Lower Herbert,” *Brisbane Courier*, October 23, 1875, 7.

²⁵⁷ “Classified Advertising: Sugar Property for Sale,” *Brisbane Courier*, November 20, 1875, 7.

²⁵⁸ “Family Notices,” *Queenslander*, January 11, 1879, 33; National Trust, “Currajong Tells the Story of North Queensland,” *Heritage Centre Education Kit*, sheet 3 issue 2, April 2006, accessed March 22, 2018, https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/wpcontent/uploads/2016/02/NT_Ed_Kit_03.pdf.

²⁵⁹ “The Exhibition,” *Brisbane Courier*, August 24, 1876, 3.

²⁶⁰ James supplies his own autobiographical detail in a newspaper article: “The Case for the Sugar Planters,” *Brisbane Courier*, February 5, 1890, 7.

in an engineering capacity, dabbled in invention, in 1881 registering an application for a patent for “Improvements in the construction of vacuum pans.”²⁶¹

Ferrand Haig’s career as a planter in the Herbert River Valley spanned 15 years. Bemerside had been established with both private and borrowed funds. It ran into trouble in 1875 when falling sugar prices and cane disease limited the potential to realise on investments. The Queensland National Bank repossessed the plantation in that year and sent in Rawdon S. Briggs to manage it. He was succeeded by Alfred S. Cowley. In 1881 the process of selling off the plantation and mill began, and the mill was consequently closed down and dismantled in 1882.²⁶² In 1883, with another advance of family money, Haig tried to recoup his losses on a property he called Brae Meadows (Braemeadows) on Palm Creek, a tributary of the Herbert. He stocked this new selection with cattle. Living primitively at Braemeadows and tending cattle in wet weather took a toll on his health and he moved to Townsville where he died of pulmonary tuberculosis in 1884.²⁶³ He never married. On his death he was described as a grazier, not a planter, and a provision of his will provided that the proceeds of the sale of his personal estate were to be used to repay the 1883 loan advanced to him by his brother John Haig of Bray Court, Maidenhead, Berkshire, distiller.²⁶⁴

Henry Miles also stayed on in the district after Bemerside was repossessed. Like Haig, Miles refinanced with family money and stocked his property with cattle. Located on Trebonne Creek, the property was called Miles Pocket. That property too was resumed by the bank in order to reconcile his existing debts and he consequently returned to England where he managed the family estate.²⁶⁵ On the death of his nephew, Sir Cecil Miles, he succeeded to the Baronetcy to become the 4th Baronet.²⁶⁶

Macknade was also affected by ‘rust’ disease in 1875 and 1876 but survived due, most likely, to astute management and the planting of a more rust-resistant variety.²⁶⁷ Arthur

²⁶¹ “Patents,” *Leader*, September 30, 1882, 8.

²⁶² Barrie, *Minding My Business*, 46; “Lower Herbert,” *Queenslander*, June 30, 1877, 6; “Progress of Settlement on the Herbert River, Kennedy District,” *Brisbane Courier*, March 8, 1879, 6; “Local & General News,” *Capricornian*, January 22, 1881, 10.

²⁶³ Barrie, *Minding My Business*, 48.

²⁶⁴ “Probate of will of Farrand Haig of Herbert River, Queensland [Australia], grazier; made 29 Dec. 1883,” ACC/1394/007, London Metropolitan Archives, City of London.

²⁶⁵ Barrie, *Minding My Business*, 48.

²⁶⁶ Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, 59-60.

²⁶⁷ “Lower Herbert,” *Week*, August 24, 1878, 21; Griggs, “‘Rust’ Disease Outbreaks,” 428.

and Frank Neame decided to return to England in 1883 after selling Macknade to Fanning, NanKivell and Sons for £60 000 (£30 000 to be paid up front, the rest to remain on mortgage). Knowing that all of Fanning, NanKivell and Sons' plantations had been running at huge losses, and that the company was still heavily in debt, Frank Neame returned in 1886 to assess the situation. When negotiations to enter into a partnership failed, Arthur also came back to the Valley and in 1887 the Neame brothers resumed management of their plantation. The Neames were still owed a large part of the purchase money. As Fanning, Nankivell and Sons were so far in debt, they relinquished Macknade to the Neames in lieu of the money owed. Arthur attributed the debacle to over-extension on the part of Fanning, Nankivell and Sons.²⁶⁸

The Neames were shocked with what they found on their return. Arthur recorded that cattle were camping in the cane fields which were ruined and overgrown with weeds. The mill, while equipped with good machinery, was badly laid out and the buildings in need of repair. He wrote that "no one would have believed that place had been occupied for the last two years."²⁶⁹ It took them several years to get the plantation and mill back to making money. Arthur stated in his memoirs that he had hoped to stay in the Valley and that his and Frank's sons would carry on the enterprise. On Frank's death in 1891 Arthur continued on at Macknade for another five years but then decided to sell up and return to England. His own health was deteriorating and he found that he could not find a manager whom he could trust while absent from the plantation.²⁷⁰ Only the Neames had managed to span the two plantation phases, returning reluctantly to England when it was clear that the plantation mode of production had come to an end in the Valley.

Meanwhile, it appears that financially all did not go well for the Wallers, and in 1889 though still identifying as 'sugar planters', both were declared insolvent.²⁷¹ Onslow remained in the Valley until his death, aged 51, in 1898.²⁷² Edwin transitioned to small farming and continued to grow cane on his property, Maragen, as a contractor supplying to Ripple Creek. In 1906 he was representing his fellow 'European' small farmers who were very unhappy with the price they were receiving for their cane from Ripple Creek

²⁶⁸ Neame, *Arthur of Diary Neame*, 108.

²⁶⁹ Neame, *Arthur of Diary Neame*, 108.

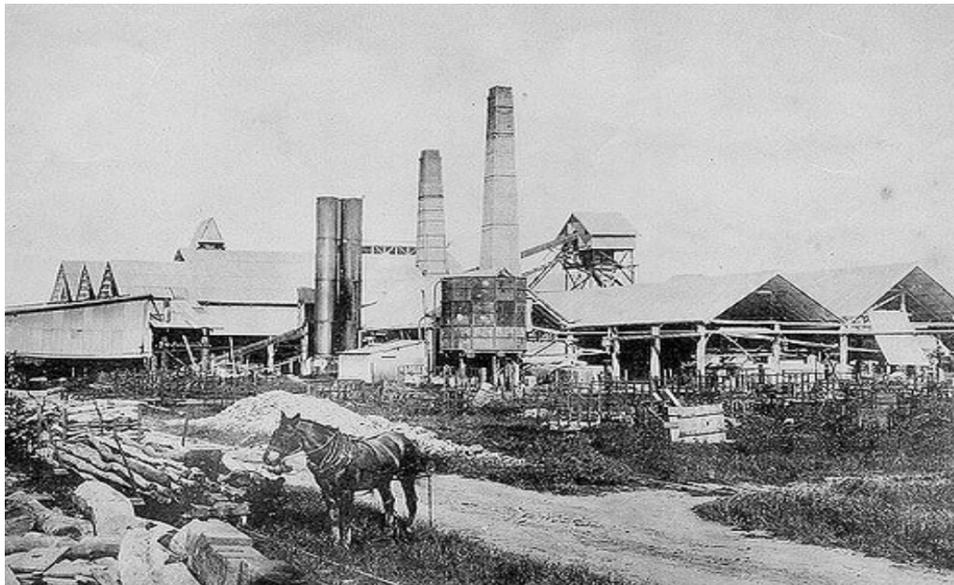
²⁷⁰ Neame, *Arthur of Diary Neame*, 114-15, 120.

²⁷¹ "Current News," *Queenslander*, March 2, 1889, 389; and Pugh, *Pugh's Almanac* 1889, 100, 145, 138.

²⁷² "Family Notices," *Northern Miner*, August 2, 1898, 2.

Mill compared to that being offered by CSR.²⁷³ He continued farming for at least another decade and then left the Valley to retire in Brisbane where he died in 1935, identified as a retired sugar grower rather than planter.²⁷⁴

Image 27: Neame's Macknade Mill acquired as a working concern by CSR, 1896.
(Source: Hinchinbrook Shire Council Library Photographic Collection)



Not only did Edward Fanning offload Macknade, but when he visited the Valley in 1887, he planned to cut Gairloch into 50 to 150 acre farms for sale or lease “to men with small means.”²⁷⁵ This would appear to have been too little too late. Susanna de Vries recorded that despite George NanKivell’s entreaties to Thomas NanKivell to travel north to see the situation for himself, he did not and even failed to respond to letters detailing the dire situation of the northern enterprises.²⁷⁶ The offer was not taken up by potential small farmers and the inevitable could not be forestalled. In 1887 both Gairloch and Hamleigh Plantation Mills went up for auction. Gairloch Mill ceased operations entirely. The NanKivell brothers were left destitute and dispersed, though George and his family did not leave immediately.²⁷⁷ While Lewis J. Cowley bought the block on which the Gairloch House and its gardens were located, the failure of that initial plan to sell off the rest of the property in small lots opened the way for Wood Bros. and Boyd of Ripple Creek to

²⁷³ “The Sugar Industry,” *North Queensland Register*, December 5, 1904, 19.

²⁷⁴ “Family Notices,” *Courier-Mail*, July 3, 1935, 1.

²⁷⁵ Alfred S. Cowley, *Cowley Cuttings Book*, August 20, 1887, (Local History Anthology Collection 900022: B), 40; “Country News,” *Queenslander*, September 3, 1887, 367.

²⁷⁶ de Vries, *Blue Ribbons, Bitter Bread*, 23.

²⁷⁷ de Vries, *Blue Ribbons, Bitter Bread*, 26-27.

acquire 500 acres. Meanwhile, horses, plant and equipment were bought by CSR, which also leased the remaining land. Of the more than £120 000 invested by Fanning and NanKivell and Sons, only £21 000 was realised on the disposal of plant and land.²⁷⁸ With the loss of Gairloch Mill, the Gairloch farmers arranged to have their cane crushed by Victoria Mill on one-year contracts.²⁷⁹

The Hamleigh Mill and Plantation, valued at £150 000, was obtained at the bargain basement price of £12 500 by Whittington (Whittingham) Bros in 1887.²⁸⁰ Although a manager was installed, by January 1892 the company was threatening to close the mill.²⁸¹ Despite hopes that it might be conducted as a central mill, by 1896 it was clear that the Hamleigh Mill would never operate again. Buildings, stock, mill and sundries were sold off.²⁸²

Though Victoria Mill and Macknade Mill, under CSR management, would survive all the travails that brought the other enterprises to their knees, CSR did threaten to abandon its activities on the Herbert several times. Historian Geoffrey Bolton outlined the constraints facing CSR: the onerous terms of purchase imposed on CSR by government for the assumption of agricultural leases on the Herbert; the competition presented to its private enterprises in Mackay by government financed mills; and taxes imposed by government on CSR's profits and on imported machinery.²⁸³ In early March 1888 CSR was considering removing the Victoria Mill and ceasing operations on the Herbert though it did not broadcast that fact.²⁸⁴ In 1891 however, CSR advised farmers that it intended to cease operations in the Herbert River Valley after the 1891 season and offered the plantation for sale. The company then changed its mind, deciding to keep the mill but offer its plantation lands for lease or sale, with the preference being for sale.²⁸⁵ Moreover, it even decided to outlay £60 000 to buy Mackade Mill when Arthur offered it for sale in

²⁷⁸ "Country Mails," *Brisbane Courier*, October 20 1887, 6; Lewis Jesse Cowley, Sugar Industry Commission, "Report of the Royal Commission, 1889," 121.

²⁷⁹ Correspondence from E.W. Knox to C.E. Forster, September 17, 1887, Deposit 142/1548, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

²⁸⁰ "Farming and Pastoral Notes," *Victorian Express*, March 19, 1887, 363.

²⁸¹ "Labour in the Cane-brake," *Queenslander*, January 30, 1892, 201.

²⁸² "Classified Advertising: Sugar Mill for Sale," *Queenslander*, February 1, 1896, 94.

²⁸³ Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away*, 201.

²⁸⁴ Correspondence from E.W. Knox to C.E. Forster, March 17, 1888, Deposit 142/1548, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

²⁸⁵ Correspondence from E.W. Knox to Victoria Mill Manager, Ingham, May 23, 1895, Deposit 142/1553, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

1896.²⁸⁶ When Robert M. Boyd put his Ripple Creek Planation up for sale, CSR began construction on a bridge across the Anabranh to facilitate access to Ripple Creek land before the Ripple Creek management had managed to sell their property.²⁸⁷ This quick action is indicative of why CSR was a survivor and able to withstand the constraints Bolton outlined. CSR had a broad business base, astute management, was opportunistic, protective of its own interests, and prioritised agricultural research and innovation. It, of all the planters on the Herbert, was in the position to put in the required infrastructure: bridges, rail, and rolling stock to source small growers' cane as they became increasingly more numerous.

R.M. Boyd felt unable to offer prospective suppliers the same price that CSR offered, nor was he willing to enter into long-term contracts. He argued that there was no way he could increase his mill's output of raw sugar since it lacked the requisite amount of cane to run the mill in "double shifts". Moreover, Boyd was only permitted to refine so much white sugar because CSR (as dominant refiner) controlled how much refined sugar produced by other millers could be put on the market.²⁸⁸ The only course left was to close down. Even CSR had clear reservations about the viability of taking the crop let alone purchasing the mill.²⁸⁹

In 1906 Wood Bros. and Boyd listed Ripple Creek Planation Mill plantation for sale, though with clear regret. They blamed the farmers for the position they were in, saying that the farmers were holding back on planting cane, trying to force the Ripple Creek management's hand to pay the same prices as CSR offered its farmers.²⁹⁰ They hoped

²⁸⁶ CSR Co. Board Minutes. Extracts re Purchase of Macknade Mill 1896-1897 and particulars Terms and Conditions of Sale, Deposit 142/1555, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

²⁸⁷ "The Northern Miner," *Northern Miner*, April 24, 1908, 4; "Ingham News," *Northern Miner*, May 7 1908, 9.

²⁸⁸ JAB Diary, "Robert Mitchell Boyd (1849-1912)," quoting "Ripple Creek Plantation," *Brisbane Courier*, May 11, 1901, 15.

²⁸⁹ Correspondence from R. Boyd to E.W. Knox, November 22, 1905, Deposit 142/1560, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra; and handwritten notes, October 24, 1903, Deposit 142/1559, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

²⁹⁰ Correspondence from R. Boyd to E.W. Knox, November 22, 1905, Deposit 142/1560, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra; and handwritten notes, October 24, 1903, Deposit 142/1559, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra; correspondence from R. Boyd, to E.W. Knox, January 9, 1906, Deposit N305-D 3.0 F4 1, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra; and "Ripple Creek," handwritten notes, October 24, 1905, N305-D 3.0 F4 1, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

that the mill would continue as a cooperative mill.²⁹¹ There had been some hope in the Valley that the government would step in to ensure the survival of the mill and the farmers had petitioned the government accordingly.²⁹² CSR ended up purchasing the sugar mill machinery, tramlines and rolling stock.²⁹³ In 1908 the Ripple Creek Mill conducted its last crush and the plantation was again offered for sale, this time with the land offered as discrete blocks. It had been arranged that CSR's Macknade Mill would take the purchasers' cane.²⁹⁴ With the Ripple Creek Plantation and Mill closed down, CSR became the sole miller in the district, and its monopoly of the sugar industry there and dominance of the wider Australian sugar industry was commented on with censure, even at the time.²⁹⁵

Boyd did not sever all contact with the district even after selling out to CSR. His son Archie, with his wife and their children, continued to reside at 'The Palms' Ripple Creek; Boyd Snr. would visit and maintained his connections in the Valley. Archie and his family moved to Sydney in October 1913 following his father's death there on December 4, 1912.²⁹⁶

CONCLUSION

The initial impetus for plantations in tropical north Queensland was a liberal land policy. The Herbert River Valley comprised rich open country with rolling, grassy plains on both sides of the Herbert River. It was speedily occupied and developed after the chief commissioner for crown lands, George Elphinstone Dalrymple, reported that the area was

²⁹¹ "Display Advertising. Ripple Creek Plantation, Herbert River, N.Q.," *Queenslander*, September 8, 1906, 12.

²⁹² "The Ripple Creek Mill: Premier's Reply to Petition," *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, August 28, 1907, 4 as quoted in JAB Diary, "Robert Mitchell Boyd (1849-1912)."

²⁹³ Memorandum of agreement between CSR and Wood Bros. and Boyd, April 14, 1908, N305-D 3.0 4 1, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

²⁹⁴ "The Queensland: Ripple Creek Sugar Plantation," *Brisbane Courier*, May 10, 1906, 4; "Farms, Land etc.: Ripple Creek Plantation, Herbert River, N.Q.," *Queenslander*, June 16, 1906, 16; "Local and General," *Johnstone River Advocate*, June 27 1907, 2; "Telegrams," *Evening Telegraph*, June 20, 1907, 3; "World of Labour," *Worker*, May 30, 1908, 7; "Notes and Comments," *Queenslander*, May 2 1908, 36; "Advertising," *Macleay Chronicle*, July 23 1908, 8.

²⁹⁵ "Northern Sugar Industry," *Queenslander*, August 11, 1906, 40; "MALEFICENT MONOPOLY The Colonial Sugar Refining Co.," *Sunday Times*, December 1, 1907, 1; "Colonial Sugar Refining Company," *Daily Mercury*, August 9. 1910, 7; Commonwealth Parliament, "House of Representatives," [Hansard], *Sugar Bounty Bill (No.2) Second Reading*, September 21, 1910 and *Constitution Alteration (Legislative Powers) Bill Second Reading*, October 20, 1910; and Griggs, "The Decline of Competition," for his discussion of CSR's monopoly of the factors of the Australian sugar industry.

²⁹⁶ "Herbert River Notes," *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, October 11, 1913, 11; "Personal," *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, December 12, 1912, 4; JAB Diary, "Robert Mitchell Boyd (1849-1912)," December 2-4, 1912.

well suited to the cultivation of plantation crops. A plantation era was precipitated by the arrival of the Mackenzie family and the first successful crushing at their plantation mill, Gairloch, in 1872. Pastoralists, planters and small selectors were drawn to the Valley while indentured Melanesian labour was recruited for the fieldwork. In both the initial opening up of the Valley and later, after 1878, much of the land selection was speculative and a good deal taken up by absentee landholders. The planter group, both owners and managers, was largely a transient one, though those who came to the Herbert were not always in a hurry to leave when their enterprises failed. For the duration of the plantation period there was a clear social divide between planters and farmers, with planters dominating the social, economic and political aspects of the community on the Herbert.

The planters on the Herbert made several attempts to unite to form both a Herbert River planters' association and a broader association to give Australian sugar planters one voice. Yet those efforts were marked by a distinct inability to sustain a unified front with which to lobby governments or conduct rural extension. A situation of crisis prompted each attempt to form an association, but momentum was lost when the crisis was addressed. This is consistent with planter associations in other sugar growing areas of the world.

The particular issue that occupied planters lobbying activities across the globe was labour, and on the Herbert it was no different. There is also evidence that the planters on the Herbert intended, like their global counterparts, that their association be a conduit for rural extension and the promotion of agriculture, particularly of the sugar industry. It is doubtful that they intended to reach out beyond their own planter circle however, for it is clear that the planters on the Herbert perceived themselves as a class apart. When faced with a crisis they locked ranks with their fellow planters in other sugar growing districts and as a class searched for ways to secure their survival. Nevertheless, internal tensions, particularly the reserve of CSR management, limited the effectiveness of the Herbert River planters' attempts at unity. Absentee ownership was another impediment. Unlike the planters of Hawai'i or Louisiana, neither they nor their associations would be lasting phenomena.

By the 1890s the vertically integrated mode of production had become unsustainable in tropical Australia. The industry had to adapt or collapse. The adaptation made was small farms worked by the white owner farmer and his family, using white labour for the

harvest. This set the Australian sugar industry apart from sugar industries elsewhere. A hitherto unrecognised driving force pushing the transformation from plantation to small farm on the Herbert was the small farmers' agricultural association. In tropical north Queensland this transition was precipitated in 1882 by the HRFA. How the small farmers acquired their land, who they were, and the origins and objects of the HRFA will be examined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

THE SMALL FARMERS OF THE HERBERT RIVER VALLEY AND THE HERBERT RIVER FARMERS' ASSOCIATION

The planters on the Herbert made several attempts to unite but had no enduring success in forming either local or industrywide planters' associations. Eventually they ceased to exist as a class. In Queensland the vertically integrated plantation mode of production did not endure as it did in Brazil, Hawai'i, Louisiana and Barbados. In contrast, as we have seen, by 1914 the sugar industries of Fiji and Australia had moved from vertical integration to the separation of milling and cultivation. In Fiji sugar cane came to be cultivated by tenant farmers who were, by and large, former indentured labourers while in Australia it was cultivated by independent, white small growers.

One of the forces behind the transformation in tropical north Queensland was the small farmers' agricultural association of which the HRFA is an example. Even before the attempts by the Herbert River planters to form an agricultural association, small selectors had formed the HRFA. This chapter will examine the small selectors, in particular, how they came by their land on the Herbert, how they lived, what drove them to form an agricultural association, and what they hoped to achieve through the agency of collective action.

HOW SMALL FARMERS CAME TO THE HERBERT RIVER VALLEY

Economist Robert E. Baldwin noted that small, family-size farms were attractive to poorer immigrants, but that the cost of migration and the initial capital outlay required for even a small productive farm limited this group's ability to fulfil their aspirations. Furthermore, poorer immigrants had difficulty accessing capital as lenders were prejudiced against low-income groups, while they were also disadvantaged because they could not initiate or participate in the importation of cheap, unskilled labour.¹ In Queensland however, those issues were addressed by the active encouragement of the Queensland government in the immigration of both low income British and non-British migrants including assisted passages; disembarking at regional ports such as Townsville;

¹ Robert E Baldwin, "Patterns of Development in Newly Settled Regions," *The Manchester School* 24 (1956): 166-67.

liberal land laws; access to credit; and ability to make use of 'time-expired' indentured labour.

The Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1868, intended to encourage the small agriculturalist, resulted in 93 selections being taken up and made freehold in the Herbert River Valley.² These averaged around 600 acres, with the legislation allowing for a maximum selection of 640 acres.³ As they were hardly small holdings they were not taken up by small selectors. Instead, hopeful small selectors took up residence on others' land which they cleared and planted with crops while also working off-farm. This assisted the lessees to fulfil the requirements of the Lands Act while the small selectors accumulated enough capital to take up selections of their own.

In 1872 there were already over 100 white workers in the Valley, with between 20 and 40 employed at Macknade and the balance employed by the other three major planters, Haig and Miles, Atkinson, and the Mackenzies. There was a need for many more workers, however.⁴ In 1873 there were 85 Melanesian labourers and "a large body of white labourers employed on the various plantations" but the number of white people in the district remained static. By 1882 the number had barely increased with 120 white workers employed across four mills, Victoria, Macknade, Hamleigh and Gairloch.⁵

Whether the labourers who were involved in the construction of the first mills stuck around once they were up and running is open to conjecture, as they may very well have been tempted to depart to the many goldfields being discovered in the north. Alternatively, they may have lost heart over the prospect of being able to acquire land. One early small selector noted in this regard that "absentee selectors retarded progress, as numerous small men came to the district to select land and settle with their families, but could not find anything suitable."⁶

Evidently there were enough small selectors, either sub-leasees or leasees in their own right, present in the Valley in mid-1873 to give the impression that the mills might

² Queensland Government, "Crown Lands Alienation Act 1868."

³ Evidence of William Stanley Warren, Sugar Industry Commission, "Report of the Royal Commission, 1889," 134.

⁴ "The Cruise of the Steamer Kate," *Brisbane Courier*, October 31, 1872, 7.

⁵ "Lower Herbert," *Brisbane Courier*, September 1, 1873, 3; "The Herbert," *Mackay Mercury and South Kennedy Advertiser*, April 3, 1875, 3; "The Lower Herbert," *Queenslander*, May 20, 1882, 2-3.

⁶ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 5.

endeavour to crush cane from small growers' holdings as occurred in the south. Referring to the former Walrus mill, a newspaper commentator speculated that, in its new location on land, it "may very possibly be open to crush as well for the cockatoos in their neighbourhood."⁷

The Crown Lands Alienation Act (Queensland) of 1876, while precipitating a land rush by speculators, also allowed for the first small selectors on the Herbert to take up land.⁸ The government put a halt to the speculative rush with the 1884 Crown Lands Act which suspended the 1876 Act and reclassified alienable land, thus further promoting the selection of land by smaller selectors.⁹ The rates of conversion to freehold and the forfeiture of selections differed significantly for speculators and small selectors respectively, indicating that the latter were determined to secure their selections and settle on the Herbert. While just over half of conditional leases were made freehold by 1889, over four-fifths of homestead leases were made freehold. In addition, the rate of forfeiture was less for homesteaders.¹⁰

During the plantation stage, the actual acreage of land put under cane or other crops on the Herbert remained relatively small compared to the amount of land selected. In 1889, 5 933 acres were under cane and 450 acres under other crops. Of the land under sugar cane, 1 100 acres were worked by 16 selectors. Of the three small farmers who gave evidence at the 1889 commission, John Alm had 90 of his 160-acre holding planted with cane, Niels Christian Rosendahl 35 out of 160 acres, and Charles Watson only five out

⁷ "Lower Herbert," *Brisbane Courier*, June 7, 1873, 5. Cocky, short for cockatoo, was popularly applied to small farmers to distinguish them from squatters or large landowners. Cane cocky signified a cane farmer. See Lady Mary Ann Barker, *Station Life in New Zealand*, 1883, [Ebook #6104, 2009], Letter xv Everyday station life, accessed June 15, 2018, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/6104/6104-h/6104-h.htm>: "These small farmers are called Cockatoos in Australia by the squatters or sheep farmers, who dislike them for buying up the best bits of land on their runs; and say that, like a cockatoo, the small freeholder alights on good ground, extracts all he can from it, and then flies away to 'fresh fields and pastures new'."

⁸ Queensland Government, "Crown Lands Alienation Act 1876"; Queensland Government, Sugar Industry Commission, "Report of the Royal Commission, 1889," 104.

⁹ Queensland Government, "Crown Lands Act 1884," 1149.

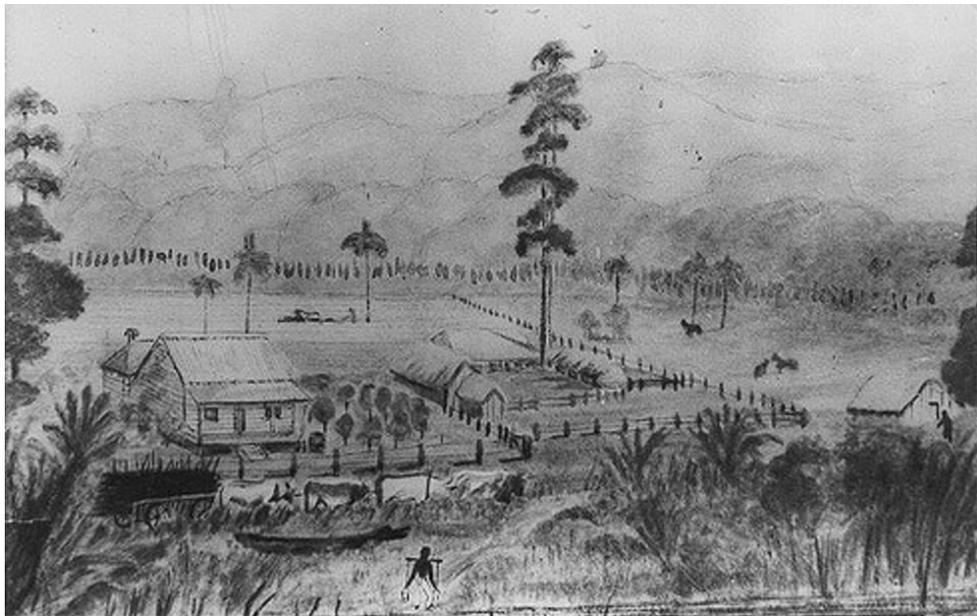
¹⁰ Evidence of William Stanley Warren, Sugar Industry Commission, "Report of the Royal Commission, 1889," 134-35.

of 160 acres.¹¹ The greater part of the Valley's cane was still produced by the plantations, Victoria, Macknade, Ripple Creek, and Hamleigh.¹²

The idea that small farmers should be facilitated to grow sugar cane by the provision of mills to crush their cane did not go away. In 1879 it was commented of the Herbert River district that; "it is to be hoped sugar growing will have its fair share of attention. A few large mills started here on the Central Factory system would enliven things up considerably and be a source of profit to the erectors and a very great boon to all the small farmers, who hardly know what to grow, the eternal corn not paying at all well in these latitudes."¹³

In the following year a visitor to the Herbert noted that small selectors had taken up land on the south bank of the river, attempting to earn a livelihood by growing maize despite the challenges of that endeavor in the tropics. He speculated that if there were a central mill "[small selectors] would only be too willing to go into sugar cane cultivation."¹⁴

Image 28: The cottage was a former Gairloch Plantation cottage. Oakleigh, Cordelia Vale, circa 1878–1899. (Source Carr family, Cordelia)



¹¹ Evidence of John Alm, Niels Christian Rosendahl and Charles Watson, Sugar Industry Commission, "Report of the Royal Commission, 1889," 104-05, 109-10.

¹² Evidence of William Stanley Warren, Sugar Industry Commission, "Report of the Royal Commission, 1889," 134.

¹³ "Lower Herbert, Kennedy District," *Brisbane Courier*, July 12, 1879, 6.

¹⁴ "A Few Notes from the Lower Herbert," *Queenslander*, October 2, 1880, 3.

The settlers referred to would be significant to the agricultural association movement in the Herbert River Valley. Acquiring selections as early as 1878, their number included Arthur W. Carr of Oakleigh, Rosendahl of Gumby, and William Johnson (formerly Wilhelm Sorensen) of Homebush.¹⁵ Carr, Rosendahl and Johnson each took up 160 acre homestead selections on the south side of the Herbert River below Mt. Katharina (Cordelia). They did so to the dismay of other landowners who prophesised that they would be washed away in the next flood.¹⁶ The Herbert River and its major tributary, the Stone River, dominate the landscape of the Valley. While it appears a tranquil flow, ebbing with the tides, the Herbert River regularly becomes a fearsome and destructive force as it engulfs the floodplain upon which, after European settlement, plantations, small farms and townships were established. The planters had good reason to be skeptical of the small selectors' choice of land, as demonstrated by later inundations.

Agricultural economist Bruce Davidson proposed that in this period in Australia, a small farmer with between 22 and 100 acres realised a yearly income ranging from £100 to £500, compared to the average European male wage of £75 (including accommodation).¹⁷ In 1893, one correspondent reported that a small farmer on the Herbert who had started out as a ploughman with no capital owned 100 acres, with 70 under cane, and cleared £800 annually. That same farmer owned a two-storey house and all requisite horses and implements.¹⁸ He had achieved all this in a decade and a half. It is understandable why sugar farming held a real attraction and not surprising that the initial trio was followed by others.

Small selectors sought out good land but, because of the activities of the speculative purchasers, ran into issues with boundaries arising from prior occupation. An area of good farming land in the lower Herbert area that had been a traditional indigenous Aboriginal camping ground lay adjacent to 1 280 acres that had been designated as town reserve land.¹⁹ In May 1880, settler August Anderssen selected a small selection of this

¹⁵ "Cardwell," *Queenslander*, September 21, 1878, 793; Barrie, *Minding My Business*, 34.

¹⁶ Barrie, *Minding My Business*, 31, 34; Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 13, 17.

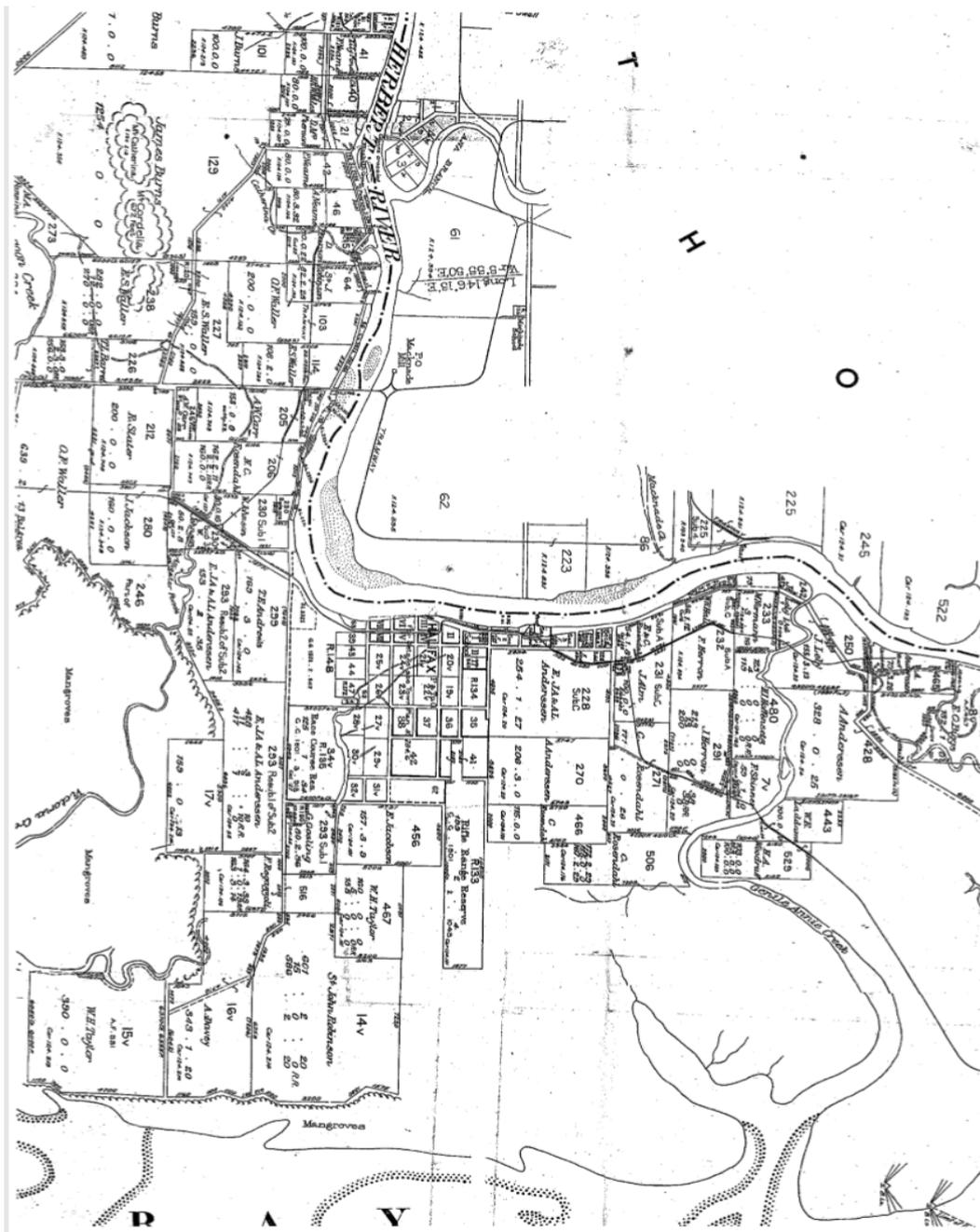
¹⁷ Davidson, *European Farming in Australia*, 154.

¹⁸ "The Sugar Industry in Queensland: Letters from our Special Correspondent (From "The Times," 7th January, 1893)," in *The Sugar Question in Queensland*, 6-7.

¹⁹ Robert L. Shepherd, "The Herbert River Story Part 26: The Gairloch Floating," *Herbert River Express*, January 24, 1957. The camping ground was called Black's Township. Though correct grammar would dictate that it should be written Blacks' with the apostrophe after the 's', presuming that a family group

land adjacent to the reserve. He travelled to Cardwell to register his selection only to be advised that the block he had selected was in fact within the town reserve.

Map 3: Showing land holdings as of original D/Grant. Harald Hoffensetz, August Anderssen, Arthur W, Carr, Niels C. Rosendahl, John Alm, Francis Herron John Lely located between the Anabranck and Gentle Annie Creek. (Source: Parish of Cordelia. County of Cardwell. Ingham Land Agent's District North Kennedy Queensland (Brisbane: Survey Office, Dep.t. of Public Lands, 1922).



occupied the original camping area, Black's Township is written with an apostrophe 's' though even occasionally with no apostrophe at all.

Apprised of the boundaries by the land commissioner, Anderssen returned to the Valley to report to other interested settlers what land was available for selection.²⁰ Ten selections were taken up, totaling 2 200 acres. Anderssen took up 360 acres which he called Riverview, while Alm, Francis Herron, and Henry (or Herbert) Beardsworth, a cousin of Arthur and Frank Neame, each took up 160 acres of prime river-frontage land up to Gentle Annie Creek, though Beardsworth forfeited his soon after.²¹ Harald Hoffensetz's selections, also located on the Herbert River near Gentle Annie Creek, consisted of 41 acres selected in 1880, and 119 acres in 1883.²² Alm called his selection Groseth, Herron's was named Drumcree, while Hoffensetz called his Rest Downs. Beardsworth's surrendered selection was later granted to Martimus Normann, who named it Norwood.

Others took up blocks back from the river including Francis' brother James Herron whose selection adjoined his brother's. He named it Emma Vale. Another was Henry Faithfull on Hornsey, and Lauritz Nielson whose selection was behind Faithfull's.²³ John Lely's selection was downriver from Hoffensetz's property and was called Mona. He also took up another relinquished property called Eaglefarm. Even the original town reserve was later subdivided for selection. As the early years were volatile, the small selectors took advantage of failed speculation. Like Lely, Andersson purchased a forfeited estate in 1888 valued at £700. It consisted of 640 acres, but of which only 30 had been cleared. Twenty of those acres were under cane.²⁴

Premier S.W. Griffith had summarised the conditions under which he considered sugar farming by small white farmers in tropical north Queensland would be successful: "the farmer will not begin the planting of cane unless he is assured of a mill at which to dispose of it. This result can therefore only be brought about by degrees, essential conditions being mutual confidence, a sufficient number of acclimatized Europeans competent and willing to engage in the industry, and capitalists having faith in them."²⁵

²⁰ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 17-18.

²¹ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 17-18.

²² Queensland, "A Deed of Grant for a Homestead Selection," Harald Ingward [sic] Hoffensetz, October 31, 1883, No. 67647, County Cardwell, Parish Cordelia, Area 119 acres. See Appendix 4.

²³ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 24; Barrie, *Minding My Business*, 33-35.

²⁴ "Roundabout," *Queensland Figaro and Punch*, March 10, 1888, 15.

²⁵ S.W. Griffith, "The Coloured Labour Question in Australia," *The Antipodean*, 1892, 16.

Certainly, it is true that small farming took off once legislation was passed to facilitate the establishment of cooperative central mills and some plantation mills converted to central mills. Nevertheless, the small farmers on the Herbert exhibited particular audacity and optimism regarding their chances of growing sugar, selecting land in an area where plantation agriculture was not only encouraged but legislated for by government.

Table 4: Sugar production Herbert River and Queensland 1872, 1882, 1892, 1902 and 1914

AREA UNDER CANE	1872	1882	1892	1902	1914
Cardwell/Ingham (acres)	404	2 416	5 586	8 896	16 086
Queensland (acres)	11 757	39 591	55 520	85 338	161 195
SUGAR PRODUCED					
Cardwell/Ingham (tons)	130	1 180	7 244	25 692 **	24 993
Queensland (tons)	6 266	15 702	61368	79 080	225 847
NUMBER OF CULTIVATORS (without mills)					
Cardwell/Ingham	NA	21	73	150 (1905)	266 (1916)
Queensland	NA	270 (1884)	366 (1893)	2 697 (1903)	4130
SUGAR MILLS					
Cardwell/Ingham	1	2#	4	3	2
Queensland (excluding juice mills)*	65	120	72	43*	46*

one of the original three closed in 1882 and three more were to start crushing in 1883

** Statistics available combine Herbert and Johnstone districts

Note: These figures have a high margin of error but indicate overall trends.

Source: Queensland Government, *Statistics of the Colony of Queensland* and *Statistical Register of Queensland*; and “Agricultural Production Queensland 1859-60 to 2007-08.”

Prepared by the Office of Economic and Statistical Research Queensland Treasury, the State of Queensland (Brisbane: Queensland Treasury, 2009)

In the years that the HRFA was negotiating to supply cane to CSR’s Victoria mill, the sugar industry was riding a wave of optimism. In 1884, when CSR accepted the HRFA’s proposal, the number of sugar cane farms in Queensland (including large estates without mills) reached a peak of 270. After the disastrous turn of fortune that year, the number of farms went down and only began to rise significantly again after the passing of legislation

to temporarily extend the use of indentured labour in 1892.²⁶ The Queensland Department of Agriculture, writing on the progress of plantation subdivision for the growing of cane by small growers in its 1891-92 annual report, found “every indication that this system will be, before long, largely in operation.”²⁷

In 1892, CSR started converting its plantation mill on the Herbert to a central mill, carving up its plantation into small farms of 100 acres for lease or sale to small growers.²⁸ Already in March, general manager Edward W. Knox noted with satisfaction that 1 300 acres had been applied for. Memoranda of agreement were sent out to applicants.²⁹ As Griffith had forecast, with a capitalist interest willing to invest in small farming and the certainty that a central mill would take their cane, farmers took up sugar cane farming. Moreover, by this stage the members of the HRFA had proved that white people could live and work in the tropics.³⁰

Those who took up CSR’s offer knew there was a considerable advantage to acquiring former plantation lands. Unlike government selections they did not have the drawback of residence conditions which were difficult to fulfil if the hopeful farmer had to work off-farm in order to survive during the establishment period.³¹ Former plantation lands were usually already ploughed or under cane and could be purchased or leased under very favourable conditions.³² CSR offered to sell rations at cost price for the first 12 months and to provide humpies, horses and implements to approved tenants, the value of which would be deducted from the proceeds of the first crop.³³

By mid-1892, 73 farmers were ready to supply cane from 3 190 acres to Victoria, Macknade and Ripple Creek Plantation mills, with a further 720 acres guaranteed for the

²⁶ Notes from Mr. C.H. O’Brien’s Typescript re Central Mills, Deposit N305-D 1.0 4 8, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra; and Queensland Government, “Pacific Island Labourers (Extension) Act 1892.”

²⁷ Queensland Government, “Votes and Proceedings,” 1892, Vol. IV, 605, as quoted in Shlomowitz, “The Search for Institutional Equilibrium,” 105.

²⁸ Chairman’s Report to Shareholders at Meeting for Half Year ending March 31, 1892, Deposit N305-D 1.0-4-4, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra; Griggs, “Origins and Early Development,” 55; “Country News,” *Queenslander*, March 23, 1892, 582.

²⁹ Correspondence from E. W. Knox to Manager, March 20, 1892, Deposit 142/1551, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra. See Appendix 5.

³⁰ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 37.

³¹ Moore, “Queensland Sugar Industry,” 42. Further land laws, the Agricultural Lands Purchases Acts of 1894 and 1897 enabled the government to purchase estates comprising of already alienated fertile land for settlement as small agricultural farms.

³² Wegner, “Hinchinbrook,” 134.

³³ “Country News,” *Queenslander*, March 23, 1892, 582.

following year.³⁴ In the closest northern cane cultivation area, Innisfail, the first mill and plantation was established in 1881. By 1892 there were four mills but still no small farmers growing cane.³⁵

WHO WERE THE SMALL SETTLERS?

Following in the wake of the planters, immigrants of numerous European nationalities found employment on the plantations as skilled workers: sawyers, carpenters, blacksmiths, bricklayers, ploughmen, brickmakers, wheelwrights, bullock-drivers, engineers and overseers. They also provided the services required as the small townships, Sligo (later Ingham) and Lower Herbert (later Halifax), grew up. As they acquired land, they planted small crops: maize, sorghum, potatoes and sweet potatoes. They also planted tropical fruit varieties such as mangoes, bananas, guavas and granadillas, and all varieties of citrus as well. They kept pigs and fowls and both beef and dairy cattle. By these means they subsisted while supplying both the plantations and the wider community as it developed. They supplemented their farm income with outside work such as fencing and building, timber getting and pit sawing. Each property had to be cleared of timber to bring it into agricultural use, and the mills required a good supply of timber.

While the plantations were good customers of timber and other products the small farmers could produce, farming was fraught with difficulties. The more adventurous tried coffee, wheat and rice but these were defeated by ignorance, weather, pests, and inability to satisfy market taste and demand. Tobacco grew well but the grade produced was not to the discerning taste.³⁶ The average rainfall was far in excess of what was suitable for cotton and maize, while the latter was regularly decimated by pests. Most of the vegetable crops, even basics like maize and potatoes, could only be grown well in the cooler, drier, winter months.

³⁴ Correspondence from Lewis J. Cowley to the Under Secretary, Agricultural Department, June 9, 1892, Series ID 6041 Item ID 902860, Batch file No 17, agricultural. Sugar Cane Grubs: Correspondence re eradication, Queensland State Archives, Brisbane.

³⁵ Correspondence from O'Donohue, to the Under Secretary for Agriculture, May 18, 1892, Series ID 6041 Item ID 902860, Batch file No 17, agricultural. Sugar Cane Grubs: Correspondence re eradication, Queensland State Archives, Brisbane.

³⁶ Bianka Vidonja Balanzategui, "Henry Wickham, Adventurer, Knight, Smuggler, Tobacco Planter and Father of the Rubber Industry," *Interpreting Ingham History*, <http://interpretinginghamhistory.blogspot.com.au/>.

Outside markets were only accessible by road or sea, and according to farmer perception there was “no market for anything a man might grow.”³⁷ Even nearly 30 years after the Valley had been opened up to European settlement it could be observed by one resident that “[they were] cut off completely from the rest of the world [t]here.”³⁸ Any farm produce had to be transported downriver to the primitive port facilities at Dungeness, at high expense and risk to the farmer. The freight, commission and wharfage charges were prohibitive, said

Image 29: Dungeness, described as “a miserable, low-lying dead-and-alive-place,” circa 1881. (Source: Hinchinbrook Shire Council Library Photographic Collection)



to be equal to the value of the crops. Anderssen experienced this when he arranged with an agent to ship a ton of sweet potatoes to the Townsville markets. Rather than receiving a cheque as expected he was billed seven shillings and five pence to cover expenses.³⁹ Even if the product arrived safely at Dungeness it could then sit in the hot sun for a week degenerating. If it did reach Townsville, it could be waiting there another week before the arrival of a steamer to ship it south.⁴⁰ Until a rail link was established—and the full

³⁷ Evidence of Niels Christian Rosendahl, Sugar Industry Commission, “Report of the Royal Commission, 1889,” 110.

³⁸ Evidence of Niels Christian Rosendahl, Sugar Industry Commission, “Report of the Royal Commission, 1889,” 110.

³⁹ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 30.

⁴⁰ Evidence of Niels Christian Rosendahl and William Thomas White, Sugar Industry Commission, “Report of the Royal Commission, 1889,” 109, 131.

linkage of Brisbane to Cairns was not achieved until 1924—there was little that small farmers could do to remedy the situation, other than find a crop whose perishability and transport could be the responsibility of somebody else.

The prejudice of the time dictated that white people could not work in the tropics, and if they did choose to live there they would be best engaged in “growing such things as vanilla and other tropical products requiring care and attention rather than hard labour.”⁴¹ Nevertheless, sugar, despite being labour intensive, offered the best opportunity for small growers because they did not have to personally worry about milling, transporting or marketing the crops, and there was the possibility of using non-white labour during the harvest.

Griggs identified small selectors across the sugar districts as typically Anglo-Celtic or local-born of that origin.⁴² However, on the Herbert, a significant number were from Denmark, Norway and Sweden: origins masked in some cases by the Anglicising of their names.⁴³ Four of the six founders of the HRFA were Scandinavian and two were Anglo-Celtic. The Scandinavians were mostly rural people whose exodus from their homelands was prompted by a number of reasons including scarcity of arable land, famine, religious persecution and conflict. Fredrik Larsen Lund and Eino Olavi Koivukangas both emphasised land ownership and economic opportunities as significant pull factors.⁴⁴ A Dane arriving in 1871 described himself and his fellow passengers as “a motley crew” whose faces and dress evinced “extreme poverty” and a “spirit of recklessness.”⁴⁵ With Australia having recruitment agencies in the Scandinavian countries and offering free passage and small land grants, immigrants started arriving in significant numbers in Australia in 1870s.⁴⁶ They developed a reputation for being orderly, well-behaved immigrants, and, with many already speaking English and “ready and apt to fall in with

⁴¹ “Polynesians as Laborers,” *Brisbane Courier*, June 11, 1872, 7.

⁴² Griggs, *Global Industry, Local Innovation*, 2.

⁴³ Evidence of Charles Watson, Sugar Industry Commission, “Report of the Royal Commission, 1889,” 112.

⁴⁴ Lund, “A Norwegian Waltz,” 20-26, 126; Eino Olavi Koivukangas, “Scandinavian Immigration and Settlement in Australia before World War II,” (PhD diss., Australian National University, 1972), 48-52.

⁴⁵ J. Lyng, *The Scandinavians in Australia, New Zealand and the Western Queensland* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1939), 125.

⁴⁶ Koivukangas, “Scandinavian Immigration,” 106-09; Lyng, *The Scandinavians in Australia*, 118-23; Lund, “A Norwegian Waltz,” *passim*; Fredrik Larsen Lund, “You May Well Become Slaves: On the Fringes of Queensland's Assisted Migration Scheme,” *Queensland History Journal* 21 (2012): 718-32.

the ways and conditions of living in Queensland,” they quickly found employment and were readily absorbed into the rural population.⁴⁷

What is notable about this first cohort is that most men either came with wives or married soon after arrival in Australia. Lund calculated that one-fifth of those arriving in Australia in the 1870s were children.⁴⁸ By contrast, the rest of the vanguard leading the charge north were young single men with adventurous spirits who literally risked all: spirits, health and money. The intrepid women who came with children in the folds of their skirts did so at a time when it was believed that the tropical climate was detrimental to women’s health.⁴⁹ They also would have been warned that the Herbert held its own particular dangers: the wrath of the displaced Indigenous peoples, and the threat of crocodiles and fevers.⁵⁰ Unlike planters’ wives, they could not take recuperative trips back ‘home’ or move south in the summer months, or travel to the southern cities to await the birth of their babies.

Arthur Neame employed white workers as he was laying out and constructing his plantation but found drunkenness a recurrent problem. The arrival of the sober Scandinavians was welcomed, as Neame recounted: “we got some immigrants, married couples, Danes, Germans & a couple from Norway who all turned out well, hard working & useful; several of them after a few years with us took up land on their own account and grew cane, & became quite well off.”⁵¹ One of the immigrants who worked for him and of whom he spoke in glowing terms was Anderssen. As Arthur recorded, Anderssen claimed that he owed all his later good fortune to the start Arthur gave him, but the latter demurred saying that “he really owed it to his own hard work & intelligence.”⁵²

Anderssen and his fellow Scandinavians intended to settle permanently in the Valley. Most are buried in the region and descendants still live in north Queensland. After their

⁴⁷ The Queensland Immigration Agent’s Report for the Year 1899 as quoted in Lund, “A Norwegian Waltz,” 31-32n71. Lund noted that Scandinavians, over time, came to be regarded by Australian authorities as suitable immigrants because it was believed that because of racial origins and language they would be easily Anglicised. Lund, “A Norwegian Waltz,” 3.

⁴⁸ Lund, “A Norwegian Waltz,” 39.

⁴⁹ Walter Maxwell, “A Report upon some Factors relating to the Cane Sugar Industry of Australia,” in *The Sugar Question in Queensland*, 49; and Robert Gray, *Reminiscences of India and North Queensland: 1857-1912* (London: Constable and Company, 1913), 247-48, 254-56.

⁵⁰ Neame, “A Memoir,” 26. 22-30, n1.

⁵¹ Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, 52.

⁵² Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, 53.

ships docked in Queensland ports—Rockhampton, Maryborough, Bowen and Townsville—they travelled to the Valley, arriving between 1871 and 1879. They were a variety of ages, the youngest being Johan (John) Ingbright Alm Johannesen who was only 21, while Anderssen was 33 years old. They got their start by securing employment with the mills or large estate owners, or working as contractors. Though not all were skilled, some, like Anderssen, who was a carpenter and wheelwright, and Harald Hoffensetz, who was a cooper, brought skills that were in high demand. Their wives worked as cooks or domestics. As it could take up to a decade to acquire their own selections, in the interim they were materially assisted by a number of the planter fraternity, particularly the Neames, Wallers, and William Bairstow Ingham.⁵³ Intermarriage between the Scandinavian families was not uncommon and families tended to be large.

Image 30: The Rosendahl family, Halifax. Mr. N. C. Rosendahl is a pioneer of forty-three years' standing in Halifax, 1914. (Source: *Northern Herald*, October 2, 1914, 26.)



Moore described the small farmer as being poorly educated and having left few written records.⁵⁴ It is known from Neame's account that Anderssen did not speak English but there is ample evidence that he and his fellow immigrants were literate, articulate and

⁵³ "First Families 2001," accessed June 9, 2017, <http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/10421/20041220-0000/www.firstfamilies2001.net.au/>; "The 'Father' of Halifax," *Herbert River Express*, July 20, 2013, 14; Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 1-2, 7; "Family Helped Nurture Township," *Herbert River Express*, September 14, 2013, 6; Wegner, "Hinchinbrook," 621; "Tough Rewarding Life," *Herbert River Express*, August 10, 2013, 10; Lund, "A Norwegian Waltz"; Ancestry.com, "Har. Ingv. Hoffensets," Hamburg State Archives Staatsarchiv Hamburg. Hamburg Passenger Lists, 1850-1934 [database on-line], Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2008, accessed January 16, 2018, <https://search.ancestry.com.au/>; "The Mystery of Harald," *Herbert River Express*, July 27, 2013, 14.

⁵⁴ Moore, "Queensland Sugar Industry," 38.

energetic.⁵⁵ Similarly, not all were from humble backgrounds. Rosendahl was said to have been of Danish nobility, though he migrated because he had fallen on hard times.⁵⁶ Neame recounted that Rosendahl had told him that in Denmark his earnings were meagre, no more than 12/- a week, and that in winter he was often without work. But once he established himself cane farming in the Valley, he realised his aspirations, making an income of around £1 000 per annum.⁵⁷

The two Anglo-Celts were Francis Herron and Arthur William Carr, and like the Scandinavians they came to the Valley to settle permanently and have descendants still living on the Herbert or in Townsville. They both left England in 1875, arriving in Queensland ports—Herron into Townsville and Carr into Brisbane—travelling on to the Herbert Valley where they endeavoured to establish themselves before they brought their wives. While Herron was a British army veteran, Carr had been a bank clerk. Like the Scandinavians, they were hardly illiterate. Both were offered a hand-up on their arrival by the Neames and Wallers. Though Carr first went to Cardwell where he selected land, he found it unsuitable for sugar growing and consequently secured a job as an overseer at Macknade Plantation. Meanwhile, Herron, like Rosendahl, began on a block of land in Cordelia belonging to the Neames and Wallers, and when he took up land it was the neighbouring selection to Carr's.⁵⁸

Another who would be significant to the trajectory of the small farmer association movement on the Herbert was John Lely. He was an Oxford graduate who arrived in Townsville in 1879. He came to the Herbert after stints in Charters Towers where he engaged in the building trade and Cairns where he established a brickworks. During his

⁵⁵ This is evidenced by letters to newspapers, journal and newspapers reports, evidence provided to Royal Commissions, surviving memoirs and fragments of records of agricultural associations, local committees and Divisional Boards. Lutheranism, the majority religion in Germany and Scandinavia, had a central belief in teaching literacy so everyone could read the Bible.

⁵⁶ Wegner, "Hinchinbrook," 621.

⁵⁷ Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, 52-53.

⁵⁸ "Founding Farmer's Legacy," *Herbert River Express*, September 7, 2013, 6; Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 13, 24; Barrie, *Minding My Business*, 33-35; Matthew Fox, *History of Queensland: Its People and Industries* (Brisbane: States Publishing Company, 1923), 736-37; "Herbert River Notes." *Cairns Post*, November 10, 1915, 8; Rita and Geoff Carr, *Arthur William Carr and Susannah Puddifant Carr*, sponsorship plaque, Mercer Lane Mosaics, February, 2015.

time in the Valley as a sugar farmer he was a force for progress and change, working closely with the member for the Herbert electorate, Alfred S. Cowley.⁵⁹

The willingness of the Neames and others to allow new immigrants to work their holdings was to an extent self-serving. They cleared the land and planted food crops required by the plantations while also providing the white, skilled labour required by the planters. Nevertheless, this was an opportunity that gave the new arrivals the wherewithal to take up selections of their own. The open-handed treatment given to these immigrants—providing equipment, often even a rudimentary hut to live in—led them to regard the Neames favourably.

Image 31: Settler's hut, Lower Herbert. Painting by Ted Core taken from original photograph, circa 1876. (Source: Canossa Nursing Home, Trebonne)



Bravado, innovation and invention were the hallmarks of both planter and small farmer and all these qualities were required as they built homes, broke virgin soil and tried to wrest a living from an unforgiving and unfamiliar environment. Most small farmers started out humbly and relied on their own skills to construct their homes, or reused structures from closed mills or abandoned estates. Skilled craftsmen were in high demand by the plantations as witnessed by the HRFA cohort. But the planters were not the only employers. P. Feldt, a Norwegian and one of the first small selectors in 1883, was a roof

⁵⁹ He left the district in 1901 and lived the remainder of his life at Dry River, (between Herberton and Mt. Garnet), in seclusion and anonymity, and died in the Townsville General Hospital in 1948 aged 96 years. Leonard Lely, "Herbert River Pioneer Passes Away," *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, August 7, 1948, 7; Queensland Government, "Historical Marriages," *Birth Deaths Marriages and Divorces*, accessed July 29, 2017, <https://www.bdm.qld.gov.au/IndexSearch/querySubmit.m?ReportName=MarriageSearch>.

contractor whose skills were quickly employed by the divisional board.⁶⁰ Early huts were made of logs with shingled or thatched roofs. The settlers, including Alm, learned their thatching skills from Scotsman and skilled thatcher Duncan McAuslan.⁶¹

Image 32: Back view of the Tokalon homestead with thatched roof, 1882. (Source: Hinchinbrook Shire Council Library Photographic Collection)



Hessian acted as room dividers and canvas was used at windows. Galvanised roofing iron and glass windows were later improvements. Weatherboard houses began being built in 1871 but the progress of this was limited for the want of sawyers and carpenters.⁶² Anderssen's Riverview was a large, commodious Queenslander built to last and in the style of the planters' houses, and part of it today continues as part of the Halifax Hotel. In fact, it was constructed from pre-cut timber that had been prepared for a hotel on the goldfields. Andersson obtained the timber at auction when the original contract fell through.⁶³ Carr moved a Gairloch cottage to his property for his residence, while Rosendahl erected a sawpit to cut the timber for the house he built.⁶⁴

As their life stories indicate, the small farmers were committed to life on the Herbert. Unlike the Neames or their cousins the Beardsworths, who could fall back on affluent

⁶⁰ "Ingham Notes," *Cairns Post*, January 15, 1915, 8.

⁶¹ He was head stockman for the Scott brothers and then business partner of Henry Stone.

⁶² "Herbert River," *Queenslander*, October 14, 1871, 10.

⁶³ "The 'Father' of Halifax," *Herbert River Express*, July 20, 2013, 14.

⁶⁴ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 17.

connections or return home to England, for them it was do or die. Despite the inhospitable nature and dangers of their environs, the infant mortality rate, the lack of services, and the caprices of the sugar industry, they stayed and became farmers, members of the HRFA (and other local farmer associations), founding members of church and school committees, divisional board councillors, and stalwarts of clubs such as the Masonic Lodge and the Rifle Club. As Alm would later record:

We small settlers can explode the belief that the district only can be developed by gangs of black labour with a few white bosses. We are six who have been in the district continuously for upward of ten years. We have done hard work from fencing to scrub-clearing, and in spite of having no trips to the south we can physically measure ourselves with those fortunate ones who have had the advantage of recuperative trips.⁶⁵

This determination to make a success of life on the Herbert was emphasised by Ian Frazer, in his study “Conservationism and farming in North Queensland, 1861-1970”. He observed that while the “North’s pioneers struggled to turn their tropical scrub blocks into farmland with axes, mattocks and shovels,” nonetheless they persisted.⁶⁶ He gave the example of small farmer Rosendahl who he suggested epitomised the yeoman type, the type that was extolled as “patriots, ready to suffer anything but severance from the soil and equal to ‘the severest privations’.”⁶⁷ When giving evidence at the 1889 royal commission, Rosendahl said that, despite not making money from farming, he could think of doing nothing else: “I have never been anything but a farmer, and have always been working on a farm. I cannot say that I am very prosperous, but I should like to stick to it.”⁶⁸ In 1905 Cowley remarked of the Herbert River:

One pleasing feature is to know that by far the greater number of cane-growers on the Herbert and Johnstone rivers are men who were employed as ploughmen or in other vocations by owners of large estates previous to subdivision, and there is abundance of opportunities in North Queensland for sober, steady men to become employers and landowners, and this is a factor against us in lessening the supply of employees. The honest, sober work-man can always acquire a holding of his own.⁶⁹

The description of the yeoman farmer in 1914 was very different to the reality of small sugar farming two decades earlier. The fluctuating fortunes of sugar growing in the late nineteenth century required the small farmers to take outside work even as they farmed

⁶⁵ Edward Wybergh Docker, *The Blackbirders: The Recruiting of South Seas Labour for Queensland, 1863-1907* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson Ltd., 1970), 209.

⁶⁶ Frazer, “Conservationism,” 118.

⁶⁷ *Townsville Herald*, January 26, 1889, 14, as quoted in Frazer, “Conservationism,” 118.

⁶⁸ Evidence of Niels Christian Rosendahl, Sugar Industry Commission, “Report of the Royal Commission, 1889,” 110.

⁶⁹ “The Northern Sugar Industry,” *Queenslander*, June 10, 1905, 32.

their selections. Meanwhile, amongst the first small farmers on the Herbert were Chinese and time-expired Melanesians.⁷⁰ By 1914 the small sugar farmers of the Herbert River Valley were, as Moore described, “Yeoman farmers in the liberal tradition, men of small capital means, farming their own land with the aid of their families and not labouring for others.”⁷¹ Furthermore, as Grigg pointed out, they were largely Europeans whose independence was guaranteed by the ability to supply their cane to central mills.⁷²

The white farmers had scant tolerance of non-white farmers and neither was there official sanction for them to farm permanently. They did not conform to the yeoman vision.⁷³ While a *white* Queensland could accommodate non-white workers, a *white* Australia was a different matter.⁷⁴ Thus, after federation in 1901 and the introduction of the White Australia Policy, legislation was enacted to exclude non-whites from the industry, not only as labourers but as farmers. The Queensland government introduced two acts, the Leases to Aliens Restrictions Act of 1912 and the Sugar Cultivation Act of 1913, which effectively prevented any remaining non-naturalised Chinese or other Asian and Melanesian small cane farmers from cane farming after 1915. Before the total exclusion ban which came into effect at the end of 1915, the acts required aliens (except Italians under the 1913 regulations) to pass a dictation test in a language determined by the government before they could be leased parcels of land greater than five acres in size, or granted a certificate of exemption to cultivate sugar cane (either as a farmer or farm labourer).⁷⁵ What really discouraged them from growing sugar cane however, was their exclusion from receiving the sugar bounty because their cane was not being cultivated by *whites*.

⁷⁰ As has already been established in this thesis, independent white sugar cane farmers were the exception in the sugar growing world in the period 1872 to 1914. These white farmers established associations, which were also global exceptions. This thesis focuses on those associations, not the place of non-white, tenant sugar farmers in the Australian sugar industry, though the latter must be acknowledged for their significant contribution. For scholarship on those see Griggs, “Alien Agriculturalists,” 135-56; Griggs, “Origins and Early Development,” 46-61; Moore, *Kanaka*; Mercer, “Survival of a Pacific Islander Population.”

⁷¹ Moore, “Queensland Sugar Industry,” 39.

⁷² Griggs, *Global Industry, Local Innovation*, 2.

⁷³ Griggs, “Alien Agriculturalists”; Wegner and Robb, “Chinese in the Sugar,” 10-12.

⁷⁴ Megarrity, “‘White Queensland’,” 1-12.

⁷⁵ Queensland Government, “The Leases to Aliens Restriction Act of 1912”; “The Sugar Cultivation Act of 1913.” They were allowed to lease less than five acres because so many Queensland towns relied on Chinese market gardeners for fresh vegetables.

DISINCENTIVES TO SMALL FARMING

Australia was a settler society driven by capitalist imperatives and sugar cultivation was touted as the means of making a fortune.⁷⁶ Elsewhere in the world sugar was cultivated by peasants (subsistence farmers) on small plots and by tenant farmers on plantation land. In Australia the personal aspirations of small settlers as yeoman farmers differentiated them from a peasantry, while the conditions of peasantry were not consistent with the type of settler society envisaged by government.⁷⁷ Indigenous Australians and their mostly hunter-gatherer lifestyle did not represent a displaced peasantry, while their claim to traditional ownership of the land only began to be addressed by government late in the twentieth century. They were not even considered in the scheme to encourage independent small farming in tropical Australia.⁷⁸ Though tenants could operate as independent capitalists, as was illustrated in Louisiana, in Australia there was a resistance to tenant farming and subsistence farming as explored in chapter two. The small settlers on the Herbert who formed the HRFA were motivated by aspirations of land ownership and independence. Even CSR encouraged its tenants to buy their leases.

Chapter two outlined the disincentives that disinclined planters to take the crops of small farmers for crushing. A particular and valid disincentive for planters to take cane from small growers was transport arrangements. Meanwhile, the problem of how they would get their cane to the mill meant that selectors were disinclined to gamble on planting a crop. Ideally, the distance from farm to mill was no more than five miles (eight kilometres) by land or 10 miles (16 kilometres) by water. But before rail, when cane was transported by river punt or cart, handling cane was time-consuming, delaying the delivery of quickly deteriorating cut cane.

The potential for transport on the Herbert River was limited. For planters, the reliance on a river that George E. Dalrymple had already observed, in 1864, would prove to be unnavigable, presented real difficulties for not only getting the cane to the mill, but also getting the raw sugar to the port. Dalrymple described the river's drawbacks as the exposure of its mouth to the open ocean and the southeast trade-winds, and the miles of

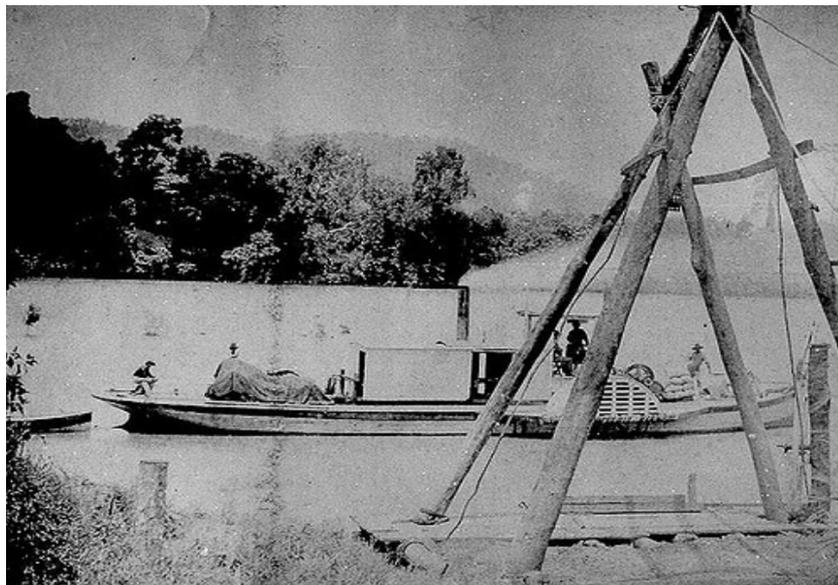
⁷⁶ See Appendix 6.

⁷⁷ Denoon, *Settler Capitalism*, 39.

⁷⁸ Though farmers on the Herbert attempted to use them as labour with the end of the indentured labour system. See Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away*, 252.

swamps which cut it off from the back country.⁷⁹ Natural impediments, such as snags, shifting sand islands and rocky bars, were compounded by siltation as clearing for farming and human interference eroding river banks. The cut cane had to be hauled to riverside wharves, loaded onto punts and ferried to the mills' riverside wharves, and then off-loaded and transported to the mill. Milled sugar likewise had to be punted downriver to the receiving stores. These methods required several handlings, as did the ferrying of supplies and machinery upstream to the plantation and farms' river landings. As the river is tidal, all this had to be conducted as the tides permitted, and so the journey from Halifax to Dungeness, or from paddock to mill, could take 24 hours. These difficulties often meant that boatmen had to work through the night. Already by 1887 it was recorded in *Pugh's Almanac* that the Herbert was only navigable for five miles upriver, and then only by small boats.⁸⁰ The use of the river for the transport of sugar would be abandoned once an extensive rail system was laid down.

Image 33: Paddle steamer *Kent* at CSR's Halifax landing, circa 1881-1890. (Source: Hinchinbrook Shire Council Library Photographic Collection)



With the coming of CSR in the 1880s, independent, small farmers began to seriously consider sugar cane farming. CSR laid seven miles (11 kilometres) of tramline from the mill to its wharf, and a further 18 miles (29 kilometres) of tramline and four miles (six kilometres) of portable tramway worked by three locomotives to transport cane from its

⁷⁹ "Rockingham Bay," *Mercury*, August 2, 1864, 3.

⁸⁰ Pugh, *Pugh's Almanac and Queensland Directory* 1887, 334. Only five years earlier it was claimed that the river was navigable up to Stone Hut, a distance from Dungeness of over 22 miles. "Scenery on the Herbert River," *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, November 25, 1882.

estates.⁸¹ It offered a glimmer of hope, in the face of a lack of infrastructure and the fluctuating fortunes of the mills which had been distinct disincentives for small, white tenants or landowners to grow sugar cane. But even CSR would only take cane from properties that fronted its railway line.⁸² The farmers who formed the HRFA were well placed. They had astutely selected land that was relatively flood-free, bordering on, or with access to, waterways, and accessible by rail from CSR's Victoria Mill. The advantageous location of one of Anderssen's blocks was observed by Ebenezer Cowley on his initial foray on the Herbert on behalf of CSR. He negotiated with Anderssen to purchase 10 acres of his riverfront land so that CSR could build a wharf and sugar store.⁸³

CSR was not the first to offer contracts or leases to small farmers. In 1877, there was talk of a possible subdivision of former Gairloch lands, as was noted in chapter four. Blocks would be offered to small growers who would supply their cane to a new improved mill to be constructed on Gairloch. No one would commit to growing the required 300 acres of cane.⁸⁴ When Fanning, NanKivell and Sons built their new mill, cane from the other side of the river had to be winched across on an aerial arrangement, known as a 'pendent wire tramway'. The mill had only two outside suppliers, with one of those a NanKivell on a separate estate.⁸⁵ Similarly, in 1881, it was rumoured that the Hamleigh Sugar Co. was planning to offer small farmers an inducement to cultivate sugar cane by guaranteeing to purchase their crops.⁸⁶ No growers could be enticed as the mill only had about six and half miles (10 kilometres) of tramline worked by horses. Hamleigh's distance from both the Herbert River and the port at Dungeness, the want of tramway to source cane from possible suppliers, and the absence of a districtwide tramway system

⁸¹ Tramway: the original term for the 600mm or 2ft (610mm) railway used to haul sugar cane either by horses or steam locomotives. "The North-Eastern Coast; Its Cultivators and Cultivation," *Queenslander*, January 7, 1888, 31; "The Sugar Commission," *Queenslander*, February 9, 1889, 254; evidence of William McLean, Sugar Industry Commission, "Report of the Royal Commission, 1889," 128.

⁸² Correspondence from E. W. Knox to Cowley, January 14, 1884, Deposit 142/1547, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra; correspondence from E. W. Knox to E. Cowley, June 24, July 7, July 23, July 28, 1884, Deposit 142/1547, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

⁸³ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 26.

⁸⁴ "Lower Herbert," *Queenslander*, June 30, 1877, 6.

⁸⁵ "Sugar Industry," *Sydney Mail*, October 18, 1884, 791; evidence of Lewis Jesse Cowley, Sugar Industry Commission, "Report of the Royal Commission, 1889," 122.

⁸⁶ "The Lower Herbert. Our Sugar Circular," 1881, press cuttings, 48, Deposit 142/3579 CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

put it at a distinct disadvantage.⁸⁷ The Neames, on their return to the Valley in 1887, began leasing land, and persisted with it despite the reluctance of white selectors to commit to cane growing. The only growers to take up their offer were Chinese.⁸⁸ Like CSR, the Neames contracted to cart the cane and, as more growers came on board, they began to lay down tramlines and provide portable horse-line for the fields. Robert M. Boyd, of Ripple Creek Plantation, also leased to tenants, and both he and the Neames would have liked to have purchased cane from more contractors but needed the divisional board to put in the infrastructure on the northern side of the river, as they could not afford to do it themselves. Unfortunately, it was not until the passing of the Railways Guarantee Act in 1895 that the divisional board could secure loans to lay a tramline on the northern side of the river.⁸⁹

Image 34: Some of the last Melanesian cane cutters on the Herbert River, 1903.
(Source: Hinchinbrook Shire Council Library Photographic Collection)



Another disincentive to small farming of sugar cane was the concern about labour. Hamleigh manager Robert Grierson Blackmore informed the 1889 commission that despite offers made to small selectors to take their cane if they grew it, “they did not seem

⁸⁷ “Country Mails,” *Brisbane Courier*, October 28, 1893, 6; “The Sugar Industry,” *Brisbane Courier*, March 12, 1894, 6.

⁸⁸ Wegner and Robb, “Chinese in the Sugar,” 124; evidence of Frank Neame, Sugar Industry Commission, “Report of the Royal Commission, 1889,” 113; evidence of Robert Mitchell Boyd, Sugar Industry Commission, “Report of the Royal Commission, 1889,” 118.

⁸⁹ Queensland Government, “Railways Guarantee Act 1895.”

to care to go into it” for reasons of labour scarcity.⁹⁰ The first government-sponsored cooperative mills in Mackay, North Eton and Racecourse faltered on the commitment to process only cane grown by white labour. The small farmers of the Herbert rejected a cooperative mill proposal because of the proviso that it be required to source cane grown by white labour.⁹¹

While CSR was still cultivating some land of its own, in the years following the decision to subdivide, the tenants were expected to find their own harvesting labour.⁹² Knox was unequivocal about this saying, “it is out of the question for us to give any promise for assistance and this is to be made quite clear to the tenants.”⁹³ That the increasing number of small farmers were having trouble sourcing labour suited CSR management. Knox’s response to the Victoria Mill manager’s reports of labour difficulties in 1892 exposed his devious plan: “there is a much better chance of continuance of the employment of coloured labourers being authorized by the Government if the number of people feeling the want of such men be increased.”⁹⁴ But with the cessation of indentured labour inevitable, that attitude had to change, and in 1893 the manager was authorised to assist tenants with securing harvesting labour.⁹⁵

For white labourers to want to cut cane, institutional arrangements had to be implemented to make the job more appealing. Previously, fieldwork had been unattractive as it was poorly paid, while conditions were also poor, even exploitative. Time-expired Melanesian labourers developed a system of cutting by contract, but there were restrictions imposed by the Pacific Island Labourers Act.⁹⁶ With underemployment prevailing during the 1890s’ depression, unemployed white labourers were driven to seek work in sugar growing regions where they adopted the working arrangements already

⁹⁰ Evidence of Robert Grierson Blackmore, Sugar Industry Commission, “Report of the Royal Commission, 1889,” 125-26.

⁹¹ “Proposed Central Sugar-Mills,” *Brisbane Courier*, July 12 1886, 3; Queensland Government, “Report of Central Sugar Mills, by W.O. Hodgkinson, 1886,” 21.

⁹² Correspondence from E. W. Knox to Manager Victoria Mill, March 20, 1892, Deposit 142/1551, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

⁹³ Correspondence from E. W. Knox to Manager Victoria Mill, March 20, 1892, Deposit 142/1551, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

⁹⁴ Correspondence from E. W. Knox to Manager Victoria Mill, March 23, 1892, Deposit 142/1551, CSR Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

⁹⁵ Correspondence from E. W. Knox to Manager Victoria Mill, July 13, 1893, Deposit 142/1552, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra; correspondence from E. W. Knox to Manager Victoria Mill, August 24, 1893, Deposit 142/1552, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

⁹⁶ “Herbert River,” *Sugar Journal and Tropical Cultivator*, October 15, 1894, 201.

developed by Melanesian labourers. This system, identified as the ‘butty gang’ system, addressed the previous disincentives of sugar field work.

The butty gang was an autonomous “non-hierarchical worker peer group operating under a collective piece-rate payment system” which benefitted both farmer and worker.⁹⁷ The farmer did not need to organise work groups or supervise their labour. The gang signed on with a group of farmers, working on a rotation determined by the mill. The incentive of the piece-rate system meant that the gang was self-policing. The worker was free of the control of the farmer, and by working a piece-rate system was remunerated for effort exerted. White cane cutters experimented with a number of payment schemes, but Shlomowitz determined that by 1912, when wages and conditions were standardised, the adoption of the butty gang system was almost universal.⁹⁸ The legislation which made fieldwork more palatable to white workers was the Shearers’ and Sugar Workers’ Accommodation Act of 1905, which set minimum standards of diet and accommodation, and the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration ruling in 1907 which fixed a minimum wage for fieldworkers.⁹⁹ As the system of payment for cane cutting was working itself out, different modes of payment were preferred—payment per ton or wages.¹⁰⁰

On the Herbert these satisfactory arrangements were not achieved smoothly. Workers found that farmers did not always comply with the Accommodation Act and so accommodation arrangements and wages were hotly contested. The situation was complicated by the provisions of the Sugar Bounty Act 1905 and the threat that wages paid under the standard rate would result in the withholding of the bounty.¹⁰¹ The PRF&GA, the Johnstone River Farmers’ Association, and the HRFL were amongst those district associations which negotiated with the Sugar Workers’ Union (SWU) as each

⁹⁷ Shlomowitz, “The Search for Institutional Equilibrium,” 116.

⁹⁸ Shlomowitz, “The Search for Institutional Equilibrium,” 120.

⁹⁹ Queensland Government, “An Act to Provide for the Proper and Sufficient Accommodation of Shearers and Sugar Workers, 1905”; and Ex parte H.V. McKay (Harvester Case), (1907) 2 CAR 1, accessed March 20, 2018, <http://ww2.fwa.gov.au/manilafiles/files/archives/19072CAR1.pdf>. See Schedule, 19. Also see article by Doug Hunt which brings together scholarship on this topic. Doug Hunt, *Labour in North Queensland: Industrial and Political Behaviour, 1900-1920* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag, 2010).

¹⁰⁰ R. L. Shepherd “The Herbert River Story: Part 61 The Labour Scheme,” *Local Historical Anthology Collection*, book 1 vol. 3 Collection Code: 900003:B, Hinchinbrook Shire Library, Ingham; and “Herbert River,” *Sugar Journal and Tropical Cultivator*, August 15, 1902, 28.

¹⁰¹ Commonwealth Government, “Sugar Bounty. No. 23 of 1905: An Act to provide for a Bounty to Growers of Sugar-Cane and Beet, December 21, 1905,” Clause 9.

district tried to settle on mutually acceptable rates of pay and living conditions for free labour.¹⁰² A district scale of wage was decided by district wages boards made up of farmer and union officials.¹⁰³ Districts wanted scales of pay to be established on merit as conditions varied in each of the districts and so they compared each other's suggested scales in order to come up with an acceptable formula. Cane cutters were divided on how they wanted to be paid: wages or contract. The farmers' associations and the workers' groups vied to get the upper hand in determining a standard rate of pay in their districts. Conflict between the district farmers' association and the union was clear in 1906 when Charles Trent, secretary of the Herbert SWU, reported to the labour commission that the HRFL had posted the proposed rate of pay for that season in the newspaper without consultation with the SWU. The SWU request for a conference with the HRFL had been refused.¹⁰⁴

Early contemporary reports tended to disparage white cane cutters' efforts, though in 1904 Carr commented that:

In my opinion all who have given white labour a fair and properly organized trial have come well to the front; it pays better to trash and cut by white labour at contract rates than it does by black labour at day wages.¹⁰⁵

Fellow farmers disagreed with his view that there was enough white labour in Queensland without the need to use "either Mr McLean's Chinamen or Mr Boyd's Kanakas."¹⁰⁶ Unlike Carr, most were insistent that the solution to the labour issue was the continuation of the government bonus for sugar harvested with white labour, and government assistance to secure suitable labour, particularly that sourced from Europe.¹⁰⁷ The farmer

¹⁰² "Sugar Workers' Union," *Daily Mercury*, May 22, 1906, 2.

¹⁰³ Burrows and Morton, *The Canecutters*, 36.

¹⁰⁴ Evidence of Charles Trent, "Sugar Industry Labour Commission: Report of the Royal Commission, 1906," 350.

¹⁰⁵ "World or Labour," *Worker*, October 29, 1904, 7.

¹⁰⁶ "Visit to Halifax," *Queenslander*, June 19, 1905, 22; correspondence from A.W. Carr to the Editor, "Correspondence," *Herbert River Express*, October 3, 1904. Melanesian indentured labourers were called kanakas, the word deriving from the Polynesian word, tangata, pronounced with a k in Hawai'i. Originally referring to indigenous Hawai'ians, as the labour trade expanded the word came to be used to mean 'native'. See Vidonja Balanzategui, *The Herbert River Story*, 28.

¹⁰⁷ Evidence of Edward [sic] Waller, "Sugar Industry Labour Commission: Report of the Royal Commission, 1906," 368; "Petition. Sugar Cane Farmers and other Residents of the Herbert River North Queensland to House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Australia," July 1, 1905; "Sugar Labour," *Queensland Times, Ipswich Herald and General Advertiser*, June 7, 1906, 9. The Excise Tariff Act of 1902 and the Sugar Bounty Act of 1903 required a farmer's sugar crop to be cultivated by white labour only, if he was to receive the bounty. See Deidre Howard-Wagner, "Colonialism and the Science of Race Difference," 1-9, accessed November 15, 2017, <https://tasa.org.au/wp->

associations on the Herbert petitioned the federal government accordingly. During the Sugar Industry Labour Commission in 1906, the commissioners questioned whether the HRFL had made serious attempts to solve their members' labour problems. Commissioners suggested that in writing letters to the Prime Minister, the league was expecting others to solve their problem for them and that, rather than instructing the secretary of the league to write letters, members should ask the HRFL to organise labour.¹⁰⁸ This suggestion flew in the face of the reality on the Herbert. CSR continued to undertake to secure labour for its cane suppliers and discouraged them from signing on labourers independently, threatening to penalise those who did so.¹⁰⁹ Those undertakings limited the autonomy of the HRFL to pursue labour. Regardless of these difficulties, the farmers were advised to accept the paucity of white labour and work towards a practicable solution.¹¹⁰ Part of that solution was the establishment of a standard wage and provision of suitable accommodation. Alfred Ashford, a cane cutter on the Herbert, argued that farmers would have no trouble capturing "the cream of the labour from the whole of the States" if they offered "fair conditions."¹¹¹ But as iterated here, the Herbert farmers' organisation was not inclined to negotiate with workers on the issue.¹¹²

The farmers' association's petition did elicit one favourable response from the Prime Minister that agricultural labourers from Europe and Britain could be engaged as long as clear information was provided as to how the scheme would work.¹¹³ When E.J. Waring, manager of CSR's Macknade Mill, wrote to Knox, referring to "the scheme accepted by

content/uploads/2008/12/189.pdf; John Chesterman and Brian Galligan noted the anomaly that indigenous Australians were exempted under Clause 10 of the Sugar Bounty Act of 1905 and their employment did not prejudice the receipt of the bounty. John Chesterman and Brian Galligan, *Citizens Without Rights: Aborigines and Australian Citizenship* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 86; Commonwealth Government, "Excise Tariff. Act No. 11 of 1902: An Act relating to Duties of Excise"; "The Schedule; Sugar; Sugar Bounty. Act No. 4 of 1903: An Act to provide for a Bounty to Growers of Sugar-Cane and Beet,"; "No. 23 of 1905," Clause 10. While white workers and farmers were negotiating an award in 1907, outside of this the HRFL took upon itself the authority on the Herbert to fix wages for indigenous workers, women and men, a number of which were employed at rates separate and far below that of white workers, an injustice which did not go unremarked upon. See "Brief Mention," *Johnstone River Advocate*, June 6, 1907, 3; "Political Pap," *Truth*, June 16, 1907, 5.

¹⁰⁸ "Sugar Industry Labour Commission: Report of the Royal Commission, 1906," 368-69.

¹⁰⁹ M. Casolin, "Contributions of Early French Settlers," 23.

¹¹⁰ Shepherd, "The Herbert River Story: Part 61 The Labour Scheme."

¹¹¹ Evidence of Alfred Ashford to the Sugar Industry Labour Royal Commission, "Report of the Royal Commission 1906," 126.

¹¹² Evidence of Charles Trent to the Sugar Industry Labour Royal Commission, "Report of the Royal Commission 1906: Minutes of Proceedings, Minutes of Evidence taken before the Commission and appendices," 349, accessed August 21, 2017, http://onerearch.slq.qld.gov.au/SLQ:SLQ_PCI_EBSCO:slq_alma21135340600002061.

¹¹³ "Sugar Labour," *Queensland Times, Ipswich Herald and General Advertiser*, June 7, 1906, 9.

the Prime Minister from the Farmers' Association," he was explicitly referring to the Contract Immigrants Act 1905 and the part played by the Herbert River farmers and their representative association (at the time, the HRFL).¹¹⁴ As a consequence of the passing of the Act, CSR was able to engage workers on behalf of the farmers. Prior to the harvest season the farmers would give the mill management signed authorities for the workers they required.¹¹⁵ The labourers recruited included Scandinavians, Britons, Italians, Austrians and Hungarians.¹¹⁶ The emergence of white cane cutting gangs dispelled, once and for all, the long-held belief that white people could not live and labour in the tropics without detriment to their health.

Image 35: First of the white cane cutters in Ingham, 1904. (Source: Hinchinbrook Shire Council Library Photographic Collection)



THE HERBERT RIVER FARMERS' ASSOCIATION

Elsewhere in the sugar growing world, former slaves and former indentured labourers engaged in tenancy or share-cropping, constrained by limited independence. They were locked into ongoing dependence on planters, and conversely planters, among others, depended on their labour. This lack of independence meant that those farmers had limited

¹¹⁴ Correspondence E. H. Waring, Manager Macknade Mill to General Manager, January 24, 1907, Deposit 142/1495 Letter no. 359, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Canberra; "Visit to Halifax," *Queenslander*, June 19, 1905, 22; Commonwealth Parliament, "Contract Immigrants Act 1905," Federal Register of Legislation, accessed January 18, 2018, <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C1905A00019>.

¹¹⁵ Correspondence E. H. Waring, Manager Macknade Mill to General Manager, January 24, 1907, Deposit 142/1495 Letter no. 359, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

¹¹⁶ Casolin, "Contributions of Early French Settlers," 23.

opportunity or inclination to attempt to better their conditions through political agitation or lobbying. Conversely, planters could see rural extension as a threat to the social order and prevent their tenants or share-croppers from attending extension programmes.¹¹⁷ In the more egalitarian society of the tropical north Queensland frontier, yeomen farmers did not hesitate to organise themselves to challenge the planters' hegemony.

Clergyman Fredrick Richmond, travelling to Queensland in the 1870s, observed that "If men are to become a class of respected and powerful yeomanry, they must be organized."¹¹⁸ An article in the *Queenslander* in 1880 identified a want of "common solicitude" as the reason for the dearth of small farmer associations in Australia generally.¹¹⁹ Richmond had remonstrated that if farmers were to be respected, and able to exert any power to improve their position, they needed to form associations. This sentiment was echoed by founding member of the HRFA Harald Hoffensetz, whose thoughts were cited within Alm's observation:

one looked in vain to find a farmers' organisation anywhere in Queensland. Why that should be so, [Hoffensetz] could not understand; it was generally recognised, he said, that the farming industry was a most important one, and all Governments would strive to do their best for it; but he maintained that the farmers should know their own business best; they should come together, ventilate their requirements, and form a policy. In that way, they would help themselves, and be of assistance to the Government. If they were content to sit down and do nothing, they had no right to complain, if they did not get what they required.¹²⁰

The small settlers of the Herbert River Valley struggling to grow small crops profitably were economically precarious. However, they had an object in common: a desire to grow sugar and supply it to CSR. They saw a concrete benefit to organising themselves and formed an agricultural association of their own.

The formation of the HRFA had its origins in the establishment of CSR's Victoria Plantation. In all sugar growing districts of Australia there were first informal and then more formal discussions amongst settlers about the possibilities, prospects, risks and benefits if they took up sugar cane farming. The Herbert River Valley settlers had been quick to formalise their discussions by making a direct enquiry of CSR regarding its plans for Victoria Mill. Two representatives of Black's Township, Anderssen and Alm, were

¹¹⁷ de Jong, *A Different Day*, 80-81.

¹¹⁸ Frederick Richmond, *Queensland in the Seventies: Reminiscences of the Early Days of a Young Clergyman* (Singapore: s.n., 1927), 103.

¹¹⁹ "Co-operation Amongst Farmers," *Queenslander*, January 3, 1880, 17.

¹²⁰ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 36.

deputised to approach an officer of CSR with a proposal that the small settlers of the Lower Herbert area grow sugar cane for supply to the new mill that they saw taking shape on the banks of Palm Creek. CSR letter books noted two requests in 1881 and 1882 from farmers to take their cane.¹²¹ The officer, familiar with the culture of CSR, suggested that a collective approach to the company would be more effective. This reflected CSR's unwillingness to enter into contracts with individuals. It wanted farmers to negotiate contracts collectively and guarantee a tonnage.¹²²

A meeting of the Black's Township settlers was called at Anderssen's farm, Riverview, so that Anderssen and Alm could report back on their meeting with the CSR officer. Six settlers attended the meeting, four of whom were Scandinavian: Hoffensetz, Anderssen, Rosendahl and Alm, the others being the two Englishmen Carr and Herron. Hoffensetz proposed a formal motion to form an association to be named the Herbert River Farmers' Association. Carr seconded it. The six attending the first meeting are recorded as the founding membership, with Anderssen as the first chairman, Alm as secretary and Carr as treasurer. The HRFA claimed at the time to be the first such association in Queensland—that is, one that originated to represent small growers' interests rather than those of larger planters.¹²³ For the next 14 years it would be the voice of the Herbert River small farmers.

British settlers like Carr and Herron would have known something of agricultural associations if only by way of the universally popular show or exhibition and its variant, the ploughing competition. The agricultural association was a global phenomenon and immigrants from farming backgrounds of other European countries also brought their associative traditions with them.¹²⁴ Lund suggested that the Scandinavians brought to the HRFA the “collaborative traditions” with which they were already familiar in their home

¹²¹ Victoria (Cowley) letters to Knox pre-1888 did not survive. Letter Book 1881 CSR to Victoria missing but in Letter Book 17 February 1882 to 4 September 1883 there were two references to farmers requests to accept their cane: 5 October 1881 and 20 April 1882.

¹²² Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 34; Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away*, 147.

¹²³ Alm, *Early History of the River Herbert District*, 36. See chapter 4 and table 3 for names, membership and role of first Queensland agricultural associations that took an interest in sugar cultivation.

¹²⁴ Examples of scholarship speaking of the agricultural association movements in both Britain and Europe are Nilsson, Pettersson and Svensson, “Agrarian Transition and Literacy,” 82, 92, accessed June 17, 2018, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41377843>; Stapelbroek and Marjanen, eds., *The Rise of Economic Societies, passim*; Joel Mokyr, “Intellectual Origins,” 294, 317, accessed June 17, 2018, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3875064>.

countries.¹²⁵ Instances of collaboration in the home country rural areas included parish meetings, village councils and agricultural societies.

Because Norway, Sweden and Denmark followed individual paths towards democratisation as they interacted with national revolution and industrial revolution, the collaborative traditions immigrants from those countries transferred through their diasporas had different foundations. Nevertheless, what Norway, Sweden and Denmark's populaces enjoyed was a degree of equality and freedom that other countries did not have in the nineteenth century.¹²⁶ They also shared relatively high levels of literacy. This translated as freedom of association, ability to initiate and conduct official associational procedure and a tendency for collaborative behaviour. Norway's rural collaborative traditions can in part be explained by a dominant class of peasant freeholders (yeomen farmers), rural political representation and a high membership of voluntary associations; Sweden's to an independent peasantry and political representation by property-owning farmers; Denmark's to rural popular movements antagonistic to ruling elites and a high degree of rural participation in associations and cooperatives after the overthrow of absolutism in 1849.¹²⁷

Table 5: Herbert River Farmers' Association President and Secretary 1882-1896

YEAR	PRESIDENT OR CHAIRMAN	SECRETARY
1882	A. Anderssen	J. Alm
1883	A. Anderssen	J. Alm
1884	A. Anderssen	J. Alm
1885	H. Hoffensetz (?)	J. Alm
1886	H. Hoffensetz	J. Alm
1887	A. Anderssen	J. Alm
1888	A. Anderssen	J. Alm
1889	F. Neame	J. Alm
1890	F. Neame	J. Alm
1891	F. Neame	J. Alm
1892	A. Neame	J. Alm
1893	A. Neame	J. Alm
1894	W.T. White	J. Alm or J. Lely
1895	W.T. White	J. Alm or J. Lely
1896	W.T. White	B. Lynn (?)

Source: Pughs' Almanac 1882-1896, Letter to the Editor of *The Times London*, January 25, 1886 and *Queensland Agricultural Journal*, March 1, 1898, 240.

¹²⁵ Lund, "A Norwegian Waltz," 94. See pertinent discussion in relation to Swedish landowning peasants in Peter Aronsson. "Swedish Rural Society and Political Culture: The Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Experience," *Rural History* 3 (1992): 41-57.

¹²⁶ Jan Eivind Myhre, "The Cradle of Norwegian Equality and Egalitarianism: Norway in the Nineteenth Century," in *Egalitarianism in Scandinavia. Approaches to Social Inequality and Difference*, eds. S. Bendixsen, M. Bringslid, and H. Vike, (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 67.

¹²⁷ Tim Knudsen and Bo Rothstein, "State Building in Scandinavia," *Comparative Politics* 26 (1994): 203-220, accessed August 28, 2019, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/422268>; and Myhre, "The Cradle of Norwegian Equality and Egalitarianism," 68-85.

The initial approach by the smallholders to the CSR was, given the reputed arrogance of the company, an audacious action. In addition to being unwilling to talk with a small farmer delegation, unless it was making a collective approach with a guaranteed tonnage, the company was also reluctant to negotiate with those it considered to lack appropriate social status. This reluctance deepened if the results of any negotiation promised to diverge from the company's terms.¹²⁸ J. B. Thurston, colonial secretary and later Governor of Fiji from 1888 to 1897, was recorded as accusing CSR of being "the most selfish company in the Australasias."¹²⁹ The farmers' boldness may have come from an astute assessment of the circumstances on the Herbert. In comparison to Mackay, there were fewer planters to impede an advance by small growers, and CSR's fellow planters had still not recovered from the difficult years following the locust plague.¹³⁰

It is unclear if the Herbert farmers anticipated success. Whether CSR harboured similar, genuine reservations, or whether it deliberately set out to sabotage the small farmers is also uncertain. Only Rosendahl planted a small experimental plot of cane. Perhaps CSR anticipated that the farmers would not be able to commit to a guaranteed supply and would therefore not persist with their proposal. Furthermore, in 1881 there was no global precedent of small sugar farmers forming associations, so it is possible that the company anticipated the suggestion that the selectors form one would confound them and exhaust their enthusiasm. The Scandinavian members were formerly labourers and servants and may have been thought to be uneducated, even illiterate and incapable of conducting the formal business of an association.

On the other hand, it is quite possible that CSR was not being obstructive. The company would have been familiar with planters' associations and known the potential effectiveness of the united approach. CSR also knew that if the experiment of independent, white, small sugar cane farmers was to be successful in the tropical north, they would need to be informed agriculturalists. Globally, across all industries, it was appreciated that farmers, to be successful, needed access to up-to-date information on the best agricultural methods and technology. The company expected high standards of

¹²⁸ Secondary sources such as Hunt, *Labour in North Queensland*, 30, 79-80, accessed June 6, 2018, <https://researchonline.jcu.edu.au/11955/1/Hunt1.pdf>; CSR letter books, evidence provided at royal commissions, parliamentary debate and press reports all attest abundantly to CSR's behaviour and attitude which never wavered and were exhibited by staff of both mills and head office.

¹²⁹ Cited in Deryck Scarr, *Fiji, a Short History* (Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1984), 82.

¹³⁰ Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away*, 78, 146.

cultivation but it would not be able to exert the same paternalistic control over white landowners as it could over tenant farmers.¹³¹ As the proven vehicle to disseminate agricultural information, an agricultural association would help Herbert Valley farmers be proficient farmers. Possibly working in their favour, too, was the reputation of CSR (founded by Danish-born Sir Edward Knox) for giving a helping hand to Scandinavians.¹³²

The membership subscription of the HRFA was set at £1 and while Chinese or Melanesian farmers were not explicitly excluded from membership, they were probably not welcome.¹³³ Initially, meetings were held monthly, on the Saturday night nearest each full moon and at the homes of each of the foundation members in rotation. Anderssen and his wife set the precedent of serving a supper after the meeting. Alm made the observation that those social evenings to which the wives of the members were also invited were invaluable to the women, who, like the men, relied on what they could learn from one another. Distant from urban centres and professional expertise and services, men and women alike had to depend on their own skills and ingenuity. Alm recalled those occasions as providing “pleasure and much needed recreation” for all.¹³⁴

Once the association was formed, a letter was written to CSR detailing a proposal that the six members of the new association put a combined area of 200 acres under cane with the intention of supplying that cane to the proposed Victoria Mill for crushing. The local manager with whom they had to negotiate was Ebenezer Cowley. Cowley was not in favour of small farming while also regarding the tropical climate as not being suitable for family life.¹³⁵ Geoffrey Bolton commented that the formation of the HRFA did not alter Cowley’s opinion that CSR’s enterprise on the Herbert should be conducted as a vertically integrated plantation using indentured labour. However, that opinion would

¹³¹ For CSR’s relationship with its tenants in Fiji see Moynagh, *Brown or White?* However, in twenty-first century accounts there has been increasingly more critical and damning evidence of CSR’s treatment of its tenants in Fiji. An example is Daryle Tarte, “Sugar,” in *Fiji: A Place called home*, Canberra, 2014, accessed June 7, 2018, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt13wvvb2.17>.

¹³² Lund, “A Norwegian Waltz,” 94-95. See Lyng, 107-09 for an account of Knox’s life and attachment to his birth country.

¹³³ Patricia Mary Mercer, “The Survival of the Pacific Islander Population in North Queensland, 1900-1940” (PhD diss., Australian National University, 1981), 21, 200.

¹³⁴ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 37, 39.

¹³⁵ Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away*, 147; Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 38. He may have been jaundiced for good reason. He and his wife Janet lost their one-year old son Llewlllyn at Bemerside in 1878 and Alfred and Marie Cowley lost their one-year old daughter Theodora (Dotti) in 1884. Vidonja Balanzategui, *The Herbert River Story*. 81.

have been coloured by the fact that he was under notice that the company was not planning to lease any of its land to small selectors but rather would be growing its own cane for the mill.¹³⁶

By the time the next meeting of the HRFA was called at Alm's farm, a reply to their application had been received. Not unexpectedly, Cowley advised them that while he had forwarded their proposal to CSR's general manager they should not become too hopeful. Nevertheless, the farmers' optimism was not dampened and Rosendahl even informed the meeting that he had already put in a small patch of cane which he hoped to cut for plant.¹³⁷

CSR's head office never mentioned the HRFA in its correspondence with Cowley, though correspondence indicated that a list of interested farmers was forwarded to CSR head office through Cowley.¹³⁸ The approach made by the selectors seems to have been a peripheral matter as far as CSR was concerned. From 1881 when the Palm Creek site began to be cleared and machinery arrived, the immediate concerns were securing titles to land and negotiating with government and selectors to gain access, through their land, to the CSR Fairford holding and the land behind the mill site on the other side of Palm Creek. Another pressing concern was getting enough cane planted for a planned first crushing in 1883. The company also seemed preoccupied with keeping knowledge from other planters in the Valley. To that effect the local manager was instructed to not be too neighbourly.¹³⁹

In May 1882 the *Queenslander* had reported that "the Colonial Sugar Refining Company had given notice of their willingness to crush for the selectors."¹⁴⁰ However, it was not until 12 November, 1883, that Knox asked Cowley about the list of possible contract farmers.¹⁴¹ As CSR was having difficulty supplying enough cane to the mill from its own land, in January 1884 Knox advised Cowley that the contractors he had proposed (bar

¹³⁶ Correspondence from E. W. Knox to E. Cowley, October 5, 1881, Deposit 142/3506, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

¹³⁷ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 38.

¹³⁸ Correspondence from E. W. Knox to E. Cowley, November 12, 1883, Deposit 142/1547, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

¹³⁹ Correspondence from E. W. Knox to E. Cowley, February 20, 1883, Deposit 142/1546, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

¹⁴⁰ "The Lower Herbert," *Queenslander*, May 20, 1882, 3.

¹⁴¹ Correspondence from E. W. Knox to E. Cowley, November 12, 1883, Deposit 142/1547, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

three whose properties were inaccessible to the main tramline, because of intervening blocks) could be advised to clear their land in expectation of Victoria Mill taking their crops.¹⁴²

Knox preferred to contract independent farmers rather than to lease out land because of the company's experience on the Tweed. There the company ended up resuming much of the leased land. Knox was also concerned that farmers of "limited means" would have trouble securing coloured labour and he did not think that employing European labour was a profitable option for planters, let alone for small farmers.¹⁴³

On 22 April, 1884, contracts were sent to the farmers to sign. The HRFA must have been trying to extract some sort of concession, however, a telegram of 24 April shows Knox to have informed the HRFA that no negotiation on other terms was possible.¹⁴⁴ The contract was to be the same as that formalised with the Mackay farmers supplying the Homebush Mill.¹⁴⁵ Alm's recollections of the event offer more detail. According to him, the HRFA received a letter from the cane inspector which stated that he had been directed by CSR Head Office to interview the farmers and offer cane contracts to farmers with land near the company's tramline. He requested to be advised when and where he could meet the farmers to explain the company's terms. At a meeting, held in Copnell's Hotel, Alm outlined the agreement which he said was on the same lines as that which applied in NSW. The agreements would be for seven years. The price offered was 10/- per ton for growing and trashing, with the company carrying the cost of harvesting the crops. It would give advances on crops which would be determined by whether they were plant cane or ratoon. If the farmers were agreeable to the terms the cane inspector was authorised to enter into agreements immediately. He impressed on them that there was no time to lose as the cane was required for the 1885 season. No limits were put on how much cane the farmers could supply to the mill as the company required as much cane as it could get.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Correspondence from E.W. Knox to E. Cowley, January 8, January 14 and July 28, 1884, Deposit 142/1547, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

¹⁴³ Correspondence from E.W. Knox to E. Cowley, February 12, 1884, Deposit 142/1547, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

¹⁴⁴ Correspondence E.W. Knox to E. Cowley, April 22 and May 6, 1884 and Telegram April 24, 1884, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

¹⁴⁵ A copy of that particular contract has not survived.

¹⁴⁶ Correspondence from E.W. Knox to E. Cowley, April 22, 1884, Deposit 142/1547, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra; Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 44.

Image 36: The HRFA held meetings at the Copnell's Hotel, renamed the Halifax Hotel in 1886, photograph taken 1887. (Source: Hinchinbrook Shire Council Library Photographic Collection)

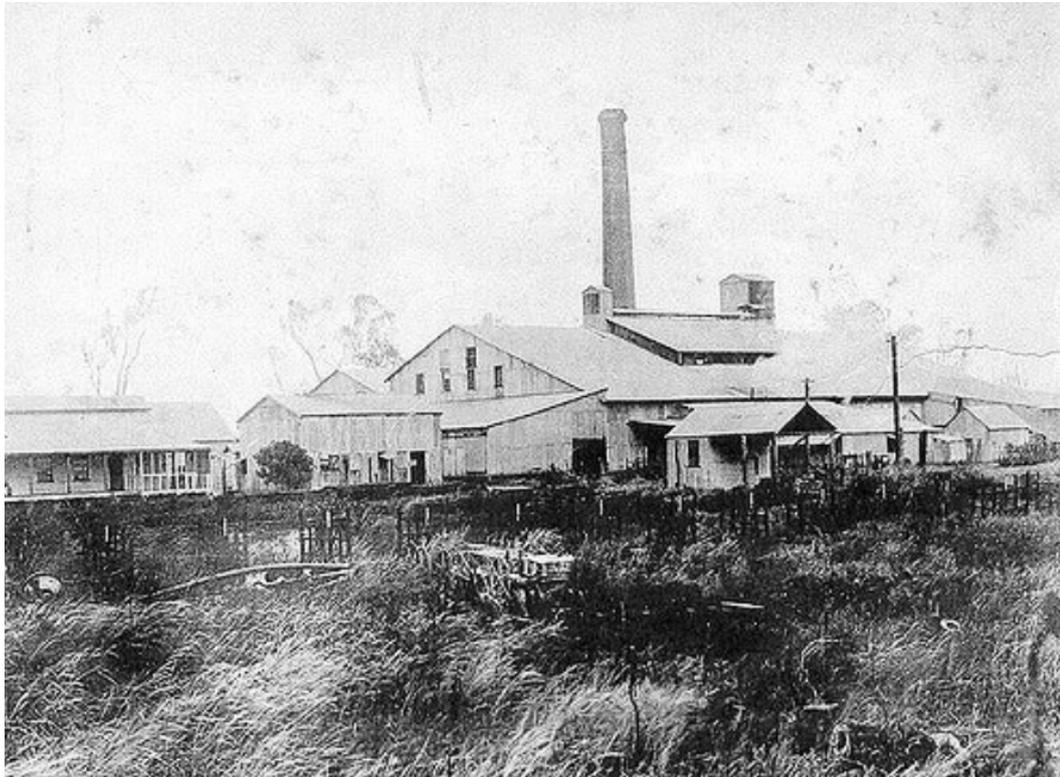


Alm claimed that the selectors did not take long to consider the matter as they had already given it a good deal of thought, knew what area they could put under cane, and that the terms were what they had expected having heard from farmers on the Clarence what their arrangement was with CSR.¹⁴⁷ As for the terms of the contract, Knox did not waver from those previously offered. Those attending the meeting agreed to the terms and Fairgrave noted down the individual acreage, saying he would have the agreements drawn up and, when completed, would send for them to come to Victoria Mill to sign. A few days later the prospective contractors were brought to Victoria Mill by special train, the cane agreements were perused and signed, and each contractor received £1 to seal the agreement. The business completed, the contractors were escorted to the officers' quarters where they were given a celebratory lunch. According to Alm's recollections, Fairgrave concluded that the "day would be of great importance" and would "mark the beginning of a new era in the history of the sugar industry of Queensland."¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 44.

¹⁴⁸ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 43-44.

Image 37: CSR's sugar mill, Victoria Plantation in 1883, where HRFA members signed the historic 1884 supply contracts. (Source: Hinchinbrook Shire Council Library Photographic Collection)



The concept of small growers supplying the Victoria Mill became a reality. A newspaper report of 1884 announced that “Several small farmers on the river are about to grow cane, and as their land is eminently adapted for sugar cultivation their prospect of success is almost certain under ordinary circumstances.”¹⁴⁹ Unfortunately, there was no crushing in 1884 and the small growers’ cane was used for plant. Further negotiations with individual farmers appear to have taken place over July, while CSR talked about increasing the mill plant in 1884 and offered more contracts for 1885. There was nevertheless some reservation that the small farmers’ cane was inferior and lacked sugar compared to the plantation grown cane: eight to 10 percent, in contrast to the plantation’s 14 percent.¹⁵⁰

Alm’s firsthand account stated that the settlers conceived a vision and collectively, through an organisation, the HRFA, undertook to agitate until they finally achieved that vision. Correspondence which would have contained the letters from farmers and the HRFA forwarded by Cowley to CSR head office, were not forwarded to the CSR

¹⁴⁹ *Brisbane Courier*, July 19, 1884, 5.

¹⁵⁰ Correspondence from manager, Victoria Mill, Ingham to E.W. Knox, July 17, 1885 and August 6, 1885, Deposit 142/1047, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

archives. Surviving CSR correspondence is therefore one-sided. Knox did not appear to have ever communicated directly with individuals or an association in those early years. His correspondence indicated that he always communicated with the farmers (or association) through Cowley or consequent Victoria Mill managers who were advised to read the letters first and then pass them on. However, CSR official correspondence, while not referring to the HRFA by name, does confirm Alm's account of individual and collective agitation on the part of a group of lower Herbert settlers. Contrary to Alm's assertions, Cowley appeared quite keen to promote their cause though that can only be deduced from the tone of Knox's replies to Cowley.

An immediate labour shortage for the Victoria Plantation and a resultant shortfall in supply of cane necessary for the mill to run at optimum capacity may have helped to influence CSR's change of heart. So, in truth, while it cannot be claimed that CSR buckled under the settler's pressure, nevertheless, circumstances were such that CSR could see the wisdom in taking advantage of their offer and had some sense that they, unlike their NSW counterparts, were likely to honour their contracts. The fact is indisputable that the settlers were keen, organised and ready. It was also a gamble on CSR's part given that the industry on the Herbert, unlike that in NSW, relied on indentured labour and CSR management had already indicated its reservations about small farmers being able to secure or afford labour.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FARMER ORGANISATION

Typical secondary accounts record that the small farmers were offered the opportunity to supply cane by CSR. No mention is made of the two, perhaps even three, years of negotiation by the HRFA. The role of the farmers and their association in the achievement of that outcome is absent from those accounts. Andrea Howell, for instance, credited the resilient planter: "The more resilient of the planters had, meanwhile, been seeking solutions of their own. As early as 1884 C.S.R. had offered farmers on the Herbert River seven-year agreements to supply cane to its mill on the grower's undertaking to cut the cane on a cooperative system so as to keep up a regular supply."¹⁵¹

That statement is typical of the top-down accounts of sugar industry historiography and is a simplistic explanation of a complex event. Those complexities include the dynamics

¹⁵¹ Howell, "The Australian Sugar Industry," 35.

that came into play in the Herbert. There, land-owning small farmers were ambitious and enterprising. Amongst those farmers were Scandinavians with strong organisational traditions who formed an association and negotiated with CSR to achieve those outcomes. Regardless of whether it happened at a time when it suited CSR to comply with their demands, to erase the part of the small farmers and their association in these negotiations ignores a significant dimension of this transformative event.

The same organised small settlers who formed the HRFA worked towards achieving services for the growing lower Herbert farming community. The coming of CSR generated a feeling of optimism in the Valley. The charismatic publican J.P. Shewcroft was reputed to have remarked of this period: "It was a great time, the money was literally shoveled into the district; I didn't complain, I received a fair share of it."¹⁵² Nevertheless, there was a dearth of essential services. While awaiting a response from CSR, the members of the association turned their attention to pressing needs, such as acquiring road access to their properties, a school and a church.¹⁵³ Access to their selections was limited and they had been using a bridle track which they had cut themselves. With the divisional board short of funds and unable to provide a road, the HRFA offered to clear a track themselves for a fee. The board accepted the offer. Over the years, road improvement in the Lower Herbert area continued to be pressed for by the association. Its cause was strengthened when Rosendahl was elected to the divisional board in 1887.¹⁵⁴ A committee formed of the foundation members of the HRFA also wrote letters to the education department applying for a provisional school. With the application approved in 1883, association members Anderssen, Hoffensetz and Alm coordinated the erection of the school building and in late 1883 teacher Daniel Courtney commenced teaching in the new school.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 32.

¹⁵³ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 38-39.

¹⁵⁴ Wegner, "Hinchinbrook," 283. By then the association had relinquished its role to the Herbert River Farmers' League (HRFL) and its lower Herbert members became the Halifax Planters' Club (HPC). Wegner records him as representing the HRFL in 1887.

¹⁵⁵ Which eventually would come to be known as the Halifax State School. Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 39, 43. Letter writing actually began in 1881 by Edwin Waller, Frank Neame and others, in the first instance for the township of Ingham. The HRFA members, naturally became more involved as an application was made for Halifax. Halifax Provisional School, Series ID 12607 Item ID 14818, Queensland State Archives, Brisbane.

Image 38: The HRFA members coordinated the building of the school. Halifax Provisional School, n.d. (Source: *Halifax State School Centenary, 1883-1983*, 48)



Image 39: Members of the HRFA designed and built the church. Our Saviour's Church, Halifax, Easter Sunday, 1902. (Source: Hinchinbrook Shire Council Library Photographic Collection)



Anderssen and Hoffensetz were appointed as ‘architects’ for the construction of the Anglican Church of Our Saviour, while Alm thatched the roof.¹⁵⁶ Its construction was observed to have been the result of “the united efforts of most of the farmers in the vicinity.”¹⁵⁷ In these achievements the HRFA proved the value of unified action. Through the agency of their association the lower Herbert farmers had not only secured themselves livelihoods as cane farmers but also secured much needed community infrastructure: a road to their properties, a school and a church. Equally importantly, the HRFA meetings provided occasions of fellowship for the farmers and their families.

While agricultural associations were formed by individuals with a particular drive for associative action or leadership abilities, the associations also provided members with skills that equipped them to participate in other forums. For instance, Anderssen was a freemason and instigated the formation of the Lodge Cordelia.¹⁵⁸ Carr was a freemason as well as captain of the Halifax Rifle Club and a justice of the peace. Like Rosendahl and Alm, fellow early Scandinavian selectors Watson and Feldt not only served on the divisional board, but were founding members of the hospital board, while Feldt was also a member of the HRP&AA and cemetery trust.¹⁵⁹

Image 40: Some members of the Halifax Rifle Club, A.W. Carr, Captain, 1905.

(Source: “Some of the members of the Halifax Rifle Club,” *North Queensland Register*, October 30, 1905, 33)



¹⁵⁶ “The ‘Father’ of Halifax,” *Herbert River Express*, July 20, 2013, 14; Vidonja Balanzategui, *The Herbert River Story*, 11; Robert L. Shepherd, “The Herbert River Story: The Community’s Church,” *Herbert River Express*, February 1, 1992, 7.

¹⁵⁷ “Country News: Herbert River,” *Queenslander*, November 6, 1886, 726.

¹⁵⁸ “Ingham Notes,” *North Queensland Register*, November 24, 1897, 34.

¹⁵⁹ Wegner, “Hinchinbrook,” Appendix 2, 600-29.

Nevertheless, there were detractors who regarded the association's members as a "clique of insignificant 'cockies' with a soul a little above sweet potatoes and pumpkins."¹⁶⁰ Alm recorded that this attitude changed somewhat when, six months after its formation, at which point the membership had grown to around 20 members, an unsolicited letter of support was received from Frank Neame, accompanied by a donation of five guineas.

The association invited him to become president. It was not uncommon for agricultural associations to ask somebody of some community standing to preside. This would be especially useful where the formation of such an association by smaller farmers was regarded by others as audacious and ridiculous. Neame accepted the position.¹⁶¹ However, Neame and his wife left for England in late 1882 and did not return to the Herbert until 1886. In poor health, he returned 'home' at the end of 1890, dying in the autumn of 1891.¹⁶² While Neame wrote a letter of support, gave a donation and accepted the honour of being patron, he may not have been able to do much else for the HRFA. On Neame's death his brother Arthur assumed the presidency and was president until 1893. After that W.T. White, government surveyor and dairy farmer, was the president until the HRFA handed over its objects to the HRFL.¹⁶³

Alm made much of Neame championing the HRFA. He wrote that as a long-time resident of the Herbert River district, a successful planter and chairman of the Hinchinbrook Divisional Board, his approval of the association and the small grower ideals dampened criticisms, for he "was so universally admired and respected by all sections of the public that they would not adversely criticise anything in which he took a leading part."¹⁶⁴ His and his brother's patronage was valued for the weight it gave to the association's petitions to CSR, the divisional board and governments. Alm recalled that as president, Neame pledged to do all he could to advance the causes of the association. Neame opined that cooperation amongst farmers was much needed in the Valley.¹⁶⁵ That was an interesting comment for him to have made given that the HRFA was proof that the farmers were clearly capable of taking productive steps to cooperate, while the planters' efforts had

¹⁶⁰ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 39.

¹⁶¹ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 39-40.

¹⁶² Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, 108, 127.

¹⁶³ "Herbert River Farmers Upon Mr. Cowley as a Representative," *Queenslander*, January 19, 1889, 108; Pugh, *Pugh's Almanac and Queensland Directory* 1892, 105, 108, 1893; Wegner, "Hinchinbrook," 627 and see table 5, 232.

¹⁶⁴ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 40.

¹⁶⁵ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 40.

been distinctly lack-lustre. Within 12 months of the formation of the association it boasted 30 members. By 1885 the membership had increased to 60, indicating that small selectors felt membership of the association had something to offer them.¹⁶⁶

The incongruity of Neame being the chairman of both the HRFA and the planters' association is highlighted by meetings of the HRFA he chaired on 14 and 22 December, 1889. The meetings had been convened to discuss a letter he had received from Alfred S. Cowley. At the second meeting, Lely expressed dissatisfaction with Cowley's representation of their needs regarding a railway line to Dungeness. Lely proposed that association members should take the opportunity provided by that meeting to express their dissatisfaction with Cowley's efforts on their behalf. In a clear closing of planter ranks, Neame suggested that the objection be withdrawn as, on personal communication from Cowley, he, Neame, was confident that Cowley was doing the best he could as a junior member of the House. Neame prevailed over the issue and the criticism of Cowley was not tabled.¹⁶⁷

At that meeting, a deputation of HRFA members and others was appointed to wait upon the visiting Minister for Railways, while three, Watson, Rosendahl, and Alm were chosen as witnesses for the royal commission.¹⁶⁸ Unlike the planters' conference which excluded small farmers' associations, the royal commission took oral evidence from not only 45 planters but 53 farmers and selectors. It also took evidence from both planters' and farmers' associations: Bundaberg Planters' Association (BPA), Maryborough Planters' Association, the HRFA and the Pioneer River Farmers' Association (PRFA). The commission provided an opportunity for farmers to be heard; farmers and their associations took that opportunity with each farmers' association ensuring that it put forward witnesses to speak on behalf of the farmers of their districts.

The correspondence in the CSR letter books attests to the fact that more small settlers were making approaches to CSR to supply cane. There were several reasons why CSR did not encourage expansion beyond the initial contracts. The locusts were decimating crops, but if they were able to be controlled, the plantation itself could supply enough

¹⁶⁶ Robert L. Shepherd, "The Herbert River Story: The Macknade Sale," *Herbert River Express*, January 25, 1992, 11.

¹⁶⁷ "Herbert River Farmers Upon Mr. Cowley as a Representative," *Queenslander*, January 19, 1889, 108.

¹⁶⁸ "Herbert River Farmers Upon Mr. Cowley as a Representative," *Queenslander*, January 19, 1889, 109.

cane for its needs. In 1884 the company was already threatening to withdraw from the Valley and it was disinclined to put in the infrastructure required to access new contractors' farms. Another factor was that those new contractors would need to borrow money from CSR to plant their crop of cane; on the reputation of some of those asking for advances, Knox expressed doubt that they could fulfil their contracts to the satisfaction of the company or with profit to themselves.¹⁶⁹

While the HRFA had secured supply contracts for small farmers with CSR, it did not stop the association from giving consideration to setting up its own cooperative mill given that the government had pledged support to the erection of North Eton and Racecourse cooperative mills. This came about unexpectedly when a rumour went around the Valley that CSR planned to dismantle the Victoria mill. This rumour was not without substance, for on 21 August, 1884, Knox wrote to Cowley that unless labour issues could be resolved, the company would "have to consider seriously the propriety of abandoning the plantation at Victoria and shifting the plant to some more favourable locality."¹⁷⁰ So, on 10 September, 1885, the Herbert River Valley farmers held a meeting in the Halifax schoolroom in order to initiate the process of obtaining a central mill. A committee made up of the chairman and secretary of the HRFA and five other association members was appointed to gather information and to draw up a plan for a central mill scheme. It was decided to advise the Premier of their plan and to call another meeting once the committee had made progress.¹⁷¹ Plans were duly drawn up to form a joint stock company, and on 9 October 1885 a formal application was lodged for a loan of £15 000, pending the promise of government support.¹⁷² The matter was debated in a sitting of the legislative assembly on 11 November, 1885.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ Correspondence from E.W. Knox to E. Cowley, August 21, 1884, July 14, 1884, Deposit 142/1547, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

¹⁷⁰ Correspondence from E.W. Knox to E. Cowley, August 21, 1884, July 14, 1884, Deposit 142/1547, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

¹⁷¹ "Current News," *Queenslander*, October 3, 1885, 533.

¹⁷² Extracts of papers tabled in parliament and correspondence from John Alm, as secretary of the Herbert River Farmers' Association, "The Central Sugar-Mill Project," *Queenslander*, October 31, 1885, 714. See Appendix 7.

¹⁷³ Queensland Government, Parliamentary Debates, Legislative Assembly, "Supply," November 4, 1885, 1442-58, "Supply – Resumption of Committee," November 5, 1885, 1461-77; Queensland Government, Legislative Assembly, "Establishment of Central Mills (Papers Respecting: Petition), Correspondence and Report by W.O. Hodgkinson, 1885-6"; "The Central Mill Project," *Brisbane Courier*, October 27, 1885, 2. Also see correspondence from John Alm, secretary of the Herbert River Farmers' Association to the Premier, September 25, 1885 and October 9, 1885.

The extension of a government-subsidised central mill system to the Herbert would progress the aim to end the recruitment of Melanesian labourers. When W.O. Hodgkinson was appointed commissioner to investigate suitable sites for central sugar mills, he travelled to the Herbert River district. After touring the entire Valley in 1886, he was convinced that Halifax was the only place that had room enough for a mill.¹⁷⁴ An impediment though, was that there were only eight small farmers supplying Victoria Mill at this stage. Some had as little as 15 acres under cane.¹⁷⁵ While staying in the Halifax Hotel, Hodgkinson met with six members of the HRFA on 26 March. Despite the HRFA having previously made clear that it was its intention “to procure and erect a mill” it decided to reject the proposal that a cooperative central mill be erected in the Valley.¹⁷⁶ The primary objection was the proviso that the mill would be required to source cane grown by white labour.¹⁷⁷ It was impossible to get Europeans to do trashing and while newly cleared lands were still littered with tree roots and unable to be worked by a plough, cultivation had to continue to be done by hand, by cheap coloured labour. Hodgkinson reported that a motion was passed at the meeting to the effect that “sugar could not be grown with white labour in the present state of settlement”.¹⁷⁸ Other concerns were the nature of administrative arrangements which a government-sponsored central mill would entail, and the requirement to mortgage properties.¹⁷⁹

Enthusiasm for a farmer-owned central mill waned as a result of a change in Victoria Mill management with Ebenezer Cowley’s departure, the slump in sugar prices, and the cane grub infestation which, by 1886, was causing damage severe enough to reduce returns. The HRFA had previously stated to Hodgkinson that “if the Government would assist the farmers with a central mill, and let them grow the cane the best way they could, it would be a very good thing.” However, in a regular HRFA meeting, the members later concluded that “the best central mill the farmers could get was the C.S.R. Co. mill; and

¹⁷⁴ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 53.

¹⁷⁵ Correspondence from E. Cowley to the editor, “Central Sugar Mills,” *Telegraph*, July 23, 1885, 2.

¹⁷⁶ Extracts of papers tabled in parliament and correspondence from John Alm, as secretary of the Herbert River Farmers’ Association, “The Central Sugar-Mill Project,” *Queenslander*, October 31, 1885, 714.

¹⁷⁷ “Proposed Central Sugar-mills,” *Brisbane Courier*, July 12, 1886, 3; Queensland Government, “Report of Central Sugar Mills, by W.O. Hodgkinson, 1886,” Queensland Votes and Proceedings vol. 2, 21.

¹⁷⁸ Queensland Government, “Report of Central Sugar Mills, by W.O. Hodgkinson, 1886,” 21.

¹⁷⁹ “Local News,” *Maryborough Chronicle, Wide Bay and Burnett Advertiser*, January 27, 1886, 2.

they should line themselves up behind the Company.”¹⁸⁰ Carr reminded members that they were bound by a four-year agreement to supply cane to Victoria Mill. There was a feeling at the meeting that allegiance should be demonstrated to CSR, the company which had “put the farmers on their feet.”¹⁸¹ Rosendahl was suspicious of the government scheme, saying that “Governments came and went, [and] promises were readily given and were as readily broken.”¹⁸² Hodgkinson gave the farmers three days to think over the proposal and it was suggested that he was surprised when his proposal was met with swift rejection. However, he recorded the outcome somewhat differently, writing that “[he did] not think settlement sufficiently advanced to warrant any Government-expenditure in [that] quarter.”¹⁸³

CSR records reveal that Ebenezer Cowley’s relationship with the company was not without problems and Knox was not loath to allege that Cowley was managing Victoria Plantation poorly. By 1884 Knox was looking for ways to dispense with him, claiming that he “never felt quite comfortable about him.”¹⁸⁴ In 1885, his tenure as manager was not extended and he left the district to take up the position of overseer of the State Nursery at Kamerunga. On Cowley’s departure the HRFA wrote him a letter which was obsequious in its praise and credited his “intelligence and enterprise” for “inducing capitalists to invest in the rich lands then unoccupied.”¹⁸⁵ Knox commented that the “outside public” was “friendly with Mr. Cowley.”¹⁸⁶ This comment indicates that despite his initial reservations, Cowley was far more supportive of the farmers than CSR policy probably intended him to be, and certainly more than local record would have it. In local records he was described as “a plantation man purely and simply” who had “never become reconciled to the principle of small growers engaging in the type of work reserved exclusively for kanaka labourers on the plantations.”¹⁸⁷ James Knox replaced Cowley

¹⁸⁰ Queensland Parliament, “Report of Central Sugar Mills, by W.O. Hodgkinson, 1886,” 21; Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 53.

¹⁸¹ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 53.

¹⁸² Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 53.

¹⁸³ Queensland Parliament, “Report of Central Sugar Mills, by W.O. Hodgkinson, 1886,” 21.

¹⁸⁴ Correspondence from E.W. Knox to Mr. Richardson, December 3, 1884, Deposit 142/1047, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

¹⁸⁵ Correspondence from Harald T. Hoffensetz, John Alm and August Anderssen, HRFA to Ebenezer Cowley Esq., May 10, 1885, Ebenezer Cowley Scrapbook, Q 631.09943 COW, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane.

¹⁸⁶ Correspondence from E.W. Knox to R.W. McCulloch, April 13, 1885, Deposit 142/1547, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

¹⁸⁷ Robert L. Shepherd, “The Herbert River Story: ‘First for the settlers,’” *Herbert River Story*, January 30, 1992, 8.

and, in his short time at Victoria Mill, helped further the interests of the small grower. Some of the work he undertook included extending the tramline to enable more cane to be taken from small growers' farms making the small growers' position more secure.¹⁸⁸

The success of the HRFA's arrangement with CSR spread. When a reporter from the *Queenslander* newspaper visited the Herbert he had hoped to talk to the local manager about it because "this company has more than any other sugar company in the North carried out the system of the central mill, or the purchasing of cane from the grower, and information on the subject would have been interesting to the public and of great benefit to the standing of the sugar industry."¹⁸⁹

As noted in the previous chapter, the reporter's request for an interview was summarily denied. In a period when planters and their insistence on the reliance of indentured labour was making them increasingly unpopular with the wider public, one would think that any good publicity would have been welcomed. But as stated earlier, CSR's head office consistently insisted on secrecy even in the Victoria Plantation's dealings with its fellow planters on the Herbert.

The volatile period of the late 1880s—when both planters and farmers were coming to terms with the fact that the days of indentured labour were numbered—saw the talk of northern separation intensify. The threatened abolition of that form of labour was regarded by some in the north as evidence of the south's unsympathetic attitude to northern development.¹⁹⁰ Planters used the separation movement as a platform for endorsing legislation preferencing indentured labour—not necessarily of Melanesian labour, but "some class of coloured labour suitable for tropical cultivation on the coast."¹⁹¹ These sentiments were strongly articulated in the letter written by the HRFA together with the Herbert River Planters' Association and the MPFA to the *London Times* in 1886, a letter which clearly specified that they were writing on behalf of northern farming and planting interests as distinct from those in the south who did not need to make use of such labour.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 47.

¹⁸⁹ "Some Northern Sugar Plantations," *Queenslander*, December 31, 1887, 1071.

¹⁹⁰ Christine Doran, *Separatism in Townsville* (Townsville: James Cook University, 1981), 84.

¹⁹¹ "Northern Queensland and the Labour Traffic," *Times*, January 25, 1886.

¹⁹² "Northern Queensland and the Labour Traffic," *Times*, January 25, 1886. See Appendix 8.

Janice Wegner recorded that the divisional board declared in favour of separation both in 1889 and 1892, fearing for the future of the sugar industry.¹⁹³ Meanwhile, the Herbert had Cowley as the sugar growers' advocate in parliament proposing that there should be an extension to the use of indentured labour.¹⁹⁴ He identified the "Herbert River Farmers' Association" as having founded the Herbert River Branch of the Separation League.¹⁹⁵ While there is no firm evidence to substantiate that claim, the sequence of events in that period support it. There was a well-attended meeting held on 9 September, 1889, at the Divisional Board Hall, Ingham, to form the Herbert River Branch of the Separation League, but who initiated the meeting is not stated, and who attended is not recorded. J.A. Boyd recalled that his brother Robert attended it and other planters may have also been present.¹⁹⁶ A newspaper report stated the initiative was enthusiastically supported.¹⁹⁷ When the Premier Sir Samuel Griffith visited the district in late December, 1890, he spoke to those gathered to meet him in Ingham on the issue of separation. His response to questions on separation were vague but hinted at his changing views on regional autonomy. The correspondent recorded that, next day, Griffith met with a group of farmers and citizens in Halifax.¹⁹⁸ Alm recalled this meeting as being held at Anderssen's Riverview. The HRFA presented the Premier with papers they had prepared including one which highlighted the progress the district had made under CSR. They hoped to impress upon the Premier that CSR "should be encouraged to go on and pursue their policy, which was tending to permanent advancement for the North: that, if the withdrawal of Polynesian labour was persisted in, the strong Separation Movement, which set in when the white labour policy was first announced, would be intensified."¹⁹⁹ This indicated that the HRFA members saw their future and prosperity as aligned with

¹⁹³ Wegner, "Hinchinbrook," 299.

¹⁹⁴ Queensland Parliament, "Parliamentary Debates [Hansard] Legislative Assembly," June 6, 1889, 162-3.

¹⁹⁵ "Political Banquet," *Queensland Figaro and Punch*, April 14, 1888, 15; see Charles Arrowsmith Bernays, *Queensland Politics during Sixty (1895-1919) Years* (Brisbane: A.J. Cumming Govt. Printer, 1919) for northern separation movement, 506-34 and *passim*; A.S. Cowley biographical details, 125-26 and *passim*.

¹⁹⁶ JAB Diary, "Robert Mitchell Boyd (1849-1912)," September 7, 1889, accessed March 24, 2018, <https://connorhistorycom.files.wordpress.com/.../boyd-robert-mitchell-boyd-1849-1912-references.pdf>.

¹⁹⁷ "Queensland News," *Toowoomba Chronicle and Darling Downs General Advertiser*, September 12, 1889, 4.

¹⁹⁸ "The Ministerial Tour," *Northern Miner* December 27, 1890, 3.

¹⁹⁹ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 58.

that of CSR and hoped the threat of support for the separation movement was a possible cudgel in the battle to save what they and planters saw as a besieged industry.

However, the HRFA, in aligning with planters, was out of step with the wider separation movement. Already in 1890, in Townsville, where businessmen's interests usually aligned with planters, the Townsville Separation League was separating itself from the taint of the labour question.²⁰⁰ As Wegner observed, the input of the planters in the separation movement, and their manipulation of the movement as a means to resolve the labour issue, was not necessarily welcomed.²⁰¹ When Griffith granted an extension of the use of indentured labour in 1892, support for the movement waned in the sugar districts. It was still hoped that abolition would be averted, and it was feared that support of separation would actually result in the loss of hope of procuring any sort of indentured labour and the ruination of the industry.

On March 17, 1888, Knox wrote to C.E. Forster, saying that "the removal of Victoria Mill seems not an impossibility."²⁰² All threats were confidential and Knox advised Forster not to tell the small farmers, fearing that if they got wind of it they might not plant for the next season and the mill would find itself short of cane supplies. When two of the HRFA farmers wrote to CSR applying for an extension of their contracts beyond 1891, Knox advised W. McLean to tell them that CSR could not promise to still be in business on the Herbert after that year. This letter reiterated the ongoing concern about securing sufficient labour and questioned the farmers' ability to either cut and load their crop or find the labour to do so. However, interestingly, Knox described their application as "a favourable one," indicating that the company had no regrets about its arrangement with the farmers of the HRFA.²⁰³ With Griffith threatening the withdrawal of Melanesian labour, CSR announced publicly that it would dismantle the mill and withdraw from the Herbert after the 1891 crushing.

The HRFA was not advised of this development as a body but, in due time, in typical CSR fashion, Knox told the manager of Victoria Mill to communicate privately and

²⁰⁰ "Northern Mail News," *Morning Bulletin*, September 25, 1890, 5; Doran, *Separatism in Townsville*, XVIII, 76, 81-2, 84, 120.

²⁰¹ Wegner, "Hinchinbrook," 123.

²⁰² Correspondence from E.W. Knox to C.E. Forster, March 17, 1888, Deposit142/1548, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

²⁰³ Correspondence from E.W. Knox to W. McLean, July 9, 1890, Deposit 142/1549, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

“quietly” with each farmer. Knox half-heartedly suggested that the farmers might want to acquire the mill themselves.²⁰⁴ The manager was instructed to tell them that CSR would not join them in an appeal for government help to buy the mill, but would sell them the plantation mill at a good price.²⁰⁵

Alm recounted that the HRFA wrote a letter on behalf of the farmers to the general manager inquiring whether CSR would be prepared to sell the mill as a going concern. The association received a reply which said that the company was willing to sell the mill as a going concern with lands for £93 000, paid in government bonds. The association decided to forward copies of all correspondence to the Premier accompanied by a “strong” letter. That letter, rather than advising the government to buy the mill, strongly urged it to “reenact the continuance of Polynesian labor and thereby keep the CSR Company in the district.”²⁰⁶ The farmers felt that the government should continue with indentured labour until such time as Queensland sugar could be sold in the other Australian colonies under tariff protection against sugar grown elsewhere with servile labour. Furthermore, the letter stated that if indentured labour was discontinued, all attempts at agriculture on the tropical coastlands would have to be abandoned. The letter reiterated how much CSR had done for the small grower in the Herbert River district and that the company should dispose of all its land in the district and concentrate only on milling.²⁰⁷

The Premier replied that he was planning a visit to the north and that the farmers would be advised when he was to visit Halifax. Forwarding copies of all correspondence to the Premier, writing a ‘strong’ letter, and the arguments outlined in the letter all suggest that the proposal to purchase was a tactical move to achieve a repeal of section 11 of the 1885 Act, prohibiting the further importation of indentured labourers, rather than an earnest desire on the part of the farmers to acquire the mill and property.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ Correspondence from E.W. Knox to W. McLean, February 4, 1891, Deposit 142/1550 CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

²⁰⁵ Correspondence from E.W. Knox to W. McLean, February 4, 1891, Deposit 142/1550 CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

²⁰⁶ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 55-57.

²⁰⁷ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 55-57.

²⁰⁸ Queensland Government, “The Pacific Island Labourers Act of 1880 Amendment Act of 1885”; Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 55-57.

What the HRFA did, in fact, was engage an accountant to draw up a statement of the farmers' business with CSR which they believed would present a favourable assessment of the arrangement. Sir Samuel Griffith visited the north, sailing up the coast in the government steamer, the *Lucinda*. In the afternoon of the second day of his visit to the district, 25 December 1890, the farmers presented to him the papers they had prepared.²⁰⁹ Alm recorded that Griffith returned two weeks later, docked at Dungeness, and invited farmer representatives to meet with him on board the *Lucinda*. Those who met with him were Anderssen, Carr, Rosendahl and Alm.²¹⁰ He informed the farmers that he had made some decisions and that he believed CSR would continue operations in the district. Griffith stated that he was impressed by the spirit of cooperation that existed between the farmers and CSR, as well as the thriving business that was being conducted between the two. Of the farmers' association itself, he commented that the Lower Herbert farmers had set a fine example which other districts would do well to follow.²¹¹

Despite those reassuring words the farmers, must have still felt unsure of their position and what the outcome would ultimately be. Knox wrote that he had received several communications from Alm questioning whether CSR was still considering removing the mill. He also wondered, if the farmers should buy it, what other articles would be included in the sale, and, if the farmers bought the mill, would CSR buy their sugar. In each instance Knox replied to Alm indirectly, with a letter sent to Farquhar to hand to Alm. Meanwhile, 'sale notes' were issued to all supplying farmers except Alm, contracting their crops for the coming season, 1892.²¹²

In the meantime, Knox was speculating on the government passing legislation to facilitate the farmers buying the mill, while also investigating the possibility of removing the mill to Labasa, Fiji, at the end of the 1892 season. In October 1891, therefore, the company seemed to be considering two scenarios: selling the mill to the farmers, or moving the mill to Labasa. Knox wrote that "Mr. Alm and his neighbours" were informed that the company

²⁰⁹ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 58; "The Ministerial Tour," *Northern Miner*, December 27, 1890, 3.

²¹⁰ The minutiae of the recollection of that meeting, Griffith's good humour, the strong whisky, the refreshments in the saloon, the conversation, who else was in attendance suggest an authentic account, if not an accurate recollection of the date that encounter took place.

²¹¹ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 58-59.

²¹² Correspondence from E.W. Knox to W.A. Farquhar, May 27, 1891, June 9, 1891, June 15, 1891, and December 3, 1891, Deposit 142/1550, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

had “not now any intention of adopting his suggestion to retain the mill as a central factory and try to sell the cultivation land, as we have been doing at Mackay, to farmers who would grow cane to keep the mill employed.”²¹³

Knox met personally with Samuel Griffith in early February, to advise him that should the importation of Melanesian labour be renewed, the company would pledge to continue their operations on the Herbert.²¹⁴ On 12 February, 1892, Griffith released his manifesto to the press. He announced that indentured labour would be continued, with restrictions, for a further 10 years. He said he had made this decision despite his personal reservations and the fact that “it has been established by actual trial that sugar is a profitable crop to be grown by small farmers, if they can command a sale for it to the manufacturers at reasonable prices.” He observed that “this system is already carried on with great success, notably in the Bundaberg, Mackay, and Herbert River districts.”²¹⁵ Five days later Knox telegraphed Farquhar advising him the “Board decided continue work at Victoria.”²¹⁶ Performing a complete turnaround, CSR stayed in the Herbert but withdrew from cultivation. Knox, speaking of the company’s accounts, wryly wrote to Farquhar, “we manage the manufacture a great deal better than we do the agriculture.”²¹⁷ The association then received a letter from CSR advising that, as indentured labour was to continue, Victoria Mill would continue business as usual and enter into new crushing contracts with the farmers.²¹⁸

From Alm’s account, Griffiths was impressed by the HRFA’s representation and their arguments. After all, his comments about small farming on the Herbert in his manifesto would have been informed by his encounter with the HRFA and its members. The small farmers’ representations in a number of districts seem to have been instrumental in deciding him to repeal the 1885 Act. The actions the HRFA took in this instance—letter writing, preparation of papers and documents, meeting with the Premier—provide a rare insight into the organisational action of small farmers in this period and the lengths to

²¹³ Correspondence from E.W. Knox to W.A. Farquhar, October 28, 1891, Deposit 142/1550, CSR Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

²¹⁴ Correspondence from E.W. Knox to W.A. Farquhar, February 18, 1892, Deposit 142/1550, CSR Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

²¹⁵ “The Premier’s Manifesto,” *Telegraph*, February 13, 1892, 5.

²¹⁶ Telegram from E.W. Knox to W.A. Farquhar, February 17, 1892, Deposit 142/1550, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

²¹⁷ Correspondence from E.W. Knox to W.A. Farquhar, February 24, 1892, Deposit 142/1550, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

²¹⁸ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 59.

which they would go to achieve their goals. It also shows that just like CSR, their goals were not necessarily transparent, and that they were prepared to appear to be considering a farmer purchase of the mill, while actually preferring that CSR continue its business in the Valley as a central mill.

Also noteworthy, as in 1882, the HRFA did not hesitate to suggest an alternative scenario: that CSR conduct Victoria as a central mill, a suggestion which the company rejected. Yet by February 1892, after Griffith's decision was released, Knox wrote to Farquhar saying: "We are I see, quite agreed as to the desirability of getting as large a proportion as possible of our supply of cane grown by the farmers, and I hope that we shall be able at an early date, to do something towards disposing of by lease or sale, a considerable portion of the Victoria Estate for this purpose."²¹⁹

While the government decision to extend the importation of Melanesian labour with the Pacific Island Labourers (Extension) Act of 1892 gave the sugar planters some hope for the future of the industry, astute planters like CSR appreciated that the continued use of that form of labour remained tenuous and that the wisest course of action, if they were going to continue to conduct business in a particular district, was to divest themselves of their landholdings. CSR commenced the subdivision of the Victoria Mill plantation lands as leases with an option to purchase. Supply contracts were negotiated for five years from 1 January, 1892. As each month passed, more and more farmers took up the option to lease or purchase CSR's lands, and they did not disappoint, growing good crops of cane. The mood was a buoyant one with the *Sugar Journal and Tropical Cultivator* commenting that, on the Herbert River, "The talk is still of farmers—farmers here and farmers there—taking up land or going to putting in cane or counting their crops."²²⁰

²¹⁹ Correspondence from E.W. Knox to W.A. Farquhar, February 24, 1892, Deposit 142/1550, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

²²⁰ "Herbert River," *Sugar Journal and Tropical Cultivator*, January 15, 1893, 264.

Image 41: Sample of progress made by small farmers on homestead selections, 1892. (Source: "The Premier's Manifesto," *Queensland Times, Ipswich Herald and General Advertiser*, February 25, 1892, 2.)

Farmers.	1888.		1889.		1890.		1891.	
	Acres.	Tons.	Acres.	Tons.	Acres.	Tons.	Acres.	Tons.
A. Anderson	55	1,650	160	4,340	200	4,000	200	6,000
J. Alm	59	1,280	54	1,100	90	2,587	90	2,600
F. Herron	35	900	93	2,640	93	2,188	100	3,000
F. Feidt	20	420	20	465	37	670	40	1,000
M. Norman*	16	493	23	500	25	700	25	700
J. Lely*	—	—	75	3,000	102	3,150	112	3,000
W. Johnson Rendall*	—	—	65	not cut	65	2,532	70	2,100
J. Herron*	23	714	40	1,751	70	1,440	70	1,400
H. Faithfull*	—	—	27	not cut	27	852	27	850
N. Rosendahl	29	630	16	543	36	940	40	1,200
A. W. Carr	43	574	41	1,741	16	509	50	1,500
Walier Bros.†	70	1,400	80	2,400				
	349	9,071	696	18,444	76	19,56	821	23,150

*No returns furnished of operations prior to 1888,
†Agreement cancelled.

By March 1894 Knox opined favourably that the Herbert River tenant farmers had “fair prospect of paying off their indebtedness and gradually becoming possessed of their farms.”²²¹ The Neames also leased out land, with Italians taking up 150 acres and around 200 acres taken up by other small farmers.²²² They were reputed to be on good terms with their tenants, acquiescing to all reasonable requests.²²³ Boyd of Ripple Creek followed suit, taking supplies from both tenant and independent farmers. By 1904 CSR records showed that land-owning farmers outnumbered tenant farmers.²²⁴

With the sale of Macknade to CSR and the closure of Ripple Creek mill, CSR became the dominant miller on the Herbert, operating both of its mills as central mills. Farmer groups in districts north and south of the Herbert, emboldened by the Queensland government’s commitment to the cooperative principle, took advantage of the terms offered to establish their own mills. Through the agency of the HRFA, the Herbert’s small farmers twice investigated and rejected the idea of a farmer’s cooperative mill. Even

²²¹ Correspondence from E.W. Knox to manager Victoria Mill, March 13, 1894, Deposit 142/1552, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

²²² “Herbert River,” *Sugar Journal and Tropical Cultivator*, April 15, 1892, 50.

²²³ “Herbert River,” *Sugar Journal and Tropical Cultivator*, March 15, 1894, 32.

²²⁴ Census of White Persons directly connected with C.S.R. Coy’s Mills in Queensland, November 15, 1904, Deposit N305-D.1.0 6 2, CSR Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

though the monopolistic hold of CSR was resented, and though farmers on the Herbert continued to harbour thoughts of an alternative farmers' cooperative mill, the generally fair arrangement with CSR made them complacent.²²⁵

Nevertheless, farmers were as much at the mercy of CSR's whim as they were at any time when small growers supplied a neighbouring plantation mill. As in Fiji, where CSR would withhold credit and assistance from its white tenant planters, on the Herbert, CSR was closefisted. When Edwin Waller requested a £300 loan of CSR, Knox declined him, not only because he thought the amount an unreasonable one but also because he did not consider him "a hardworking man."²²⁶ Knox began to communicate directly with farmer groups when these became more vocal and numerous, and the mills had become central mills. This change only occurred after CSR became dependent on farmers for the entire cane supply for its mills, a position which required negotiation and compromise with the farmers. If the farmers were to convert their tenancy arrangements to ownership, as CSR preferred, they would have to feel confident in CSR and its future in the district. It would be in CSR's interests to treat them with some respect. Nevertheless, farmers on the Herbert would always be negotiating from a weaker position because they had no alternative mills to take their cane.

THE REVISION OF THE HRFA

The momentous events of 1892 were followed by some fracture or disruption in the conduct of the HRFA, and from that year until the formation of the HRFL the account is blurry.²²⁷ Firstly, there was a change in the secretary's position. Alm recorded that around 1894 John Lely replaced him as secretary of the HRFA.²²⁸ Then Arthur Neame holidayed in England from December 24, 1892 to April 26, 1893 and W.T. White took over the

²²⁵ The idea of a farmer-owned central mill persisted. In 1911 and again 1916 an application was made to the Queensland Government for a central mill at Long Pocket on the Herbert. In a list of five possible localities the Board of Inquiry into the Sugar Industry (1916) listed the Long Pocket proposal number five. See Queensland Government, "Central Sugar Mills Commission, Report of the Royal Commission, 1911," 131-35; Queensland Government, "Board of Inquiry into the Sugar Industry, Report of the Board of Inquiry, 1916," 858-59. By 1922 however, while a report of the royal commission (1922) noted that there was no Long Pocket application made this time, there was interest expressed by the Yuruga-Bambaroo Cane Growers' Association. This association also decided to withdraw its application. See Queensland Government, "Report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the most suitable locations for sugar mills which may be erected in the near future, 1922," 12.

²²⁶ Correspondence from E.W. Knox to E. Cowley, June 24, July 7, July 23, July 28, 1884, Deposit 142/1547, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

²²⁷ "Herbert Sugar Growers," *Week*, April 14, 1893, 3.

²²⁸ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 73.

president's position of the HRFA.²²⁹ Meanwhile in April 1893, White presided over the inaugural meeting of the Herbert River Cane Growers' Association with Carr. The report also identified another stalwart of the HRFA, Rosendahl, as being in attendance. The rules and objects of the PRFA were read, and those in attendance drew up a set of rules and objects for the new association. The objects included both lobbying (petitioning government for a 'kanaka' hospital), and rural extension (investigating cases of cane 'blight' and sourcing material on cultivation machinery).²³⁰ White, a dairy farmer at Stone River, and Carr were elected as president and secretary respectively of this new Herbert River Cane Growers' Association.²³¹ If this was a reaction to inactivity on the part of the HRFA it is not clear whether it was intended to form a completely new association or to revitalise the HRFA and reshape it into a district wide association with a broader agricultural base.

Reports from this point onwards indicate a fading away of the HRFA. In early 1894 the *Sugar Journal and Tropical Cultivator* reported that the membership of a farmers' association comprised almost all farmers in the Valley.²³² That was the last flowering of the HRFA. The same *Journal*, a few months later, bemoaned the fact that "more interest is not evinced in the Farmers' or Cane-growers' Association."²³³ In November 1894 there was the first reference to an association in CSR correspondence, a *Halifax Cane Growers' Association*. This could still have been the HRFA because it was not until around June 1895, that W.A. Farquhar, manager of Victoria Mill received a copy of the Halifax Planters' Club (HPC) rules.²³⁴ Again in September 1895 CSR correspondence referred to a *Halifax Farmers' Association*, not a Planters' Club.²³⁵ Meanwhile, presumably again referring to the HRFA, on 15 March, 1895 the 'Sugar Journal and Tropical Cultivator' reported that "The Farmers' Association has not been doing much lately, but is still in

²²⁹ Neame, *Diary of Arthur Neame*, 115; Pugh, *Pugh's Almanac and Queensland Directory* 1894, 104.

²³⁰ "Herbert Sugar Growers," *Week*, April 14, 1893, 3.

²³¹ "Herbert Sugar Growers," *Week*, April 14, 1893, 3.

²³² Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 73; "Herbert River," *Sugar Journal and Tropical Cultivator*, March 15, 1894, 32.

²³³ "Herbert River," *Sugar Journal and Tropical Cultivator*, October 15, 1894, 201.

²³⁴ Correspondence from W.A. Farquhar to the acting manager, undated, Deposit 142/1554, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

²³⁵ The matter under discussion was chain and winding gear (windlass) which Rosendahl had seen at the Bundaberg foundry. He proposed that it could be fitted to trucks to secure cane loads. Alm recorded that the mill agreed to fit 50 trucks on the Halifax line as an experiment. Correspondence from W.H. Rothe to the manager, November 1, 1894; correspondence from E. Knox, to the manager, November 22, 1894, May 23, 1895, Deposit 142/1553, CSR, Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra; and Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 76-77.

existence, and probably when some burning question crops up it will be of some use.”²³⁶ Substantiating the formation of the HPC was a newspaper report published in September 1895, which noted that there were now two associations on the Herbert, the HPC and the Cane Growers’ Association.²³⁷ Because reporters consistently misnamed associations it cannot be known whether the latter was the HRFA or the Herbert River Cane Growers’ Association formed in 1893 of which the last was heard of in March 1896, when the PRFA recorded receiving a letter from that association.²³⁸ That it was not heard from again links it to the formation of the HRFL. It would appear that Carr distanced himself from the Herbert River Cane Growers’ Association with the formation of the HRFL, while White, who lost his herd of cows to ticks in 1896 and resigned from council in the same year, left the district sometime after.²³⁹

In the discordant years of 1893 to 1896, though various HRFA members were clearly beginning to question whether the association still fulfilled their needs, they continued to be active in an associative sense. A week or so after the Herbert River Cane Growers’ Association was formed in 1893 by White and Carr, a meeting was held in Halifax to hear A.S. Cowley speak on his work as MP. It attracted attendees from across the district. Rosendahl chaired the meeting and Carr and Lely (as secretary of the HRFA) gave votes of thanks.²⁴⁰ In May 1894, concerned about labour shortages, a farmers’ deputation was brought to the *Palmer*, a steamer, when it docked at Dungeness where it was received by Premier, the Hon. H. Nelson. John Lely, secretary of the HRFA, presented the farmers’ petition.²⁴¹

It seems that farmers were trying to find the right vehicle to represent them in a rapidly changing setting. As the number of small farmers increased and sugar cultivation spread out into more distant parts of the Valley, each locality formed their own local association. One of the earliest was the Fairford Farmers’ Association with William Canny as chairman followed by associations at Victoria, Stone River and Macknade, with

²³⁶ “Herbert River,” *Sugar Journal and Tropical Cultivator*, March 15, 1895, 37

²³⁷ “An Extraordinary Vote,” *Mackay Mercury*, September 17, 1895, 2.

²³⁸ “P.R.F.A.,” *Mackay Mercury*, March 26, 1896, 2.

²³⁹ “Pioneer Days,” *Queenslander*, November 26, 1931, 9.

²⁴⁰ “Political Paragraphs,” *North Queensland Register*, April 26, 1893, 33.

²⁴¹ “Herbert River,” *Sugar Journal and Tropical Cultivator*, March 15, 1894, 32, 79; “Herbert River,” *Sugar Journal and Tropical Cultivator*, June 15, 1894, 107; “Ministers in the North,” *Brisbane Courier*, May 4, 1894, 6-7.

Lannercost, Hamleigh, Ripple Creek, Long Pocket and Hawkins Creek forming later.²⁴² Those branches would also train those who would go on to be leading figures in the community organisations of the district including the HRFL. An early supplier of Ripple Creek Mill was Daniel Pearson.²⁴³ He represented the HRFL at the 1906 sugar commission.²⁴⁴ The name Pearson would become synonymous with the HRFL, with successive generations of Pearsons being members into the twenty-first century.²⁴⁵

These local associations were important because, as Lely put it, “each ... is a local sugar-area, and is governed by conditions which are in many respects peculiar to itself.”²⁴⁶ During the height of a cane grub problem in 1895 to 1897, for instance, the secretary of the Victoria Farmers’ Association wrote to Cowley MLA offering an alternative scheme to fund cane grub eradication. He argued that as the district the Victoria Farmers’ Association represented was free of grubs, it would be unfair to expect that district’s farmers to finance grub destruction in Halifax.²⁴⁷

The lower Herbert farmers, finding themselves addressing issues that were not necessarily shared by farmers in other localities on the Herbert, perceived the need for their own association. The CSR correspondence substantiates that over 1894 and 1895 the lower Herbert farmers were working to form a new association and by June 1895 had both formalised their association as the HPC and written a new set of rules and objects. Like many association formations, it could have been prompted by a particular crisis, in this case, the cane grub infestation.²⁴⁸ Though founding members included those who had formed the HRFA, such as Arthur Carr, it was John Lely, Oxford-educated and friend of politicians, who seemed to have been the disruptive force that managed to induce fellow lower Herbert farmers to form their own association, the HPC, with himself as secretary.²⁴⁹

²⁴² *Queensland Agricultural Journal*, March (1898): 240-42.

²⁴³ See Appendix 9.

²⁴⁴ Queensland Parliament, “Sugar Industry Labour Commission, 1906.”

²⁴⁵ D. Pearson, Member; R.V. Pearson, President; John Pearson, President; David Pearson, Member.

²⁴⁶ Correspondence from J. Lely to A. J. Thynne, March 11, 1897. Series ID 6041 Item ID 902860, Batch file No 17, agricultural. Sugar Cane Grubs: Correspondence re eradication, Queensland State Archives, Brisbane.

²⁴⁷ Correspondence from W.S. Warren to the Hon. A.S. Cowley, October 26, 1896, Series ID 6041 Item ID 902860, Batch file No 17, agricultural. Sugar Cane Grubs: Correspondence re eradication, Queensland State Archives, Brisbane.

²⁴⁸ Which was addressed by the creation of the Halifax Planters’ Club Pest Destruction Fund.

²⁴⁹ Rita and Geoff Carr, *Arthur William Carr and Susannah Puddifant Carr*.

But why call the Halifax association a planters' club? Even the members seem to have been confused as to what the proper name of their association should be. Lely, in writing to the *Cairns Post*, signed off as "Sec. Halifax Planters' Association."²⁵⁰ A later secretary, H.G. Faithful, writing to the federal member in 1901, wrote as "Secretary Halifax Farmers' Club."²⁵¹ Even Alm commented on the inclusion of 'planter' saying that CSR referred to its contractors as 'planters' indicating that this was reason for the use of planter in the name of the club.²⁵² While CSR did occasionally refer to the small growers as planters, it was more likely to refer to them as farmers, and most usually contractors. In fact, the use of the word 'planter' may have had more to do with how these successful farmers now saw themselves and their relationship with CSR. Some of the lower Herbert farmers seem to have claimed the title of planter. From this distance of time it is not clear if this was done unselfconsciously, because of the close association with mill management, or in order to elevate their own status. Lely, the property developer and speculator, identified himself as a planter rather than farmer.²⁵³ Anderssen, the "King of Halifax," whose home was described as a two-storey mansion, was referred to as a sugar-planter.²⁵⁴ Carr, in the style of the fabled southern U.S. planter, could stand on his elevated balcony and survey river, garden and cane fields and hoist the flag which summonsed his ploughmen and workers.²⁵⁵ The club appears to have maintained a particular respect for and relationship with CSR mill management, fêting officers as each was transferred out of the district.²⁵⁶

By 1896 the HRFA, comprising mainly those lower Herbert farmers, was no longer representative of the wider sugar growing community. Each local association on the Herbert not only had concerns specific to their locality, but a common desire to ensure both the viability of the small grower and of the district's sugar industry. But while a lot of talk could go on at local association meetings there were not the numbers, drive, or spirit of enquiry to pursue an agenda which addressed broader industry issues. A

²⁵⁰ "Polynesian Wages," *Bundaberg Mail and Burnett Advertiser*, April 26, 1897, 4.

²⁵¹ "The Kanaka Bill," *Queenslander*, October 26, 1901, 819.

²⁵² Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 74.

²⁵³ "Notes and Comments," *Queenslander*, September 17, 1898, 561.

²⁵⁴ "Halifax," *North Queensland Register*, August 21, 1899, 48; "Death of Mr. Anderssen," *North Queensland Register*, April 23, 1900, 10; "Advertising: Transmission by Death," *Queensland Figaro*, January 28, 1904, 18.

²⁵⁵ *Herbert River Express*, "Local Historical Anthology Collection, File 1, No. 27, Collection Code: LH22, Hinchinbrook Shire Library, Ingham.

²⁵⁶ "Ingham Notes," *North Queensland Register*, January 16, 1896, 21.

confederation of local agricultural associations authorised to speak on their behalf would carry more weight and be more effective.²⁵⁷

I suggest that the Herbert River Cane Growers' Association was an initial attempt at forming a districtwide association modelled on the Mackay district's PRFA with its many associated branches from which members were delegated to attend central meetings.²⁵⁸ The PRFA tried to keep up the momentum of the farmer association movement in Queensland, sending out a circular to sugar growing districts in 1894 making a rallying call for sugar farmers to "join together for their mutual protection and welfare."²⁵⁹ I propose that Lely, who became secretary of the HRFA around that time, was inspired by that rallying call. Alm recounted how Lely:

Conceived the idea of uniting the Associations in the district in such a way that none of the farming bodies lost their individuality, and that they should continue to manage their own affairs, but join together in all matters concerning the district at large or the sugar industry as a whole. To bring this about, he proposed to create an Executive body drawn from each of the Associations, to meet in a central place which would be Ingham, to deal with all matters of common interest.²⁶⁰

Lely recommended the name for the confederation of associations—the Herbert River Farmers' League—which came into existence around 1896. Lely was elected as founding secretary while William Canny, former plantation manager, was elected as first chairman.²⁶¹ The rules and objects of the HRFA were adopted with slight modification and ratified by all the local associations.²⁶² With the league's formation the HRFA was transformed into a districtwide body. Though Alm recorded that the HRFA was renamed the HPC, HRFL president William Canny stated unequivocally to the labour commission of 1906 that the organisation "was in existence many years before it turned itself into a league."²⁶³ Furthermore, the authoritative citing of the receipt of the rules of the HPC by W.A. Farquhar, manager of Victoria Mill, in June 1895 predated the formation of the

²⁵⁷ Correspondence from J. Lely to Hon. A.J. Thynne, December 16, 1897, Series ID 6041 Item ID 902860, Batch file No 17, agricultural. Sugar Cane Grubs: Correspondence re eradication, Queensland State Archives, Brisbane.

²⁵⁸ Swayne, "Some Phases of the Sugar Industry," 22.

²⁵⁹ "Organization of Farmers," *Sugar Journal and Tropical Cultivator*, August 15, 1894, 150.

²⁶⁰ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 73.

²⁶¹ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 74. Alm was not sure of the accuracy of his recollection but a newspaper report had Canny in the Chair at a meeting on November 24, 1897.

"Ingham Notes," *North Queensland Register*, November 24, 1897, 34.

²⁶² Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 73.

²⁶³ Evidence of William Canny, Sugar Industry Labour Commission, "Report of the Royal Commission, 1906," 343.

HRFL. In addition, a newspaper article of March 19, 1897, substantiated that the HPC preceded the HRFL:

The Halifax Planter' Club, at a meeting, decided to use every endeavour to bring about a complete system of inter-district co-operation among the cane farmers of North Queensland on the question of Polynesian wages restriction and other matters of common interest; and as a preliminary step it is thought advisable to confederate in one league the various local associations now existing, or to become existent, in the Herbert district. The Macknade and Victoria Farmers' Association will be asked to send two representatives to confer with the secretary and two other representatives of the Halifax Club, on the question.²⁶⁴

Though the report indicated the HPC initiated this confederation, it must be remembered that Lely at the time was secretary of both the HRFA and the HPC and it was he who was driving the initiative. The HPC, with its membership of farmers who had 15 years of associative action behind them, continued to be a vocal and active force. North Queensland historian Dorothy Jones alluded to the different and more determined mettle of the old lower Herbert freeholders.²⁶⁵ In 1896 and 1897 industry issues on the Herbert appeared to be addressed by the HPC, but by 1898 the HRFL found its feet and thereafter was the representative body for the entire district.

POLITICAL LOBBYING AND RURAL EXTENSION

Wegner observed that farmers' associations had many roles: educational, experimental, political and industrial.²⁶⁶ In this foundational period, in the years 1881 to 1896, the HRFA was active and its principal roles were political and industrial ones. It was limited by isolation, membership and financial inability to access or provide rural extension facilities. That is not to say that it did not attempt to provide rural education and access means to promote agriculture on the Herbert.

The principal role of the HRFA was negotiating a place for the small selectors on the Herbert and ensuring that they kept it. Once contracts for supply had been secured with CSR, the other large issue to be addressed was whether to establish a cooperative mill. Twice, the association researched and rejected the options available, opting to throw in its lot with CSR. As more selectors became members it continued to apply pressure on

²⁶⁴ "Breezy News," *Week*, March 19, 1897, 12.

²⁶⁵ Dorothy Jones, *Hurricane Lamps and Blue Umbrellas: A History of the Shire of Johnstone to 1973* (Cairns: G.K. Bolton Printers, 1973), 263.

²⁶⁶ Wegner, "Hinchinbrook," 167.

the company to take on more contractors, open its plantation lands to small holders and operate as a central mill.

The other issue the HRFL addressed was labour. As clearly articulated at the 1889 royal commission, farmers and planters were united in their perceived need for cheap labour. Despite the HRFA farmers having proved that they could toil without harm to their health in the tropics, some of their number, like their last secretary Lely, had very fixed views on the topic.²⁶⁷ A founding objective of the HRFA was that the small farmers might be able to secure Melanesian labourers through the aegis of the association.²⁶⁸ Though that did not happen, the association did manage to both extract from CSR arrangements for harvest labour and impress upon Premier Griffith that an extension of the use of indentured labour was required as an interim measure.

As has been detailed in this account, the HRFA achieved those ends by lobbying actively, writing letters and formulating petitions, and cooperating with the planter association. Together with that association, the HRFA used the threat of northern separation and a collapse of the sugar industry in an attempt to inveigle concessions. The HRFA formulated business plans and met with CSR and government officials, including the Premier. It secured the patronage of planters and local governments and in 1887 one of its numbers, Rosendahl, became the first small sugar farmer to secure a place on the divisional board followed by Alm a year later.

HRFA also had to negotiate with CSR on behalf of association members on the price received for their cane. As Wegner pointed out, this would have been no mean feat for a small association as pricing was a contentious issue and CSR would monopolise the control of pricing across the Australian sugar industry until after 1914.²⁶⁹ Moreover, there was little room for negotiation as the farmers could not threaten to withhold their crops nor were there alternative mills to which the farmers could send their crops. Nevertheless, one advantage in the HRFA's favour was that CSR was becoming increasingly dependent on the small farmers' supply.

²⁶⁷ Correspondence John Lely to the editor, "Black and White," *Brisbane Courier*, June 15, 1897, 7.

²⁶⁸ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 37.

²⁶⁹ Wegner, "Hinchinbrook," 168.

The educational and experimental roles attempted by the HRFA were limited by distance, ignorance, a paucity of funds and a lack of government institutions promoting or supporting agriculture.²⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the HRFA and the local associations attempted to obtain and share information about sugar cane growing and agriculture in general. While persisting in growing cane, the small farmers struggled to make a living in the face of drought, pests and labour issues. Ignorant of what was needed to grow other crops in the challenging tropical climate, without the knowledge and resources to experiment, and beleaguered by a lack of access to scientific information, high transport costs, and distance to markets, the HRFA jumped at the opportunity to give evidence before the 1889 royal sugar industry commission on the issue. Members of the HRFA articulated the desperate need for rural extension to the commission.

While it is not certain that the objects and rules of the Herbert River Farmers' Association as published in 1885 were those of the HRFA, the objects and rules of agricultural associations tended to be remarkably similar. We can be sure that the HRFA had similar objects outlining practical endeavours that would be pursued to improve and assist agriculture on the Herbert—plans to procure seeds and plants of alternative crops, carry out experimental crop planting, conduct chemical soil analysis and promote new machinery. They may have read papers of agricultural interest at their meetings. The small amount of information available about the Herbert River Cane Growers' Association, and the later more copious accounts of the HPC and the HRFL activities, show that rural extension of exactly that sort was included in their objectives.

Despite the limited information available, it can be seen that the HRFA tried to carry out those same extension activities. When the selectors formed the HRFA, they anticipated that it would be a forum where they could exchange ideas for the benefit and education of all members.²⁷¹ Alm recounted that the farmers understood that CSR would have certain expectations of them if they were to supply to the company, so they realised “that they would have to follow the lead of the Company, and adopt up-to-date methods.”²⁷² The HRFA joined the Acclimatization Society and sourced new cane varieties. It cannot be known whether as individuals, or through the agency of their association, they were able to acquire the latest equipment, but the 1885 rules and objects indicated that that was

²⁷⁰ See Griggs, “Improving Agricultural Practices,” 13.

²⁷¹ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 36.

²⁷² Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 34.

the association's intent. Certainly, this first cohort seem to have been experimental farmers and did not stint on obtaining the latest equipment. In the 1896 slack season, a visitor to Alm's farm noticed "a very fine Gilpin Sulky plough" while Carr was recorded as using Deer's ploughs, Planet Junior horse hoes, and a double Lister drill plough.²⁷³

Appreciating that as individuals they were not in a position to experiment with different crops and methods, the HRFA requested the government consider establishing experimental farms throughout the district. The HRFA understood the benefits of actually seeing the crop growing rather than reading about it in papers, and had established an experimental farm on which was planted tea and coffee alongside other crops, but without government funding the association was struggling to keep the farm going.²⁷⁴

If the farmers of the HRFA could read English there were lots of sources, including newspaper articles, agricultural journals and books offering advice on what to grow in Queensland and how to grow it, that they could have tapped into. Griggs questioned whether small farmers actually accessed published material about the growing of sugar cane under Australian conditions.²⁷⁵ This may be a valid consideration in relation to the first cohort of independent, white, small growers on the Herbert as English was not their first language. Nevertheless, anthropologist and naturalist Carl Lumholtz, recording his encounter with Anderssen in 1882, recounted that he and his wife "had nearly forgotten their mother tongue."²⁷⁶ This demonstrated a very capable facility to adapt to a new language. Distance and limited postal services were more limiting factors than one's mother tongue.

The HRFA and the other local associations promoted the investigation of crop pests and disease. The HRFA was particularly concerned about the persistent cane grub problem and the initiatives the association took in that regard were to have long-term and far-reaching, industrywide effect.²⁷⁷ Particularly bad cane grub outbreaks occurred in 1888

²⁷³ "Among the Halifax farms," *North Queensland Register*, May 27, 1896, 37. In the sugar regions the year is divided into the harvest season and the slack season. In the latter, land is rested, cane is planted, and fields of growing cane are tended.

²⁷⁴ Evidence of Charles Watson, Sugar Industry Commission, "Report of the Royal Commission, 1889"; evidence of John Alm, Sugar Industry Commission, "Report of the Royal Commission, 1889," 105.

²⁷⁵ Griggs, "Improving Agricultural Practices," 11-13, 26.

²⁷⁶ Lumholtz, *Among Cannibals*, 4.

²⁷⁷ The cane grub or larvae of the cane beetle is a pest that can decimate whole fields of cane. The most destructive, and one that is found in all the sugar producing districts from Mackay to Mossman, is the 'Dermolepida albohirtum Waterhouse', a greyback species. Another species, *lepidiota albohirta* (white cockchafers), was also amongst those plaguing the Herbert cane fields in the late 1880s. Telegram from

and 1889 with it being reported that some farmers on the Herbert lost as much as 25 acres to the grubs in a season.²⁷⁸ Of the farmers on the Herbert, the Halifax farmers were the most affected by cane grubs. Between 1887 and 1895 there was little scientific interest taken in the pests which were devastating northern cane fields. With sound technical advice unavailable, ineffective eradication by hand collection of beetles and grubs was practised.²⁷⁹ Though individual farmers and planters across Queensland actively collected and destroyed grubs, and ensured that their paddocks were clear of other vegetation that might harbour the beetles, they made no concerted effort as a group to alert government agencies to the threat the grub posed to the sugar industry.²⁸⁰

Enquiry, agitation and petition began with Alm and the HRFA with an outbreak on the Herbert in 1886, and was picked up later by Edwin Waller in 1895.²⁸¹ Griggs argued that given that the Queensland government was promoting a sugar industry conducted by small farmers, any threat to their economic viability prompted institutional support.²⁸² Nevertheless, the government's response to the grub crisis was tardy despite the HRFA's requests for advice and assistance as early as 1886. Only because the problem persisted, becoming so severe in 1895 that it threatened the viability of the sugar industry, did the Queensland government finally direct substantial resources to investigating means to control the pest.²⁸³ John Lely, in his capacity as secretary of the HRFA and the HPC, together with farmer groups in other grub-affected districts, agitated and petitioned government about the scourge. Finally, in 1895 and 1896, the embryonic idea of a means

J. Lely to Under Secretary, Department of Agriculture, February 3, 1897, Series ID 6041 Item ID 902860, Batch file No 17, agricultural. Sugar Cane Grubs: Correspondence re eradication, Queensland State Archives, Brisbane.

²⁷⁸ "Report on the Sugar," *Toowoomba Chronicle and Darling Downs General Advertiser*, April 13, 1889, 3.

²⁷⁹ "Report on the Sugar," *Toowoomba Chronicle and Darling Downs General Advertiser*, April 13, 1889, 3.

²⁸⁰ The beetles fly to 'feeding trees' in the scrub and then return to the soil to lay their eggs. As the grubs feed on grass roots it would be impossible to clear other vegetation that might harbour them, apart from the feeding trees.

²⁸¹ Alm packed up a box of sample stools, soil and grubs and sent them to agricultural scientist and entomologist, Henry Tyron, together with an explanatory letter on behalf of the HRFA. Evidence of John Alm, Sugar Industry Commission, "Report of the Royal Commission, 1889," 106. Waller asked Tyron if he could make a visit to the district and attached to his letter a list of questions about the cane grub. Correspondence from Edwin S. Waller to Henry Tyron, April 3, 1895, Series ID 6041 Item ID 902860, Batch file No 17, agricultural. Sugar Cane Grubs: Correspondence re eradication, Queensland State Archives, Brisbane. Tyron visited all grub affected areas in 1895 and produced a "Report on the Grub Pest of Sugar Cane" which was published in 1896. Brian T. Egan, *The History of Cane Pest and Disease Control Boards in Queensland* (Brisbane: Scribe Consulting, 2015), 16.

²⁸² Griggs, *Global Industry, Local Innovation*, 159.

²⁸³ Griggs, *Global Industry, Local Innovation*, 159.

to finance control measures hatched by the HRFA in 1887 was successfully shaped into an industrywide solution. That solution was the setting up of voluntary beetle and grub control funds, subsidized by government.²⁸⁴ The Herbert scheme continued into the 1930s and even after the formation of the government legislated pest control boards.²⁸⁵

CONCLUSION

David Cameron, writing of closer settlement in Queensland from the 1860s, remarked that sugar growing by small farmers was one of the few successes resulting from the colonial government's ongoing attempts to bring to reality its "agrarian dream through closer settlement."²⁸⁶ The HRFA farmers unconsciously played a significant role in bringing that dream to fruition. The HRFA members disproved the perception that independent, white, small farmers could neither physically farm sugar in a tropical environment nor provide a reliable supply of high-quality cane. The same outcome was not achieved in the sugar industries of Brazil, Hawai'i, Louisiana, Barbados or Fiji.

Adrian Graves suggested that the demise of plantation production and the development of farm-based central milling in Australia was due in part to the political role played by the small growers through the formation of agricultural associations or "farmer pressure groups."²⁸⁷ Unified action by small growers achieving such far-reaching results did not occur anywhere else in the sugar growing world in the period 1872 to 1914. In 1882 the HRFA proposed to the gargantuan CSR that the association's members could supply cane to the still unbuilt Victoria mill, knowing full well that the company had every intention of conducting its operations in the Valley as a vertically integrated plantation. The forming of the HRFA to achieve that end was integral to their success. The HRFA members went on to not only farm successfully but also to conduct effective ongoing

²⁸⁴ A farmer levy deducted from the mill cane payments matched by a £ for £ subsidy from the mill and credited to a Beetle Fund, Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 49-50; "The Grub Pest," *Mackay Mercury*, July 21, 1896. Reprint of a letter previously published in *Queenslander*; Egan, *History of the Cane Pest*, table 11.1, 54.

²⁸⁵ Egan, *History of the Cane Pest*, 14-15, 55 table 11.2. Egan attributed the first coordinated, if short lived effort to W.T. Paget of Paget Bros., Nindaroo Mill, Mackay. He came up with the Paget Proposal in 1895; see also Norman J. King, "Some Notes and Some Comments on Bureau History," 8, Typewritten notes, accessed October 17, 2017, <http://elibrary.sugarresearch.com.au>.

²⁸⁶ Cameron, "Closer Settlement in Queensland," accessed July 26, 2016, <http://books.publishing.monash.edu/apps/bookworm/view/Struggle+Country%3A+The+Rural+Ideal+in+Twentieth+Century+Australia/140/xhtml/chapter06.html>.

²⁸⁶ Queensland Government, Board of Inquiry into the Sugar Industry, "Report of the Board of Inquiry, 1916," 833.

²⁸⁷ Graves, *Cane and Labour*, 46.

negotiations with CSR regarding labour, pricing and other farmer/miller arrangements. That a small farmers' association should effect influence on such matters was an anomaly in the sugar growing world in the late nineteenth century.

The two seething issues of the late 1800s in sugar industries worldwide were labour, and the matter of central or cooperative mills. In Australia, in contrast to the industries of Brazil, Hawai'i, Louisiana, Barbados and Fiji, the small farmers lobbied on those issues through association. The HRFA was embroiled in both those discussions: lobbying governments to extend the use of indentured labour, and investigating the possibilities of establishing a cooperative mill in the lower Herbert.

Even though CSR had a patronising attitude towards HRFA members and failed to acknowledge the HRFA's existence by name in its correspondence it had demanded that representation to the company must be made as a group. CSR was not alone in wanting to be communicated with through an association. Every farmer who gave evidence at the 1889 royal commission was asked what association he belonged to and if he spoke for the farmers represented by that association. The association members had enough confidence in their abilities and position to withstand CSR's patronisation and, to the association's credit, it maintained civil and cooperative relationships with consecutive local managers.

Over and above its lobbying role, the HRFA provided a means to access what little agricultural extension service was available before 1897 in the tropical north. Mindful of CSR's insistence on good husbandry practices, and working with a broad range of other organisations including other districts' agricultural associations, the HRFA endeavoured to help the small selectors acquire the skills to grow heavy, sweet crops and deal with pests and disease.

The insignificant cockies found their voice in the HRFA. The merits of having an organisation of their own were clearly evident, as groups of farmers across the Valley formed local associations when new areas were opened up. Membership equipped and propelled members to participate in wider forums, both industry and civil, even before the domination of the planter class had been broken. Obituaries reveal the breadth of

community involvement and the many ways that those first settlers worked tirelessly for the advancement of the sugar industry and the whole Valley.²⁸⁸

The HRFA helped to negotiate and sustain unique cultivation and milling arrangements which, by 1914, distinguished the Australian sugar industry from those elsewhere in the tropical sugar growing world. The following chapter will detail how those initial efforts culminated in a statutory body, CANEGROWERS, and a level of protection and subsidisation enjoyed by few other sugar industries.

²⁸⁸ "Death of Mr. Anderssen," *Northern Miner*, April 23, 1900, 2.

CHAPTER 6

A NEW ERA: FROM HERBERT RIVER FARMERS' LEAGUE TO QUEENSLAND CANE GROWERS' ASSOCIATION

In the period 1872 to 1914 the sugar industries of Brazil, Hawai'i, Louisiana, Barbados, Fiji and Australia were adjusting to free labour and exploring central milling. Only in Australia was the plantation system replaced by cultivation by independent, white small farmers. On the Herbert River in tropical north Queensland small farmers proved that a small farmer/central mill system could work in the tropics. The independent, white small farmers there, were assisted in their efforts to grow sugar cane by the formation of an agricultural association of small farmers, a unique phenomenon in the sugar growing world in that period. In 1882 small farmers on the Herbert appreciated that their association gave them the means "to speak with one voice" and created a forum in which to share ideas in order to become better informed farmers.¹

Unlike the planters who formed their associations in times of crisis and failed to nurture them at other times, the small farmers persisted in searching for the appropriate associative model through which they could access rural extension and lobby politically. Between 1882 and 1896, the HRFA was the voice of the farmers on the Herbert. Reinvented as the HRFL, it was instrumental in facilitating the formation of industrywide associations and agitating for government support of the sugar industry. Beginning in 1915, the industry was restructured into a government-legislated system which, in the 1980s, was no longer considered sustainable. By that time the HRFL, which had played a farmers' advocacy role alongside the local statutory association, had gone on to reinvent itself as a scholarship fund, modelled on the Scartwater Trust.² The HRFL has continued to function in that role into the twenty-first century, and still includes in its membership a descendant of Arthur Carr, founding member of the HRFA. In this concluding chapter

¹ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 36.

² The Scartwater Trust was established by A. H. W. Cunningham of Strathmore, Bowen in 1917. The principal function of the Scartwater Trust was the rehabilitation of ex-service men and women. It also awarded scholarships to eligible sons and daughters of returned servicemen and women from the northern area only, specifically Townsville and local surrounding communities. Scartwater Trust Archive: The Story of Scartwater: A Trust established by The Late A. H. W. Cunningham Strathmore, Bowen, Qld 1956, STR/1, Special Collections, James Cook University, Townsville.

the legacy of the HRFA will be examined as the trajectory of the Herbert River sugar industry and sugar farmer representation is traced from 1896 to the present day.

A UNITED FRONT

In 1901 farmers and planters found it hard to envisage what the industry would look like after the withdrawal of indentured labour, even as central milling and cultivation by independent white farmers on small family farms was proving successful. The arrangements that would govern the relationship between central miller and farmer were still to be negotiated to the satisfaction of all parties. Speaking in defence of the monolithic CSR in 1906, HRFL president W.P. Canny hinted at the risk of the government nationalising the industry if farmers persisted in running to governments, whether state or federal, to help them resolve their issues with the miller.³ As a former plantation manager, it was not unexpected that Canny would side with CSR but nevertheless his words were prophetic. Comprehensive reorganisation both within the industry and by government resulted in the HRFL and district associations like it handing over their role to a legislated, compulsory industrywide association. The government-legislated system created to regulate the Australian sugar industry went far beyond what the millers liked, and even what the farmers had intended or wanted.

In the first decades of the twentieth century farmers and millers danced around each other trying to work out the best way for the industry to be represented, whether by farmer only and miller only industrywide associations or by a combined grower and miller association. Walter Maxwell's report of 1900 was scathing of organisational inertia in the Australian sugar industry. He suggested uniting already existing organisations to form an organisation to represent both growers and manufacturers.⁴ However, despite Maxwell's optimism about the ease with which an overarching organisation could be formed, farmers and millers did not easily find a common "principle of unity" upon which they could ground a representative body.⁵

At a conference held in Mackay in 1900, a subcommittee reporting on Maxwell's report proposed a scheme for the formation of a sugar industry association representing millers and growers. A Sugar Growers and Manufacturers' Union was then formed at the next

³ "Northern Sugar Industry: W.P. Canny interviewed," *Brisbane Courier*, July 31, 1906, 4.

⁴ "Pastoral-Agricultural. The Sugar Industry," *Capricornian*, February 24, 1900, 3; Maxwell, *Report upon an Investigation*, *passim*.

⁵ Swayne, "Some Phases of the Sugar Industry," 22.

conference held in Bundaberg in 1901.⁶ It was to be financed by a compulsory levy and to include NSW growers. The union was short-lived.

Successful efforts to form an association to represent all small farmers of Queensland were made in 1905 in Oakey, on the Darling Downs, with the Queensland Farmers' Association, and then in Bundaberg in 1906 with the Queensland Farmers Union.⁷ Though the Queensland Farmers' Association did not expressly exclude pastoralists and sugar planters, it aimed to support all struggling farmers.⁸ The union, initiated by a sugar miller, duplicated the aims of the association, and could be interpreted as the northern sugar districts' reaction to a perceived lack of representation in the association.

On the Herbert, attempts to form a branch of the Queensland Farmers' Association failed. The HRFL and the HP instead chose to affiliate with the Queensland Farmers' Union, which had sent a pamphlet and circular to 160 agricultural associations in Queensland, including those on the Herbert, inviting them to join.⁹ Fifty-three delegates, including Cowley MLA representing the HPC, attended a Queensland Farmers' Union conference held in Brisbane in August 1906.¹⁰ Members of the Queensland Farmers' Association attended the conference but expressed concern that the northern sugar growers appeared to be working with their union against the southern farmers' interests.¹¹ This tussle exposed the divide between producers of different agricultural products and highlighted the need for the sugar industry to form its own overarching association.

The next significant gathering of millers and growers was the Labor in Canefields Conference, called by the directors of Mossman Central Mill and hosted by the Townsville Chamber of Commerce in the Townsville Town Hall on February 25, 1907. The Herbert sent the largest number of delegates of any region.¹² Edward Swayne MLA

⁶ "Sugar Conference," *Sugar Journal and Tropical Cultivator*, March 15, 1900, 196-97; "Sugar Growers Association," *Bundaberg Mail and Burnett Advertiser*, June 17, 1901, 2.

⁷ "A Farmers' Union," *Maryborough Chronicle, Wide Bay and Burnett Advertiser*, September 21, 1905, 2; "Queensland Farmers' Union," *Queensland Times, Ipswich Herald and General Advertiser*, June 28, 1906, 5; "Queensland Farmers' Union," *Western Star and Roma Advertiser*, August 11, 1906, 3.

⁸ "Queensland Farmers' Union," *Queensland Times, Ipswich Herald and General Advertiser*, June 28, 1906, 5; "Queensland Farmers' Union," *Western Star and Roma Advertiser*, August 11, 1906, 3.

⁹ "Labor in Canefields Conference, Townsville," 34, Australian Pamphlet Collection SR N 080 PAM V. 208 Fiche 05 Item 4894-4895, National Library of Australia, Canberra.

¹⁰ "Labor in Canefields Conference, Townsville, 34"; "The Queensland Farmers' Conference," *Brisbane Courier*, August 10, 1906, 4.

¹¹ "Labor in Canefields Conference, Townsville."

¹² "The Townsville Conference," *Daily Mercury*, February 25, 1907, 3; "The Townsville Conference," *Johnstone River Advocate*, February 28, 1907, 2.

suggested that another attempt be made to form a sugar industry organisation. Angus Gibson, founder of the Queensland Farmers' Union and representing Bundaberg millers, remained in favour of an organisation that would represent all agriculturalists.¹³ Canny put forward a motion, seconded by Anderssen of the HRFL, that a subcommittee be created to investigate the formation of a voluntary sugar industry association representing both growers and millers. The new association was named the Queensland Sugar Producers Association and duplicated the objects of the Sugar Growers and Manufacturers Union.¹⁴ The HRFL's president, Leland Edwin Challands, was a signatory of the memorandum of association, and the first president and vice-president were directors of northern cooperative mills.¹⁵ As all sugar districts came to be represented, the organisation was renamed the Australian Sugar Producers' Association. The HRFL was an affiliate branch of the ASPA from the outset, providing a local membership base, district delegates and office premises, while also acting locally on behalf of the ASPA on industry issues.

There were several reasons why not all farmers saw the ASPA as the answer to their search for industrywide representation.¹⁶ The memorandum of association affirmed the important role played by local associations in addressing local interests while it also made clear that the ASPA's role was not to simply facilitate united action by scattered district organisations.¹⁷ A particular local interest was pricing arrangements. This issue had divided millers and growers and was one that growers hoped an industrywide body could address. Because the ASPA represented both miller and growers' interests, its ability to negotiate this and other vexing grower issues was compromised. Some southern associations promptly withdrew their affiliation and joined the short-lived Australian Canegrowers Union, a growers-only body founded in the Bundaberg district around 1908 and whose sphere of activity was from Mackay to NSW.¹⁸

¹³ "Labor in Canefields Conference, Townsville."

¹⁴ "Labor in Canefields Conference, Townsville," 36.

¹⁵ "The Australian Sugar Producers Association Limited Annual Report 1982," *Australian Sugar Journal*, 4 (1982); 49, 54; Donald Watson, "The Australian Sugar Producers Association 1907-1982: Achievements of the A.S.P.A." (Clem Lack Memorial Oration, 25 March, 1982), 90 accessed October 21, 2017, espace.library.uq.edu.au/s00855804_1981_82_11_3_88.pdf.

¹⁶ *Golden Jubilee Conference of the ASPA* (Brisbane: ASPA, 1957), 5.

¹⁷ "Genesis of the Australian Sugar Producers' Association," *Australian Sugar Journal*, April 8, 1909, 5.

¹⁸ "Canegrower's union," *Bundaberg Mail and Burnett Advertiser*, August 10, 1908, 3; "Australian Canegrowers' Union," *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, January 20, 1909, 3.

Even in districts where there were cooperatively owned central mills or proprietary mills not all farmers were shareholders and those who were not resisted comprehensive organisation. They continued to regard milling and farming interests as inherently in conflict. Despite the fact that many small farmers were also mill owners, an undercurrent of ‘us-and-them’ persisted and does so to this day. Consequently, because the Australian Canegrowers Union failed to unite all sugar growers under one umbrella organisation, a further attempt was made to form a growers’ only association. In 1914 the United Cane Growers Association was formed and all cane farming districts were enjoined to form branches. The UCGA and the ASPA came to stand juxtaposed, vying for adherents, and engaged in a dialogue that vilified and divided. The UCGA tried to attract ASPA members to its organisation with a view to becoming the authoritative voice for the industry in Queensland.¹⁹ The UCGA gained ground where farmers saw themselves disadvantaged by milling arrangements.

On the Herbert, the farmers were, on the whole, satisfied with their arrangement with CSR. Evidence gathered by the central prices board from financial details of farmers across the sugar districts revealed that farmers who had their cane milled by CSR received higher prices for their cane than others.²⁰ This had been consistently so. Canny, former HRFL chairman, asserted that the farmers on the Herbert were treated very “liberally” by the company.²¹ The UCGA hoped that the nine local branches of the HRFL would affiliate with UCGA but the HRFL made it quite clear to the association that all the growers on the Herbert supported the ASPA.²² It was considered that the ASPA looked after the interests of farmers sufficiently.²³

At this time the price the farmers received for their cane was determined by individual mills, and the price of raw and refined sugar by sugar refiners (effectively CSR).²⁴ The result could be an inequitable distribution of profits.²⁵ On the Herbert farmers were informed by CSR of the price it was prepared to pay for the cane delivered to the mill.

¹⁹ Pagani, *T.W. Crawford*, 124.

²⁰ Griggs, *Global Industry, Local Innovation*, 694.

²¹ “Northern Sugar Industry,” *Queenslander*, August 11, 1906, 40.

²² Bill Kerr, email with author, February 9, 2001; “The U.C.G.A. and its Recent Pamphlet,” *Australian Sugar Journal*, July 3, 1925, 201.

²³ “P.R.F. AND G.A.,” *Daily Mercury*, November 16, 1914, 7.

²⁴ Griggs, “The Decline of Competition,” 359-76, note 364, table 1, *passim*, accessed February 24, 2015, doi: 10.1080/00049180120100077.

²⁵ Commonwealth Government, “Report of the Royal Commission on the Sugar Industry, 1912.”

The managers of the two CSR mills would meet with HRFL delegates prior to the oncoming season to present the details of the proposed cane payment for their consideration. While the meeting was hardly a charade, there was, in reality, very little room for negotiation. CSR had the upper hand. Farmers on the Herbert had no alternative choice of mill. That is why the idea of a central, farmer-owned mill did not go away.²⁶ Usually, the farmers did not complain about the price, and the symbiotic relationship the HRFL had with CSR could even limit the extent to which the HRFL could, or would, support other associations on pricing issues. For instance, in 1914, the HRFL wrote a letter to the PRF&GA advising that as the Herbert River growers had already negotiated their cane supply contract with CSR for the 1914 season, it was not in a position to join a deputation to meet with the Premier to discuss the Sugar Cane Price Boards Bill. It nevertheless expressed solidarity with the cause.²⁷

It was not until after the repeal of both the commonwealth government's standing excise and bounty legislation and the state prohibition on the employment of coloured labour that legislation was devised to solve what political scientist Diane Shogren identified as "the cost-price problems affecting millers and growers."²⁸ The report of the royal commission handed down in 1912 indicated a need for government control of the industry both on the grounds of national interest and in order to control raw sugar prices.²⁹ However, it was not until 1915 that the Queensland government enacted two pieces of legislation to achieve that control. The first was the Sugar Acquisition Act which allowed the Queensland government to acquire all sugar manufactured in Queensland and sell it on to the commonwealth government at cost.³⁰ The second was the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act to ensure a fair division of raw sugar returns between millers and growers.³¹ The act provided for a central board which fixed the prices based on information provided by local boards containing growers and millers in equal proportion. A recognised formula for determining the cane price (the relative percentage scheme)

²⁶ "Halifax and Ingham Notes," *Morning Post*, April 4, 1906, 4.

²⁷ "Cane Price Boards Bill," *Daily Mercury*, May 18, 1914, 6.

²⁸ Shogren, "Politics and Administration," 205.

²⁹ Commonwealth Government, "Report of the Royal Commission on the Sugar Industry, 1912."

³⁰ Queensland Government, "Sugar Acquisition Act 1915."

³¹ Queensland Government, "Regulation of Sugarcane Prices Act 1915."

apportioned returns proportionately: two-thirds to the grower and one-third to the miller.³² This scheme tied the price of cane to the price of raw sugar.

CSR vigorously opposed the legislation and the perceived interference in its operations. In a statement to the 1912 royal commission that presaged these legislative changes, the CSR general manager said “what the Company most wants is to be left alone.”³³ When the cane price-fixing regulations were introduced, the company proved to be particularly recalcitrant. The general manager instructed CSR Queensland mill managers not to divulge production costs to local boards; applied unsuccessfully to the central board for a common cane supply contract across its six Queensland sugar mills for the 1915 and 1916 seasons; tried to obstruct the operation of local boards; and took out writs against the government. One of these aimed to prevent chemists from entering CSR mills to check on books and records relating manufacturing and cultivation, while another declared that the award struck by the local board for the Victoria mill area was invalid. The company even managed to revert to payment by way of the ‘sugar in bag’ calculation, rather than the relative percentage scheme.³⁴

HRFL inherited from the HRFA the role of negotiating with CSR the price that local farmers received for their cane. In early 1917 the association attempted to negotiate an extraordinary pricing arrangement with CSR. A large meeting of farmers, chaired by the HRFL president, was held in Ingham in January 1917 in anticipation of the re-tabling of the Regulations of Sugar Cane Prices Act Amendment Bill which had failed to be passed in December 1916. What transpired was influenced by two things. The first was that the ASPA, of which HRFL was an affiliate, strongly objected to parts of the legislation, particularly the 1917 amendments. The second was that the ASPA and the CSR were in collusion (at least that is how it was generally perceived). The HRFL, as an affiliate of the ASPA with its members as suppliers of CSR, was forced to walk a conciliatory line. Several motions were passed at the meeting, including a clause allowing farmers to come

³² Griggs, *Global Industry, Local Innovation*, 696-97.

³³ “The Sugar Commission: The Case for the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, Limited,” *National Advocate*, May 4, 1912, 5.

³⁴ Griggs, *Global Industry, Local Innovation*, 692-97. There were varying schemes used by millers: the ‘sugar in bag’ scheme saw payment established by how much cane it took to make one ton of 94 net titre sugar from the total mill crop; payment could be based on ccs, established by chemical or individual analysis; or payment could be based on the relative percentage scheme whereby the crushing season was divided into weekly periods and cane received paid on whether it was above or below the average ccs of all cane crushed for that week.

to an arrangement with the miller on a majority decision of the farmers of a district, independently of the cane prices board. It moved that a petition be sent to that effect, and that CSR be consulted as to whether the company would enter into ten-year contracts and on what conditions.³⁵ In essence the farmers were requesting that they be allowed to make ex-gratia arrangements with CSR including that extraordinary request for ten year contracts. The petitioning was to no avail. The act passed in November 1917 included provisions that the Queensland government could compel mills to pay the award rate for cane; that noncompliant mills could be taken over by the state; and that cane farmers and millers could not contract out of a local board as the HRFL had proposed.³⁶

Historically, many of the small farmers associations' objects were to protect their members from exploitation by millers and secure equitable arrangements for their members, but legislation like that of 1917 went over and above what they had anticipated. As a result, associations like the HRFL found themselves arguing against the legislation and throwing their lot in with the miller. There is a very tangible sense of the tightrope that representative bodies were walking: they wanted the industry to be regulated and supported in such a way that they could make a reasonable living and not be exploited by the miller, but also felt dismay as control became all encompassing. This episode echoes the HRFA's cooperative mill dilemma, between the desire for the independence offered by a mill of their own, against the security of contracts with CSR.

Lack of unity was consistent across the agricultural community. In response to this wider lack of effective farmer representation and organisation, the Queensland government embarked on a scheme of comprehensive reorganisation of farm industries. Ostensibly, the existence of the ASPA and UCGA indicated that the sugar industry possessed a high degree of organisation, and was vigorously represented. However, the fact that both were voluntary and antagonistic towards the other drained them of their potential to be effective mouth pieces.³⁷ Moreover, they did not share a common vision for the industry. The ASPA favoured commonwealth control, the UCGA state control.³⁸ In the same way the government had stepped in to guarantee the viability of the Australian sugar industry

³⁵ "Meeting of Herbert River Farmers," *Daily Mercury*, February 10, 1917, 3.

³⁶ Queensland Government, "Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act Amendment Act of 1917."

³⁷ Ford, "Operations of the Queensland Cane Growers' Association," 1-2. The details of this antagonism can be elucidated from copies of the *Producers' Review* (official journal of the UCGA) and the *Sugar Journal* (official journal of the ASPA).

³⁸ Griggs, "Plantation to Small Farm," 291.

with the Sugar Acquisition Act and the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act, it enacted the Primary Producers' Organisation Acts to create statutory industry bodies. The Primary Producers' Organisation Act of 1922 legislated for the formation of bodies representing each commodity industry with power to compel all persons in that industry to become members and pay levies.³⁹ The overarching organisation, the Queensland Producers' Association, would have a tiered structure, the local producers' associations constituting the bottom tier. The Primary Products Pools Act was designed to create commodity boards which, in theory, gave growers control over the marketing of their commodity. The UCGA executive was excited by this development and saw the act as "the missing link that producers [had] been looking for a long time."⁴⁰ The executive proposed that it should represent all canegrowers, and a separate organisation should represent millers. The ASPA rejected that proposal, while the act and its consequent amendments did not live up to expectations, especially those of sugar growers because it did not have special provisions for the sugar industry.⁴¹

The Primary Producers' Organisation and Marketing Act of 1926 replaced the former act and its 1925 amendment, merging the Primary Products Pools Acts of 1922-25, and the Primary Producers' Organisations Act of 1922-25.⁴² It made special provisions for the sugar industry, and the organisation, with its compulsory membership, carried more weight than the voluntary ASAP and UCGA. It provided for mill suppliers committees, district cane growers' executives, and the Queensland Cane Growers' Council (QCGC). That council became the governing body of the Queensland Cane Growers' Association (QCGA) and constituent body of the Queensland Council of Agriculture established under the same act.⁴³ W.H. Doherty, general secretary of the UCGA, became the general secretary of the QCGA, and in 1927 the UCGA ceased to exist.⁴⁴ Thereafter the two organisations representing farmers were the QCGA and the ASPA, both of which were funded by grower levies, though the levy paid to the QCGA was a compulsory one. ASPA

³⁹ Queensland Government, "Primary Producers' Organisation Act 1922," "Primary Products Pools Act 1922," "Amendment Acts 1923," "Amendment Acts 1925."

⁴⁰ Ford, "Operations of the Queensland Cane Growers' Association," 256, quoting from QPD. V. CXXXIX. 1922.

⁴¹ Ford, "Operations of the Queensland Cane Growers' Association," 256.

⁴² Queensland Government, "The Primary Producers' Organisation and Marketing Act 1926."

⁴³ Also referred to as Queensland Cane Growers Organization (QCGO) and later CANEGROWERS.

⁴⁴ Shogren, "Politics and Administration," 341-42.

members argued that growers should have the option of paying their levy to either the QCGA or to the ASPA.⁴⁵ This was not the only point of disagreement.

Following an embarrassing lack of consensus when a combined delegation went to Canberra in 1928, the QCGA put a proposal to the ASPA that a new sugar organisation, the 'Sugar Executive' be formed. It would consist of representatives from both the council and ASPA and deal with matters of vital importance to both associations.⁴⁶ Integral to this arrangement would be that the millers alone would finance the ASPA, since the growers were compelled to be financial members of the QCGA. The ASPA consistently ignored the request, and even opposed the Cane Growers' Council, arguing that it actively sought to marginalise the ASPA as a millers' group.⁴⁷ The QCGA for its part felt that "there was nothing any other sugar organization could do for the growers that could not be done by the Queensland Cane Growers Council."⁴⁸ Furthermore, the ASPA was perceived by the QCGA as trying to draw members away from the council.⁴⁹ This was all a lot of hot air because as all parties knew, the QCGA was a statutory body with compulsory membership, and whose members could not be taken away by the ASPA, itself dependant on the voluntary levies of farmers who, for whatever reasons, were happy to keep a foot in each camp.

The idea of an executive was allowed to lapse. In 1934 the ASPA reduced the growers' levy to half the millers in recognition that farmers also paid the QCGC levy. Conceding defeat, the ASPA began to urge a friendlier relationship between the two associations and it was observed by the general secretary of the ASPA, Mr Curlewis, that he and Doherty were of the same opinion that the two associations were beginning to work amicably together.⁵⁰

Shogren commented that the trend in Australia was for industry-based organisations to be formed by linking existing local associations rather than the creation of new branch associations.⁵¹ Andrea Howell too, referred to the formation of the two main organisations, the ASPA and the QCGA, as having resulted from the merging of local

⁴⁵ Correspondence from J. McGowan to the editor, "The Canegrowers' Conference," *Daily Mercury*, March 12, 1930, 5; "Who's Who in Sugar: J.P. McGowan," *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, October 6, 1931, 5.

⁴⁶ "Sugar Organisation," *Queenslander*, October 18, 1928, 14.

⁴⁷ Pagani, *T.W. Crawford*, 126.

⁴⁸ "Cane Growers Council: Harmony in organization," *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, August 11, 1930, 3.

⁴⁹ "Cane Growers," *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, November 28, 1928, 5.

⁵⁰ "The ASPA 1907-1982," 41; "Council Meeting," *Daily Mercury*, January, 8, 1934, 11.

⁵¹ Shogren, *T.W. Crawford*, 356.

organisations.⁵² Elsewhere it was similarly claimed that the ASPA “owed its early success to its structure, a form of federation of existing bodies representing growing and milling interests”.⁵³

Starting with the HRFA and local associations, the farmers on the Herbert organised themselves. The HRFL inherited those branches and active membership base and consolidated for itself a role as district executive.⁵⁴ The Primary Producers’ Organisation and Marketing Act of 1926 duplicated that role with a statutory District Cane Growers’ Executive. It in turn inherited the HRFL’s active membership and readymade area branches. This process was replicated across the sugar districts. However, unlike associations in those other sugar districts, the HRFL was not prepared to relinquish its role readily. As noted in chapter five, the old lower Herbert freeholders were made of a different and more determined mettle.⁵⁵ The small farmers of the HRFL had inherited that determination.

FROM HRFL TO DISTRICT CANE GROWERS’ EXECUTIVE

In her thesis examining the Herbert River Cane Growers’ Association, Annette Veree Ford was dismissive of the earlier agricultural associations on the Herbert: “Numerous small Planters’ Clubs existed in various parts of the district, though because of their limited membership they were unable to exert any significant influence on behalf of the growers. Of these groups the only one to survive was the Farmers’ League.”⁵⁶

The record of the HRFA and the local associations’ objects and achievements as recounted in the previous chapter confirm that Ford’s statement is an inaccurate one. The HRFL was formed in recognition of the need for a strong collective voice. When it formed there were, as mentioned in the previous chapter, local small farmer associations (including the HPC) but no planters’ clubs.

The league demonstrated its commitment to formal organisation in a variety of ways. Those early associations met regularly, and business was conducted by elected

⁵² Howell, “The Australian Sugar Industry,” 164.

⁵³ “The Australian Sugar Producers Association 1907-1982,” in *The Australian Sugar Producers Association Ltd., Annual Report 1982*, 40.

⁵⁴ Cane Farmers on Federation, *North Queensland Register*, August 7 1899, 46.

⁵⁵ Jones, *Hurricane Lamps and Blue Umbrellas*, 263.

⁵⁶ Ford, “Operations of the Queensland Cane Growers’ Association,” 9.

committees consisting of president, vice president(s), honorary secretary and a treasurer with the secretary usually granted an honorarium.⁵⁷ After the HRFL came into existence, a delegate was nominated to represent each local branch at HRFL meetings while other members were authorised to be delegates on a cane beetle fund. Membership fees were variable. Those associations were active and the opportunities they provided for meeting and sharing valued.

Branch meetings were well attended and branches conducted business both independently and in cooperation with the HRFL. At a meeting in June 1904 the Stone River branch is recorded as having had 19 farmers in attendance even though there was little business of importance tabled.⁵⁸ A petition presented to federal government representatives at a meeting held in Ingham in 1905 by the shire chairman, R.G. Johnson was made on behalf of 32 members of the Stone River Farmers' Association, 30 of the HPC, 16 of the Fairford Farmers' Association, 26 of the Macknade Farmers' Association, 13 of the Victoria Farmers' Association, and 16 of the Ripple Creek Farmers' Association, a total of 133 members. In 1905 there were around 150 white sugar farmers in the Herbert River Valley.⁵⁹ New local associations were still being formed in the first decades of the twentieth century. Even after the branches affiliated with the HRFL, each could, and did, field representatives in their own right to attend conferences, conduct business with mill management and identify and address distinct local concerns. They also wrote letters on their own account to other associations, even those in other sugar growing areas, to members of parliament, the Queensland Premier and the Prime Minister. The HPC and the Macknade Farmers' Association memberships included some of those members who had been the founders of the HRFA, or their descendants, and so they were well versed in lobbying and petitioning.

Though affiliates of the HRFL, each of the nine branch associations was protective of its own interests. The 1911 record of evidence to the royal sugar commission gave ample evidence; for instance, of the Macknade Farmers' Association's protracted and frustrating verbal and written communications with CSR over cane payment. While the means used

⁵⁷ The formality of those meetings is referred to, albeit tongue in cheek, by local balladist and small farmer Dan Sheahan in his poem "The Farmers' Meeting in Ye Olden Times". See Appendix 10.

⁵⁸ R. L. Shepherd "The Herbert River Story," *Local Historical Anthology Collection*, Hinchinbrook Shire Library book 1 vol. 3 Collection Code: 900003:B, Hinchinbrook Shire Library, Ingham.

⁵⁹ "Visit to Halifax," *Queenslander*, June 10, 1905, 23; "Queensland Letter," *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, August 8, 1906, 327.

by millers to arrive at payment for farmers' cane were confusing and varied, the letters reveal farmers' attempts to request clarification and understanding of the systems used, and to determine what payment they got and how the payment was calculated.⁶⁰ It also illustrated that despite their preparedness to make branch representation on issues they looked to the HRFL to act on their behalf.⁶¹

This level of complex organisation is ignored by Ford, who contended that the branch structure that came to be an important tier of the QCGA was a "recent happening", identifying the oldest as the Victoria Estate Branch formed in 1929. She ignored the fact that the HRFL presaged that branch structure, and that the many branches she observed covering "every corner of the district" were composed of the very farmers who were members of the earlier local associations that came into existence following the HRFA and then became affiliates of the HRFL.⁶² By 1929 when the district executive branches were forming in the Valley, they were reinventing the HRFL branches, the oldest of which had been formally meeting for over 40 years.

Between 1897 and 1933 the HRFL was the principal farmers' body. The activities it engaged in during that period can be grouped into three categories. Firstly, there was local farmers business: conducting large district meetings, negotiating with CSR on cane price and supervising labour arrangements. Secondly, there was its political and social community role which involved petitioning state or federal government representatives on both industry and wider community needs. Lastly, it was a provider of rural extension, researching agricultural opportunities and innovations, and remedies for cane pests and disease.

The HRFL was at the frontline and was innovative and proactive. For example, in 1903 it facilitated the establishment of a substation of the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations (BSES) on Anderssen's farm in Halifax.⁶³ It was responsible for the formation of the Australian Agricultural Cooperative Insurance Company for the purpose of accident

⁶⁰ Griggs, *Global Industry, Local Innovation*, 697.

⁶¹ Queensland Government, "Minutes of Evidence: Australian Royal Commission on the Sugar industry, 1911," 931-36.

⁶² Ford, "Operations of the Queensland Cane Growers' Association," 17.

⁶³ Walter Maxwell, "Annual Report of the Bureau of Experiment Stations," presented to Queensland Parliament, 1902, 6; 1903, 14-16. The BSES was created in 1900 and was under the control of the Queensland Minister of Agriculture and Stock. Walter Maxwell was its first director.

insurance.⁶⁴ Registered in 1911 in Brisbane with a capital of £50 000, its shareholders were all sugar growers.⁶⁵ The HRFL broke the waterfront strike of 1925 that threatened to jeopardise the loading of raw sugar onto the ships by arranging for a steamer to go to Lucinda to load the stockpiled sugar.⁶⁶ In the mid-1920s it negotiated with the post master general's department to introduce telephone extensions to outlying areas.⁶⁷ These were hardly the actions of the ineffectual associations as Ford and Shogren suggested.

The 1920s were heady days for the HRFL and its activities mirrored both the prosperous times the sugar industry was enjoying and the growing dynamism of the sugar townships. The Primary Producers' Organisation Act provided for any association or body of not fewer than 15 primary producers residing in a district to register as a Local Producers' Association.⁶⁸ There is no explicit evidence that the HRFL planned to register as the representative Primary Producers' Association. Nevertheless, on August 21, 1923, it became incorporated as the Herbert River Farmers' League Ltd. in order to give it "wider scope."⁶⁹ This suggests that it may have considered that as an incorporated body, it would have a legitimate claim to register as the representative body. After all, many of the functions which the HRFL performed already were those set down by the act to be performed by a district executive. The multiplicity of those functions, and the HRFL's growing status as a farmers' representative body meant that in 1922 it advertised for the services of an organising secretary at the annual salary of £400.⁷⁰

The league's new memorandum of association of 1924 was remarkably similar in intent and tone to the HRFA's 1885 rules and objects. Where the 1885 objects read "To join with similar associations in protecting the sugar interests against any possible damage resulting through fraud, conspiracy, mis-representation, or political persecution of any kind", the 1924 objects read: "(c) To promote or oppose legislation and other measures affecting agriculture" and "(m) To co-operate or affiliate with any other organization or

⁶⁴ "New Insurance Company," *Queensland Times*, February 13, 1911, 5; "Herbert River Notes," *Northern Miner*, April 7, 1913, 7.

⁶⁵ "New Insurance Company," *Queensland Times*, February 13, 1911, 5; "Herbert River Notes," *Northern Miner*, April 7, 1913, 7.

⁶⁶ "Rotary Dispute," *Telegraph*, October 16, 1925, 5.

⁶⁷ Vidonja Balanzategui, *The Herbert River Story*, 188.

⁶⁸ E.G. Theodore and W.M. Gillies, *Queensland Producers' Association Scheme for the Organisation of the Agricultural Industry of Queensland: Presented for the Consideration of the Farmers of Queensland*, (Brisbane: A.J. Cumming, 1922), 19-20.

⁶⁹ "Herbert River Notes," *Northern Miner*, May 24, 1924, 7.

⁷⁰ "Herbert River Farmers' League," *Cairns Post*, March 13, 1922, 1.

person for the attainment of any of the objects of the Company.”⁷¹ Like the 1885 document which declared that it would “... advance the agricultural interests of the Herbert River districts,” the 1924 document similarly gave the HRFL the responsibility “To promote and protect agricultural interests in the Herbert River District...”⁷²

Following incorporation in 1923, the HRFL began trading as a cooperative.⁷³ It also acted as a fertiliser agency. In 1925 the league tendered for a builder to construct the HRFL building on Lannercost Street, in the central business district of Ingham.⁷⁴ The foundation stone was laid by the Governor of Queensland and consequently a two-storey reinforced concrete building was opened for business in 1926.⁷⁵

Image 42: Farmers’ league building opened 1926. (Source: Hinchinbrook Shire Council Library Photographic Collection)



Officiating at the opening ceremony was Dr. Nott, federal member for the Herbert and the post-master general, W.G. Gibson. Clearly Nott did not have a premonition of what the imminent creation of a district executive of the QCGA would mean for the HRFL

⁷¹ “Northern Mail News,” *Capricornian*, May 9, 1885, 16; “Memorandum of Association of The Herbert River Farmers’ League Limited.”, 1924.

⁷² “Northern Mail News,” *Capricornian*, May 9, 1885, 16, with objects and rules of the Herbert River Farmers’ Association; “Memorandum of Association of The Herbert River Farmers’ League Limited.”, 1924.

⁷³ “History of the Herbert River Farmers’ League,” typescript, Herbert River Farmers’ Leagues files, Ingham.

⁷⁴ “Advertising,” *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, July 7, 1925, 2.

⁷⁵ “The Herbert,” *Daily Mail*, October 7, 1925, 5.

when he expressed the hope that “their membership would extend to every farmer in the district.”⁷⁶

The local district executive (later the HRCGA) came into existence in the following year. It was made up of two representatives from each of the mill areas, all of them cane growers in conformity with the legislation. W. M. Tooth, former president of the HRFL and in 1927 vice-president of the district branch of the ASPA became the first Herbert River representative on the QCGC, while HRFL member A.L. Musgrave was elected as the first secretary of district executive, and fellow-HRFL member George Geeson as first president in 1926. The steps that brought this district executive into existence are unknown. Ford found that there were no records kept until 1933 and after the district executive became the Herbert River Cane Growers (HRCGA).⁷⁷ What is known is that the district executive not only began to hold meetings in the farmers’ league building but negotiated to rent office space in which to carry out the extensive administrative tasks required of it as a statutory body.

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

The roles of the district executive not only duplicated those of the HRFL but transcended them with the inclusion of all matters pertaining to production and marketing.⁷⁸ In January 1932 a combined monthly meeting of the mill suppliers committees and the district decided to inform the HRFL that the executive now saw itself in the position “to undertake the industrial organisation of the farmers of the district, and the whole of the farmers work necessary and that it intended to proceed with the nomination of a secretary.”⁷⁹ The HRFL was given three days to respond. If it did not agree, a separate secretary would be engaged to carry out the executive’s business. The HRFL was not in a position to reject the proposal; after all, the district executive was authorised by legislation to assume the roles that had been carried out by the league to that date. In February 1932, following negotiations a merger was achieved which created the HRCGA. From that point on the HRFL was no longer directly responsible for carrying

⁷⁶ “Herbert River Notes,” *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, September 2, 1926, 3.

⁷⁷ Ford, “Operations of the Queensland Cane Growers’ Association,” 7.

⁷⁸ Queensland Government, “Primary Producers’ Organisation and Marketing Act of 1926.”

⁷⁹ “Ingham Farmers,” *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, January 13, 1932, 5.

out farmers' business, though it continued to provide office space and meeting rooms for the "combined" body and shared a secretary.⁸⁰

What smoothed the HRFL's acquiescence to the merger was that there would be equitable league representation on the executive.⁸¹ It continued to be common for farmers to be members of the HRCGA by compulsion, and of the HRFL by choice. Though a prominent member of the HRFL, T.J. McMillan, was elected as the first president of the HRCGA, there is no reason to believe that a "clique" from either the ASPA or the HRFL dominated the Herbert River executive.⁸² Rather, those who had served in local associations were already recognised by their peers as best equipped for positions. In addition, though farmers were keenly interested in their association's work, there was not a great number of farmers prepared to give the time required of an office-holder on a committee.⁸³ Most HRFL committee members were members, or even office-holders of multiple associations.

While at the time the HRCGA's formation was described as "tantamount to an amalgamation with the Herbert River Farmers' League Ltd.", it was really its death knell as a growers' representative body.⁸⁴ The transition would not have been easy. After all, the HRFL had long been recognised as the farmers' executive body. The HRFL stated defiantly that it maintained its "right to hold such meetings as were essential to the protection of its interests, particularly as to its buildings and other properties, and the appointment of delegates to the A.S.P.A", which it referred to henceforth as its "Parent body."⁸⁵ In that capacity, while restricted in taking direct industrial action, the HRFL assumed a watchdog role, "carefully observing the actions and operations of the other organization with a view where necessary, to counteract any actions that we consider were detrimental to the Industry as a whole."⁸⁶

⁸⁰ "Ingham Notes," *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, January 29, 1932, 3; "Ingham Notes," *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, January 15, 1932, 9; "Ingham Notes," *Northern Miner*, May 6, 1933, 7.

⁸¹ "Amalgamation: Herbert River Farmers' Organisations," *Cairns Post*, August 31, 1931, 5.

⁸² "Cane Growers' Council," *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, February 3, 1926, 9; "Cane Growers' Conference," *Daily Mercury*, March 24, 1927, 3; "History of the Herbert River Farmers' League," typescript, Herbert River Farmers' Leagues files, Ingham; "Organisations Combine," *Telegraph*, February 17, 1932, 3.

⁸³ Ford, "Operations of the Queensland Cane Growers' Association," 12.

⁸⁴ "Herbert River Canegrowers' Association. Annual General Meeting," *Herbert River Express*, May 4, 1933, 3.

⁸⁵ "Ingham Farmers," *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, January 13, 1932, 5; Chairman's Report, The Herbert River Farmer's League, June 22, 1936.

⁸⁶ Chairman's Report, The Herbert River Farmer's League Ltd., June 26, 1936.

The HRFL continued to be invited by the mills, chamber of commerce, HRCGA and other community groups to be included in both political discussions and social events and there were many roles the HRFL did not immediately relinquish. Though the HRCGA deferred to the HRFL in some matters, the HRFL executive continued to be unhappy with the arrangement, feeling that its role as an industrial organisation had been restricted, while the HRCGA had not adhered to the principles of the amalgamation.⁸⁷ Moreover, it thought that some members of the HRCGA were trying to induce farmers to withdraw their levies from the ASPA.⁸⁸ Maintaining ASPA membership numbers on the Herbert was important because it guaranteed the HRFL's continued role as a farmers' representative body.

Ford commented that in the years 1927 to 1939 the HRCGA went about consolidating its position.⁸⁹ That observation is provocative. Membership was compulsory so who did the HRCGA see as needing to shore its position against? The answer is the HRFL, which had, as the executive body, been representing the Valley's farmers for 40 years. The community, the chamber of commerce, the shire council and CSR still deferred to the HRFL as if it were the executive body of the Herbert River farmers. The HRCGA was also an affiliate of the ASPA so those farmers who had voluntarily pledged membership to the HRFL would have seen the creation of another representative organisation as confusing and divisive and representing a conflict of allegiances. Therefore, despite compulsory membership, given that it was a new organisation, prone to the possible resentment and confusion of HRFL members and farmers' inertia when things were going well, it is understandable that the HRCGA saw it necessary to ensure that farmers were apprised of the services and benefits offered by membership.

The final break with a pretense of unity came about when the HRCGA decided that it was no longer appropriate to use another organisation's premises, and that its "status and dignity" warranted its own building.⁹⁰ The HRCGA obtained a perpetual lease of an allotment on the opposite side of Lannercost Street, defiantly facing the HRFL building. The new farmers' building was occupied in September. From then on, the HRFL building

⁸⁷ Chairman's Report, The Herbert River Farmer's League Ltd., June 1, 1934.

⁸⁸ Chairman's Report, The Herbert River Farmer's League Ltd., June 26, 1936.

⁸⁹ Ford, "Operations of the Queensland Cane Growers' Association," 41.

⁹⁰ Chairman's Report, "Herbert River Cane Growers' Association Annual Reports 1933-1952," March 31, 1935, 2.

served as the district office of the ASPA. A room was reserved to be used as a boardroom for meetings of the HRFL, while the rest of the building was rented out to various tenants. With the reduction of its responsibilities and income, the HRFL became preoccupied with the maintenance and improvement of the building while keeping full rental occupancy.

Image 43: Farmers' building opened in 1934. (Source: State Library of Queensland. Image number: 96364)



Despite the vain hope of again being “an active and useful body, as it was once in History,” with amalgamation, the representative role of the HRFL was slowly eroded until, with declining membership and subscriptions, and no longer being the principal representative body, the representative role was reduced to that of a watchdog for the ASPA.⁹¹ In that role it still felt it played some part in supporting agriculture in the district and provided a service to growers.⁹² This was until 1987 when the ASPA disbanded, its roles nominally assumed by a new organisation—the voluntary Australian Cane Farmers’

⁹¹ Chairman’s Report, The Herbert River Farmers’ League, June 1, 1934.

⁹² President’s Report, The Herbert River Farmers’ League, December 20, 1973

Association (ACFA) and the Australian Sugar Manufacturers' Council (ASMC), a body which would represent all raw sugar milling interests.⁹³

In 1933 the list of subscribers to the HRFL numbered a total of 203—77 for Macknade and 126 for Victoria, which was just short of half the farmers in the district.⁹⁴ By 1979 the membership had reduced to 10—seven from Victoria, and three from Macknade.⁹⁵ Despite a dramatically diminished membership, the HRFL was determined to secure some sort of relevant role, so it turned its interest to education.⁹⁶ In 1976 the directors decided to embark on a bursary scheme which would assist local youth to attend the Burdekin Agricultural College, and in 1977 the first two students were awarded bursaries. With a change in its responsibilities, the HRFL Pty. Ltd was liquidated in 1977 and it became a no liability company.

In 1988 the bursary scheme was revised using the Scartwater Trust Scholarship Scheme as a model. The new scheme began with the awarding of one scholarship to one local student per annum to attend university.⁹⁷ In altering its recipient eligibility from rural school to university, the HRFL anticipated the need for farming families to consider a future for their children beyond the farm gate, as small family farming (which traditionally relied on the labour of children who left school at year 10) became progressively more unsustainable, economically, practicably and socially.

Today the HRFL Incorporated is managed by a board of directors (committee), which is elected annually at an annual general meeting. The league only meets on average twice each year. Being an active farmer is no longer a requirement for membership of the league. Membership is open to any resident of the shire of Hinchinbrook or Cardwell at the discretion of the directors.⁹⁸ On the death or retirement of a member the next of kin

⁹³ Also disbanded were the Co-operative Sugar Millers Association Limited and Proprietary Sugar Millers Association. Correspondence from ASPA to 'Dear Delegate,' ASPA Rationalisation Explanatory Memorandum, November 16, 1987. Personal archives, Bianka Vidonja Balanzategui, Ingham.

⁹⁴ List of Subscribers to the Herbert River F. League (Macknade) and (Victoria Mill), for the year 1933-1934. No extant list of subscribers before these. And Herbert River District: dissection of gross acres assigned as per Government Gazette dated 10th April 1930, 12. Pearson Family Archives, Cordelia.

⁹⁵ Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, The Herbert River Farmers' League, December 7, 1979.

⁹⁶ Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, The Herbert River Farmers' League, 1987.

⁹⁷ President's Report, The Herbert River Farmers' League, 1987.

⁹⁸ On June 25, 2010 the HRFL Company was deregistered and a month later the league became an incorporated body with a name change to the Hinchinbrook Student Association. Within months however, it was resolved that the name would be changed once again to the Herbert River Farmers' League Inc. Pers. Comm.: John A. Devietti, Secretary of the Herbert River Farmers' League Inc; "Five

is invited to membership. In the twenty-first century the continued financial viability of the league looked in doubt. Finally, in 2010, a far from unanimous decision was reached to sell the building. With the building sold, the money was invested and the scheme secured for the future.⁹⁹ While local children pursue tertiary education, the premise on which the league operates will continue to be a valid one. Threats to its existence remain, however. These are whether it remains financially viable and whether it maintains its membership. At present the membership persists because of sentiment and commitment to the purpose.

It is a conundrum why the HRFL, and the HPC too, continued to function into the twenty-first century. Once its mediating role became superfluous, with the closure of the HRCGA office in Halifax and the end of manual cane cutting, the HPC, like the HRFA, found other ways to make an ongoing contribution to the Lower Herbert community. The HPC did not fold until July 2008 with a final disbursement of its remaining funds to the Halifax ambulance.¹⁰⁰

In a practical sense, the HRFL's continued existence could be put down to its investments and its organisational structure. The dissolution of the company and its assets would be complicated. Perhaps though, the single most significant reason for the longevity of the HRFL has been emotional investment by consecutive generations and the decision taken in 1976 to engage in a purpose that gave back to a farming community.

AGRICULTURAL REPRESENTATION TODAY

Ian Drummond and Terry Marsden examined the unsustainability of the sugar industries of Barbados and Australia in their 1999 work *The Condition of Sustainability*. There they asserted that the unsustainability of both those industries stemmed in part from prevailing socio-economic constructs. In the case of Barbados, it was the economically and socially dominant landowning plantocracy that had retained control of the sugar industry. In Australia, though hardly comprising a social elite, the family farming system, due to

Receive Study Bursaries," *Herbert River Express*, September 2, 2010, 6; Articles of Association of The Herbert River Farmers' League, Limited, Section 1. Membership, Article 2.

⁹⁹ With an ageing building requiring extensive repairs and modifications, a Government Land Tax imposed in 2001 and a failure to rent out the upper floor of the building the scheme looked in jeopardy. Pers. Comm.: John A. Devietti, Secretary of the Herbert River Farmers' League Inc., and David Pearson, former member of the Herbert River Farmers' League Inc; Chairman's Annual Report for 2003.

¹⁰⁰ "Planters Support Ambos," *Herbert River Express*, October 28, 2008, 2.

strategic government legislation and subsidisation, has been the dominant construct.¹⁰¹ While in Barbados it was the plantation system under threat, in Australia it was the small farming system. Drummond and Marsden commented that: “development in the Australian sugar industry seems to be going full circle. Development has progressed through one increasingly unsustainable formation, the nineteenth century plantation system, to another based on family farms, only to return to something very much like the original within the space of less than 100 years.”¹⁰²

Notwithstanding the inherent dysfunctionalities that have caused the demise of both the Barbadian and the Hawai’ian sugar industries, scholars of plantation theory have all attested to the plantation’s tenacity. The nature of its tenacity is observable in both the Louisiana and Brazil sugar cane industries, and ironically it could be argued even on the Herbert today.

In Queensland the current dominant millers are Mitr Phol (Thailand), Cereals, Oils and Foodstuffs Corporation or COFCO (China), Finasucre (Belgium), and Wilmar (Singapore). North of the Herbert the former farmer cooperative mills are now owned by multi-national companies. Wilmar operates eight of the 24 Australian sugar mills; all of those are located in Queensland and include the former CSR’s Victoria and Macknade Mills. Wilmar is an Asian agribusiness group, by its own definition “ranked amongst the largest listed companies by market capitalization on the Singapore Exchange.”¹⁰³ As in the speculative period of the 1870s and 1880s, farming land is being bought up for market capitalisation by a company in a metropolitan centre overseas far from the cane fields of north Queensland. Just as the plantations of old did, Wilmar is combining both the cultivation and the processing processes (and even now the marketing) of what Paul S. Taylor, Bernard O. Binns and Courtenay have all identified as markers of the modern plantation—the bringing of the factors of production together under central management.¹⁰⁴ Wilmar’s enterprise would appear to be a modern manifestation of the tenacious plantation, though, in contrast to the plantations of nineteenth-century Queensland, and even plantations in other parts of the world today, Wilmar’s plantations

¹⁰¹ Drummond and Marsden, *The Condition of Sustainability*, 195.

¹⁰² Drummond and Marsden, *The Condition of Sustainability*, 197.

¹⁰³ Wilmar, accessed May 23 2018, <http://www.wilmar-international.com/>.

¹⁰⁴ Taylor, “Plantation Agriculture in the United States,” 152; Bernard O. Binns, *Plantations and Other Centrally Operated Estates* (Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 1955), 1-2; Courtenay, “An Approach to the Definition of the Plantation,” 9.

on the Herbert do not employ a large unskilled labour force and all cultivation processes are highly mechanised.

For farmers on the Herbert, negotiations now have to be conducted with representatives of a multi-national company whose headquarters are located far away. This company is socially, emotionally, historically, even culturally as different as possible from the family farmer on the Herbert, whose ownership of his farm has a hereditary lineage dating, for some, to the very first cohort who negotiated with CSR in 1882.

Image 44: Burdekin farmers protest (Source: AgAlert, accessed February 19, 2019, agalert.com.au)



Hand-in-hand with this development has been the contraction of sugar farming by small sugar cane farmers with the surviving farmers growing larger by buying up the land of exiting farmers. These forces and events threaten to make the small family cane farm “an endangered species.”¹⁰⁵ The reduction in the number of small farmers is consistent with a worldwide trend which has been identified as an international farm crisis. The imposition of neo-liberal economic principles and changes in the way that agriculture is regulated locally and globally, effectively withdrew the scaffolding supporting family-farming.¹⁰⁶ A similar rationalisation occurred in the milling sector.

¹⁰⁵ Drummond and Marsden, *The Condition of Sustainability*, 191.

¹⁰⁶ Guy M. Robinson, “Deregulation and Restructuring of the Australian Cane Sugar Industry,” *Australian Geographical Studies*, 33 (1995): 222-23, accessed May 4, 2108, doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8470.1995.tb00695.x.

In the 1980s high interest rates, rising farm costs and extreme price variability in the world sugar market put some sugar farmers under such financial stress that there were bank foreclosures. Graeme Connors' song written at the time, "Let the Canefields Burn," captured the feeling of desperation that was prevalent in that decade.¹⁰⁷ Compounding those woes, the government commenced dismantling the complex regulatory system that had underpinned the Australian sugar industry and the small farming system since 1915. The deregulation of the sugar industry was a ground-shifting transformation driven by neo-liberal imperatives of capitalist accumulation—that is, capital, rather than the state determining regional development, facilitating global accumulation in all sectors, including the agricultural sector.¹⁰⁸ Moore described deregulation as the sugar industry being "left to float alone."¹⁰⁹ This potently encapsulated how sugar farmers felt about deregulation and their confusion on how the industry would operate post deregulation.

Clive Hildebrand noted that "It is an interesting paradox that CANEGROWERS organization, which is working hard to assist its members, including its many small farmers, is perceived by many small farmers in the regions as a corporate juggernaut."¹¹⁰ He wrote this as deregulation was unfolding and when CANEGROWERS was working out how to negotiate the shifting sands not only for its farmer members but for itself as an organisation. He attributed this farmer perception to CANEGROWERS being an effective organisation, one that is "strongly managed, trades hard and follows its charter effectively."¹¹¹ He speculated that there were a couple of dynamics at play: farmers had unrealistic expectations of their associations, while CANEGROWERS, in arguing the farmers' case with confrontational language (a stance which, incidentally, seemed to have been met with the approval of the farmers), was actually rendering the arguments ineffective. He suggested that the organisation should aim for productive engagement. The terrain of productive engagement was made rocky not only by the traditional animosity between the ACFA and CANEGROWERS, but also by the historically fraught relationship between farmers and millers. Submissions from regional CANEGROWERS associations on single-desk marketing and grower choice in 2015 revealed a persistent

¹⁰⁷ Appendix 11.

¹⁰⁸ Robinson, "Deregulation and Restructuring," 213-14.

¹⁰⁹ Clive Moore, "Reviews: Peter D. Griggs 'Global Industry, Local Innovation: The History of Cane Sugar Production in Australia, 1820-1995'," *World Sugar History Newsletter* 42 (2012), accessed August 25, 2016, <http://projects.chass.utoronto.ca/wshn/number42.html>.

¹¹⁰ Hildebrand, "Report," 27.

¹¹¹ Hildebrand, "Report," 27.

and deep distrust of the millers, particularly of Wilmar and most powerfully voiced by CANEGROWERS, Herbert.¹¹²

Genuine choice and competition were welcomed by farmers, but what was feared was monopoly control by miller marketers, the loss of bargaining power, and ultimately the loss of the small-farming system.¹¹³ As deregulation unfolded there were concerns about the delicate balance of power between miller and farmer as the new miller players looked to be trying to claw back some of the market advantage previously held by CSR, while reducing the bargaining power of the farmers. CANEGROWERS Herbert River manager Peter Sheedy made specific reference to that in the CANEGROWERS Herbert River's "Submission to Productivity Commission's Draft Report on Regulation of Agriculture in Australia", referring to an "exploitation of growers by millowners" that dated back to the earliest days of an Australian sugar industry.¹¹⁴

Correspondence of CANEGROWERS Herbert River in 2015 indicated that that organisation saw its role to be one of managing change for the economic benefit of sugar growers.¹¹⁵ With deregulation pursued relentlessly by government, the best CANEGROWERS could do on behalf of sugar growers was attempt to direct outcomes to some middle ground. It regarded the removal of some of the legislative restrictions as benefitting growers, particularly those which portended to loosen the monopolistic hold of millers. The heads of agreement signed by the Queensland government, CANEGROWERS and the Australian Sugar Milling Council on March 1, 2004, and the memorandum of understanding of October 13, 2005, were such examples of instances

¹¹² Parliamentary Committees, "Sugar Industry (Real Choice in Marketing) Amendment Bill 2015," *passim*.

¹¹³ Appendix B Summary of Submissions. Sub. 21 Burdekin Districts Cane Growers Ltd. Parliamentary Committees, "Sugar Industry (Real Choice in Marketing) Amendment Bill 2015," Report No. 6, 55th Parliament Agriculture and Environment Committee, September 2015, 37.

¹¹⁴ Peter Sheedy, "Submission to Productivity Commission's Draft Report on Regulation of Agriculture in Australia," CANEGROWERS Herbert River, August 18, 2016, accessed May 17, 2018, https://www.pc.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/207463/subdr269-agriculture.pdf;

¹¹⁵ Email correspondence from Stephen Guazzo and Peter Sheedy to Tania Homan, November 13, 2015. Personal archives, Bianka Vidonja Balanzategui, Ingham; email correspondence from Stephen Guazzo and Peter E. Sheedy to Queensland Productivity Commission, Brisbane, October 9, 2015. Personal archives, Bianka Vidonja Balanzategui, Ingham.

where CANEGROWERS managed contentious change, from a collaborative marketing arrangement to voluntary marketing arrangements, to achieve a palatable outcome.¹¹⁶

When Barbara Pini conducted research on the Herbert in 1999/2000, one interviewee stated that “Being involved with ACFA is seen as if you are sleeping with the enemy.”¹¹⁷ Hildebrand opined that the tension between representative bodies and the different industry sectors was an “artificial ‘battle within’ distracting them from the real ‘battle’ which is one with the ‘competitor without’.”¹¹⁸ The ‘competitor without’ is overseas competitors like Brazil. However, it has been argued that the continued existence of the ACFA meant that the CANEGROWERS was more “effective and responsive.” There were benefits to be had from the consensus of two organisations lobbying for vital diversification opportunities such as ethanol, and the double benefit of having two organisations keeping industry causes alive in the media.¹¹⁹ Disadvantages though, were dual representation and a duplication of services and costs, and an opening for others to use the dual representation as an opportunity to divide and conquer.¹²⁰

A casualty of deregulation was compulsory membership of the primary producers’ body. In 1985, at a juncture when the sugar industry looked as if it was on the point of collapse, a 100 day sugar industry working party under the direction of Russell Savage was charged to investigate the sugar industry and make recommendations for industry restructuring. Its main brief was to outline strategies that might enable the industry “to cope more efficiently and more competitively with changing world market conditions.”¹²¹ One of the recommendations government took away from the working party’s report was to repeal the statutory status of the various sugar industry bodies including CANEGROWERS.

A farmer, whatever his farm size, had equal voting rights regardless of his crop tonnage in CANEGROWERS. Potentially, this guaranteed a policy and financial bias towards

¹¹⁶ Sheedy, “Submission”; J.M. Craigie, “Regulation and Reform of the Queensland Sugar Industry,” *Current and Future Arrangements for the Marketing of Australian Sugar Submission 10 – Attachment 3*, 47-48, accessed May 1, 2018, sub10_WSL_attch3 (4).pdf.

¹¹⁷ Pini, “From the Paddock to the Boardroom,” 320.

¹¹⁸ Hildebrand, “Report,” 14, 25.

¹¹⁹ Warren Martin, “Do Growers Need Dual Representation?” *Australian Canegrower*, February 26, 1990, 18-19.

¹²⁰ Correspondence from Warren Martin, Chairman ACFA to ‘Dear Fellow Cane Growers,’ March 22, 2000. Personal archives, Bianka Vidonja Balanzategui, Ingham.

¹²¹ “Sugar Industry Working Party Report,” (Government Printer, August 1985), vii.

small farmers.¹²² Some therefore argued that the unity of a statutory body was “fundamental to the survival of the family farm.”¹²³ Hildebrand, in recommending that the statutory status of CANEGROWERS be dismantled, argued that first and foremost loyalty should be to the mill area, not to some state or sectional organisation. Sheedy expressed particular criticism of Hildebrand’s reference to the need to develop a stronger mill region focus. He argued that “the Herbert River area had had a regional focus for years.”¹²⁴ Certainly, as this thesis attests, the Herbert River has had strong and consistent representation for regional interests dating from 1882 and the battle that CANEGROWERS Herbert River fought vigorously with Wilmar over grower choice in 2017 continued to show that strong regional focus and commitment of the Herbert representative body.¹²⁵

The Primary Industry Bodies Reform Act 1999 was the blueprint for the dismantlement of the provisions of the Primary Producers’ Organisation and Marketing Act 1926 which had brought the CANEGROWERS into existence.¹²⁶ Consequently, the statutory compulsory levying arrangements were repealed. The QCGO would no longer be funded by a statutory levy on sugar production. A poll was conducted by each replacement organisation in order for members to decide whether the constitution of that organisation should include a membership exemption provision for all producer members.¹²⁷ The Concerned Farmers Alliance contended that the local Herbert farmers should decide what happened to the assets of the district CANEGROWERS and further decide if it remained affiliated with the state CANEGROWERS or break away to form an autonomous locally owned and controlled company. The alliance preferred the latter option and circulated a questionnaire to farmers for them to express their opinions.¹²⁸ This alliance reflected the mixed sentiments the farmer body felt for its representative association. Despite the

¹²² Hildebrand, “Report,” 18.

¹²³ Martin, “Do Growers Need Dual Representation?”

¹²⁴ “Grower Fury: Hildebrand Report a ‘Recipe For Disaster’,” *Herbert River Express*, February 26, 2005; Hildebrand, “Report,” 46.

¹²⁵ See grower choice arrangements at: QSL, “QSL Fact Sheet: QSL Payment for Wilmar Growers,” June 1, 2017, accessed May 2, 2018, http://www.qsl.com.au/sites/default/files/PaymentsFactSheet-FINAL_1.pdf; Wilmar, “Our Marketing Offer to You: Wilmar Sugar Pricing and Marketing Guidebook,” September 2017, accessed May 2, 2018, <https://www.wilmarsugarmills.com.au/news/237-2018-pricing-and-marketing-guidebook/file>.

¹²⁶ Queensland Government, “Primary Industry Bodies Reform Act 1999.”

¹²⁷ Queensland Government, “Primary Industry Bodies Reform Act 1999.”

¹²⁸ “Concerned Farmers Alliance (Herbert River)”. Information sheets and a questionnaire distributed to farmers on the Herbert in 2003.

repealing of statutory status and the ensuing internecine feuding, CANEGROWERS retained its official position as peak industry body. On the Herbert, the farmers overwhelmingly voted for the CANEGROWERS Herbert River to be their representative body.¹²⁹ CANEGROWERS today claims a 75 percent membership rate and levies, just as before, based on the tons of cane they grow, with small and large growers enjoying equal voting rights. The levy varies between growing districts because each district charges different amounts for their services.

In 2012 CANEGROWERS encouraged its members to complete a poll being conducted by the Australian Electoral Commission in order to gauge the support for the formation of a replacement of the BSES, with a new company, Sugar Research Australia (SRA).¹³⁰ The ACFA, in contrast to CANEGROWERS, encouraged growers to vote no to the poll, suggesting that other avenues be explored first.¹³¹ With the poll results receiving a decisive affirmative in 2013, the BSES, the Sugar Research and Development Corporation (SRDC), and the research elements of Sugar Research Limited (SRL) were combined into one research and development organisation, SRA, a statutory body, with compulsory membership levies to be shared equally by millers and farmers.¹³² The commonwealth government matches the Queensland government's funding and grants to the SRA.¹³³

CONCLUSION

The landscape and tensions prevailing in the twenty-first century on the Herbert in relation to agricultural representation are surprisingly similar to those that prevailed in 1882. Like the HRFA, CANEGROWERS Herbert River is the agency that negotiates with the miller on the farmers' behalf. As in 1882, the miller that the CANEGROWERS has to liaise with is a large corporate body with absentee ownership and an element of vertical integration. With deregulation, membership of CANEGROWERS Herbert River

¹²⁹ "Group installed," *Herbert River Express*, April 21, 2001, 2.

¹³⁰ "Voting Papers for Sugar Research Hit Mailboxes," and "Research Reform Update: Key Facts Behind the Industry Voting to Form Sugar Research Australia," *Australian Canegrower*, August 20, 2012, 4 and 6.

¹³¹ Carolyn Archers, "Views Divided on Sugar Poll," *Sunshine Coast Daily*, August 6, 2012, accessed May 22, 2018, <https://www.sunshinecoastdaily.com.au/news/sugar-vote/1488665/>.

¹³² Commonwealth Government, "Sugar Research and Development Services Act 2013."

¹³³ "Landmark day as Sugar Research Australia comes into being," *Daily Mercury*, July 1, 2013, accessed May 22, 2018, <https://www.dailymercury.com.au/news/landmark-day-sugar-research-australia-comes-being/1928216/>; "About Sugar Research Australia," *Sugar Research Australia*, accessed May 22, 2018, <https://sugarresearch.com.au/sra-information/about-sugar-research-australia/>.

is not compulsory, just as was the case with the HRFA. Following in the footsteps of the HRFA, and then the HRFL and its cooperation with BSES, CANEGROWERS continues to promote, support and cooperate with SRA and the HSPCL in fighting cane pests and disease, developing new cane varieties and improving cultivation techniques. It explores and supports diversification just as the HRFA and the HRFL did.

One difference is that farmers of ethnicities other than European have been welcomed as members, and are even the face of CANEGROWERS. However, similar to the executive of the HRFA and the early HRFL, there is a persistently gendered bias towards male representation in the election of the executive of the CANEGROWERS Herbert River. No woman has yet been elected on the local committee (though several have tried).¹³⁴

Throughout the years of restructuring, report after report indicated the need for an overarching body that would link all the stakeholders of the industry: growers, harvesters, millers, extension providers, researchers, and marketing entities. Such a body still does not exist, and millers and growers (as represented by their association CANEGROWERS) stand just as juxtaposed as they did in 1881, when August Anderssen and John Alm went cap in hand to CSR to ask to participate in and derive their fair share of benefits from a sugar industry then dominated by plantation concerns.

The report of the Sugar Industry Oversight Group, in which CANEGROWERS was involved, was 145 pages long. In that report the words ‘complex’ or ‘complexity’ are used eight times, the word ‘challenging’ four times and ‘challenge’ 19 times. The report described every aspect of the sugar industry as ‘complex’ and the finding of solutions to those ‘challenges’ as “an extremely challenging task.”¹³⁵ The excessive use of those words would be amusing if the economic prospects of the sugar industry as described by that group in 2006 did not continue to be so dire in 2019, the small family farming way of life not so under threat, and the milling sector not so oppositional to the values, culture, and traditions embodied in the small family farming ethos.

¹³⁴ “New director makes history,” *Australian Canegrower*, February 17, 2014, 10; Pini, “From the Paddock to the Boardroom,” 303.

¹³⁵ Sugar Industry Oversight Group, “Sugar Industry Oversight Group Strategic Vision,” February 9, 2006, 133, accessed May 19, 2018, www.agriculture.gov.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/ag.../sugar/.../final_sugar_vision.pdf, 6, 92, *passim*.

Drummond and Marsden suggested that in achieving a sustainable sugar industry the agency may very well be the small family sugar cane farm, albeit in a different form.¹³⁶ Hildebrand recommended that “the owner-motivated virtues” of the small family farm should not be lost in the efforts to forge a more sustainable sugar industry.¹³⁷ Meanwhile, 75 percent of farmers still look to CANEGROWERS as the representative association which they trust to navigate the way to a more sustainable industry farmed by family farmers.

Image 45: CANEGROWERS still leads the Australian sugar industry. In Ingham, the CANEGROWERS building, the only ‘skyscraper’ in Ingham, still dominates the skyline. CANEGROWERS building, Lannercost Street, Ingham, opened December 12, 1970 (Source: Postcard image <http://www.queenslandplaces.com.au/ingham>)



In 1882 six farmers gathered to form the HRFA. Undaunted by the paucity of their numbers, that they did not have a stick of cane in the ground, that they were up against a gargantuan company, and that they had taken up land in a tropical land whose climate, wildlife and hardships were prophesied to be the death of them, they were not “content to sit down and do nothing.” Forming an association “on broad lines” they were prepared “to explode the ... belief that the district could only be developed by gangs of black labour and a few white bosses.”¹³⁸ Explode that belief, the ‘clique of insignificant

¹³⁶ Drummond and Marsden, *The Condition of Sustainability*, 197.

¹³⁷ Hildebrand, “Report,” 18.

¹³⁸ Alm, *Early History of the Herbert River District*, 36-37.

cockies' did. Through the agency of their association, the HRFA, they helped to establish a small family farm system of sugar cane growing that has endured for over a century and, despite deregulation, restructuring and all the grim warnings of the unsustainability of that system, that may yet survive.

CONCLUSION

Lining the centre of the little township of Halifax is a stand of eight magnificent mango trees (*Mangifera indica*). Mango trees were planted by pioneers for their fruit and shade. Those in Halifax were planted by the six HRFA founding members—Harald Hoffensetz, August Anderssen, Arthur W. Carr, Niels C. Rosendahl, John Alm and Francis Herron—in an effort to beautify the township. Today, listed on the Queensland Heritage Register because of their significant heritage value they stand as an enduring physical legacy of those men’s investment in their adopted home and the sugar industry of the Herbert River Valley.¹

More enduring than that stand of mango trees, and less recognised, is the contribution that clique of insignificant cockies made to the transformation of the tropical Australian sugar industry by 1914, from the plantation mode of production to one conducted by independent, white farmers on small family farms. Conduct of a sugar cane industry by such growers was a unique phenomenon in the sugar growing world. What was even more significant was that this cohort of six farmers set the transition in train on the Herbert through the agency of an agricultural association. Agricultural associations formed by independent, white, small, sugar cane farmers cannot be found in the representative sugar growing areas examined in this thesis—Brazil, Hawai’i, Louisiana, Barbados or Fiji—before 1914.

This thesis revises the narrative of the beginnings of small sugar cane farming in the tropical north of Australia. It foregrounds the role of small farmer associations in eroding the hegemony of the planters and in providing small farmers with a vehicle through which they could lobby politically, and obtain rural extension in order to be knowledgeable, innovative farmers.

REVISING THE NARRATIVE

There are two narratives underpinning the metamorphosis of the sugar industry from plantation-based to small grower. The first is that of ‘White Australia’: in that narrative the planters and governments are the dominant figures, with the small farmers the inert pawns and benefactors of the planters’ and governments’ visionary munificence, either

¹ Queensland Government, “Queensland Heritage Register: Row of Trees, Macrossan Street Halifax,” 602349, accessed April 25, 2018, <https://environment.ehp.qld.gov.au/heritage-register/detail/?id=602349>.

solving acute labour and economic problems or fulfilling an official plan to people the tropical north with small agriculturalists. That the farmer was white and European was implicit. This first narrative and its sub-narratives—plantation production, indentured labour, and small farming—have received broad academic scrutiny.

This standard narrative emphasises the planters' complicity in trying to preserve indentured labour and their own economic dominance, pushing against a government vision of white yeomanry using local white labour. To the minds of both planters and admittedly many farmers, the attainment of this vision, with the forced removal of indentured labour, risked the ruination of the very industry it was meant to save. Farmers and planters alike promulgated the popular notion that white people could not labour in the tropics without damage to their health, even as farmers on the *Herbert* were proving that a nonsense. They questioned how much the industry was valued and argued that the government was rushing the process along on one hand, while on the other hand pandering to the southern demand for cheap sugar at the producers' expense.

The standard narrative stresses the preoccupation of the Queensland government with the impact of the withdrawal of indentured labour on the sugar industry.² It iterates the fact that the government saw the industry's ongoing viability as a solution to the conundrum of how to "populate a tropical region with white inhabitants, who may find there an existence worthy of white folk."³ Certainly, legislative steps taken consequent to the royal commission on the sugar industry of 1912 were motivated by the dual imperatives of safeguarding the Queensland sugar industry and maintaining a 'White Australia' by ensuring that the Queensland coastline was inhabited with white sugar cane farmers and white labourers. But that was hardly the whole story. The small farmers through their associations were also meanwhile lobbying for the industry's viability and their own stake in it.

The second narrative is that of the small farmers and their founding agricultural associations. It is one that has been given little critical scholarly attention. As the tropical north was opened to sugar cane cultivation and the land selected by not only speculative planters, but small selectors, the latter became an increasingly numerous and far from inert group, whose voices can be clearly heard in both the labour dialogue, and in

² "Sugar Labour," *Telegraph*, January 25, 1907, 7.

³ Queensland Government, "Central Sugar Mills Commission. Report of the Royal Commission. Minutes of evidence taken before the Commission," 147.

discussions on the direction the organisation of the industry was to take. Not only can their individual voices be heard, but also their collective voices as communicated through their agricultural associations.

This narrative shows that it was not only to the imperatives of settlement and economic development of the tropics, and a 'White Australia', that the government was responding, but also to small sugar growers' demands. The Queensland sugar industry transitioned from plantation to small grower not simply as a result of government vision, but also through the agency of small selectors and their agricultural associations. Using their associations, small selectors argued for their right to participate in and derive their fair share of the benefits from a sugar industry then dominated by plantation concerns.

As increasingly numerous and more vocal stakeholders in the sugar industry, the small farmers sought institutional assistance to address their ignorance of tropical crop cultivation. They used their associations to both access rural extension and petition government for the facilities of rural extension, including experimental farms and stations, pest boards, expert advice on cane diseases and pests, access to and development of alternative cane varieties, and favourable arrangements to source, import and develop innovative farm machinery.

Faced with the inevitable withdrawal of Melanesian labour, farmers suggested, researched and organised solutions to a looming labour shortage. Solutions included central mills, alternative forms of labour, inventions and innovative use of machinery, and demands for legislation that favoured the industry allowing small growers to grow cane economically with white labour. There were cautionary voices, both farmer and miller, who warned of the possible consequences of a highly regulated industry. Nevertheless, with federation, the regulation of the sugar industry began in earnest and the plantation mode of production was abandoned in favour of farming by small farmers supplying cane to central mills.⁴

The representatives of the small farmers' local and district associations gathered at conferences and, recognising that unity was power, attempted to form an industrywide association to negotiate for the industry with one voice. It was envisaged that this association would seek solutions to labour issues, issues that became increasingly volatile

⁴ Appendix 11

as white workers entered the industry. White workers—militant and demanding fair pay and conditions—formed unions which farmers and farmer-millers saw the need to counter with an industry association. However, in creating not one but two strong industrywide associations, the age-old fissure dividing small farmers and planters, now millers, was perpetuated.

The role played by small sugar farmer associations in the metamorphoses from planter to small farmer, from local and district representation to industrywide representation, and from loose to complex regulation, is largely omitted from the record. Previously, any scrutiny given to small sugar associations in Australia emphasised their small memberships, their parochial nature, their lack of coordination with one another, their apparent inability to exert effective influence on government, and their impermanence. Viewed in this light, the associations were therefore dismissed as unworthy subjects of deeper study, and largely omitted from the historiography. This is unfortunate because though most ceased to exist in name they nevertheless continued to function as the lower stratum of the QCGA apparatus, or they became pastoral and agricultural societies, or progress associations.

Rather than emphasising them as being parochial and ephemeral this thesis suggests that local and district associations be acknowledged for the intermediary space they occupied between individual endeavour and industrial unity. They gave fledgling farmers access to rural extension, organisational experience and a political voice. They gave them the opportunity to attend conferences, the confidence to propose motions, to sit on committees, and equipped those who were thus inclined for leadership roles in the larger organisations when they formed.

Fredrik Larsen Lund described the Nordic cohort that helped to found the HRFA as “agents of change.”⁵ This thesis validates that agency and suggests that not only has that role been dismissed, but scholars have hitherto failed to recognise the HRFA, and its derivative associations, the HRFL and the HPC, and the sugar industry associative movement as a lens through which industrial history, rural politics, rural extension, technical innovation, social and class dynamics and race and gender relations could be usefully explored.

⁵ Lund, “A Norwegian Waltz,” 92.

This thesis explored cooperative efforts not only from the big process end, that is, of the planter, but from the other end, the small independent sugar cane farmer. What scholarship has been done previously on the agricultural association, whether it has been within an international or local context has been from a top-down perspective. This has meant that the activities of sugar planter associations have been recorded, as have been those of the larger sugar industry associations, the ASPA and QCGA, in Australia. Meanwhile the Australian small sugar farmer associations have not been similarly examined. This is surprising, given that, as this thesis reveals, the small farmer associations were noticeably absent in other sugar industry areas, making those in Australia unique in a global context.

This thesis framed that narrative within a broader context which includes understandings of sugar as plantation agriculture and the historiography of agricultural associations as political lobbying groups and providers of rural extension. Positioned in that context it is possible to appreciate the exceptional space the tropical north Queensland sugar cane industry occupies in sugar industry historiography, not the least because of the pivotal role played by the HRFA.

The HRFA was the cornerstone of the institutional foundations of a unique industry farmed by small family farmers, a mode of production which today is widely argued to be unsustainable. Far from being a clique of insignificant cockies, the HRFA enabled the small farmers to be provocateurs and agents of change, propelling the industry into global prominence. The HRFA, like agricultural associations the world over, encouraged farmers to be knowledgeable and progressive agriculturalists, unified in order to realise common goals. The HRFA witnessed and contributed to the transformation of the tropical north Queensland sugar industry via the cultivation of sugar cane by independent, white, small growers on family farms, the successful commercial milling of sugar cane supplied by small growers to a central mill, and the harvesting of cane by unionised white labour. Today, as the imperatives of a sustainable sugar industry threaten the viability of the small family farmer, and farming families are forced to consider a future for their children far beyond the farm gate, its successor, the HRFL, continues on the sidelines. Actively advocating for rural youth and education in the Herbert River Valley, the HRFL, like the HRFA before it, upholds its role as an agent of change.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1:

A NOTE ON THE WORD *WHITE*

Whiteness is significant to this thesis because it was important at the time: interpretations of race were central to government policy, including the White Australia Policy, and a source of concern when it came to who worked in the sugar industry. The word *white* is used in the context of the time in tropical north Queensland. It meant a person of Anglo-Celtic origins, though with the arrival of other European immigrants, particularly northern Italians, the meaning of white evolved to signify all people of European descent. This writer acknowledges the historical reality that the farming of sugar by small, white farmers in tropical north Queensland in the period 1872-1914 was an industrial exception in the sugar growing world. This writer also makes no apology for portraying it as a triumph, given that the independent, landowning small farmers of the Herbert River Valley were waging what was essentially a class battle with the planters, one that was not won universally by small farmers elsewhere, whether they were indigenous, former slave or indentured workers, or white. There is no intent by this writer to indicate that the independent, white farmer is superior because of his *whiteness*. This writer makes full acknowledgement that amongst the first small sugar farmers in the Herbert River Valley were former indentured labourers and Chinese immigrants, few of whom continued farming after federation.

Appendix 2:



Assocⁿ
 Macknade Dungenen
 29 March 1889
 Q'ld Planters Assocⁿ

Sir,
 A copy of Sugar Commission's report
 is available
 A conference of sugar planters
 from all the principal districts in
 the Colony has been convened to be
 held in Townsville on the 29th April
 at which there will be representatives
 from Bundaberg, Mackay, Burdekin,
 Herbert River, Mossman, Johnstone R.
 and Cairns.
 I have been requested to ask if,
 provided the report of the Sugar
 Commission is in your hands or
 you would allow a copy to
 be forwarded for the information
 of the meeting.
 I have the honor to be
 Sir
 Your obedient servant
 Frank Meane
 Hon Sec, Queensland Planters Assocⁿ

To The Honble
 The Colonial Secretary



In the presence of
 attended by
 10.5.89
 G. Meane
 10-16-89/1343

Queensland Planters' Association. Source: SRS 5253, 1889 Letter Number 3073, Queensland State Archives, Brisbane.

Appendix 3:

THE SUGAR PLANTER'S DREAM

The sun had set behind the hills of Queensland's tropic shore,
When on the Herbert River late, a sugar planter saw,
While 'neath a broad verandah's shade, reclining at his ease,
Rich fields of sugar cane that waved with every passing breeze,
Like some vast lake of emerald, begirt with jungle trees.

And to his vision far away the prospect wide extends,
Fresh fields of cane gleaned everywhere throughout the river bends,
Where planters' homes and mills adorned the variegated scene.
While — as to show how wide and great the difference between —
The workers' dens — for white and black — were wretched, squalid, mean!

And then within this planters' mind glad thoughts arose to view,
Of all the Griffith Government for planters wished to do:
How labour of the cheapest kind — wild, savage and untaught,
Decoyed by guile and trickery, to Queensland would be brought,
And work submissive to enrich their masters — as they ought!

Which made this planter rub his hands, and think with inward glee,
"I hope this proper state of things in Queensland soon will be,
For then we sugar planters will be free from much annoys,
And from a plentiful supply can choose who each employs,
And starve into dejection all — free Polynesian boys!"

...

And then he dreamt the colonies upon the Austral coast,
Each striving which should benefit the sugar-planters most.
Through bold "Sir Samuel Griffith's" aid, and championship so stout,
By legislative force had brought a state of things about,
Enacting foreign sugar should be rightly kept out.

This caused "the sugar industry" to move with giant speed,
But led all minor industries to envy it indeed,
Because they did not prosper in a stile proportionate,
Nor realise conditions for development so great,
Through being — *fed with human flesh* — *worked at the cheapest rate.*

...

Meanwhile palatial homes arose upon the Austral coast,
Whose wealth in sugar lands became the sugar planter's boast.
Though many of them who had gained a fortune in the trade;
As though of fame disaster they were inwardly afraid,
Cleared out — to spend in distant lands the money they had made!

Select verses of "The Sugar Planter's Dream." Source: *Worker*, April 23, 1892, 3.

Appendix 4:

VOL. 5 657 Pgs. 157
1887157
QUEENSLAND. (Form No. 7.)

No. 67/64
County Cardwell
Parish Cardelia
Area 119 Acres

A. DEED OF GRANT FOR A HOMESTEAD SELECTION.

WITNESSETH, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Queen, Defender of the Faith, and so forth:—

US HERE to whom these Presents shall come, Granting:

WHEREAS, in conformity with the Laws and Regulations in force for the Alienation of Crown Lands in Our Colony of Queensland, Harold Ingvard Hoffensetz of _____ of _____ on the thirty-first day of October 1885, made application to select the Land hereinafter described as a Homestead, and his application was duly approved and confirmed; And whereas the said Harold Ingvard Hoffensetz has since become entitled to a Deed of Grant in Fee-simple of the said Land: **Her Majesty**, That in consideration of the premises, And in further consideration of the Quit-Rent hereinafter reserved, We, with the advice of Our Executive Council of Queensland, have Granted, and for Us, Our Heirs and Successors, do hereby Grant unto the said Harold Ingvard Hoffensetz his Administrators and Assigns, subject to the several and respective Reservations hereinafter mentioned, All that Piece or Parcel of Land in Our said Colony, containing by Admeasurement One hundred and nineteen Acres be the same more or less, situated in the County of Cardwell and Parish of Cardelia

Section 482 Ingham District Portion Four hundred and eighty
Being the Land selected under the 44th Section of The Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1876

Commencing on the right bank of Gentle Annie Creek at the Northwest corner of portion seven and bounded thence on the East by that portion bearing South twenty three chains and passing through a post one hundred and ninety five links from the said creek on the South by portions two hundred and ninety one and two hundred and thirty two bearing West fifty eight chains and sixty links on the West by portion two hundred and thirty three bearing North eighteen chains and eighty links to Gentle Annie Creek and passing through a post seventeen links thence on the North by that creek downwards to the point of commencement, exclusive of four Acres reserved for road purposes with all the Rights and Appurtenances whatsoever thereto belonging but not including any part of the Soil of the said Creek

with all the Rights and Appurtenances whatsoever thereto belonging: To Hold unto the said Harold Ingvard Hoffensetz his Administrators and Assigns for ever, Yielding and Paying therefor Yearly unto Us, Our Heirs and Successors, the Quit-Rent of One Peppercorn for ever, if demanded: But Subject Notwithstanding to the several Conditions and Reservations contained and declared in the Laws of Our said Colony in that behalf: In Testimony Whereof, We have caused this Our Grant to be Sealed with the Seal of Our said Colony.

WITNESSETH Our Trusty and Well-beloved Sir ANNISON MURRAY, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Colony of Queensland and its Dependencies, at Government House, Brisbane, in Queensland aforesaid, this twenty-second day of June in the fourth year of Our Majesty, and in the year of our Lord One thousand eight hundred and eighty eighty five

ENTERED in the Register Book Vol. 657, Folio 157, this 20th day of June 1887.

J. M. W.
REGISTRAR OF TITLES

1883. A Deed of Grant for a Homestead Selection, Harald Hoffensetz. Source: Personal files, Darrin Hoffensetz.

Appendix 5:

Victoria
Memorandum of Agreement made this _____ day of _____ 189 _____, between the COLONIAL SUGAR REFINING COMPANY, LIMITED, hereinafter called Lessors, of the one part, and _____ of _____ in the Colony of Queensland, hereinafter called the Lessee, of the other part, WHEREBY the said Lessors agree to let and the said Lessee agrees to take ALL THAT piece or parcel of land more particularly described in the Schedule hereunder written, TO HOLD from the date of these presents until the thirty-first day of December, nineteen hundred and _____ (19 _____), at and for the yearly rental of £ _____ such rental to be paid by the said _____ half-yearly, in advance, and upon and subject to the covenants and conditions following, that is to say:—

1. Should the said Lessors at the request of the said Lessee at any time during the currency of this agreement consent to drain with agricultural pipes any part of the said land, the said Lessee shall pay half-yearly in advance an additional rental of ten shillings (10s.) per acre per annum on all land piped drained, such increased rental being computed from the date of the completion of the work:
2. The Lessee shall plant and cultivate all the said land, with the exception of that portion mentioned in clause 3 of this agreement, with Sugar Cane, which the Lessors undertake to purchase on the terms and conditions mentioned in a Memorandum of Agreement made and entered into in that behalf on the day of the date hereof by and between the parties hereto:
3. The said Lessee shall have the right to plant and crop upon the said land _____ per cent. (_____ %) of the total area with crops other than Sugar Cane:
4. The said Lessee shall give to the said Lessors yearly, a lien over the Sugar Cane crops to be grown by him on the said land for the purpose of securing to the said Lessors the due payment of the rent hereby reserved, and such advances of money or goods as may hereafter, in the discretion of the Lessors, be made by them to the said Lessee:
5. The said Lessee shall not sublet or assign the said land or any portion thereof, and shall not erect or permit to be erected thereon any store, public-house, or other business premises, and, save as aforesaid shall not use the said land for any other purpose than a sugar plantation, without the consent, in writing, of the Lessors first had and obtained:
6. The Lessee shall pay all rates and taxes:
7. The Lessee shall have the right at any time during the term of the lease to purchase from the said Lessors the said land at and for the price or sum of £ _____, one-fifth of which amount shall be paid to the said Lessors in cash at the time of such purchase, and the balance by four equal yearly payments, the amount for the time being due to the Lessors by the Lessee in respect of such purchase-money, bearing interest at the rate of five per cent. (5%) per annum, payable yearly at end of crop, but such right of purchase shall not be exercised until the Lessee shall have repaid all advances made to him by the Lessors, together with the interest due thereon. Should, however, any portion of the said land have been pipe drained during the currency of this lease, the said Lessee shall pay in addition to the above mentioned £ _____ a further sum of ten pounds (£10) for each acre pipe drained. All costs in connection with the survey of the land shall be borne by the said Lessee, and the cost of transfer shall be borne by the said Lessors:
8. The said Lessee shall have the right to remove within the first three months after the expiration of this lease any buildings erected by him on the said land, provided the conditions of this lease have been faithfully performed:
9. The said Lessee shall have the right to lease the said land on the same terms for a further period of seven (7) years from thirty-first December, nineteen hundred and _____, provided he has fulfilled the conditions of this lease to the satisfaction of the said Lessors, and that he has given notice in writing to the said Lessors before the thirty-first December, nineteen hundred and _____ of his intention to renew the lease:
10. The Lessors shall have the right of determining this agreement and of re-entry on non-payment of rent or breach or non-performance of covenants and conditions on the part of the Lessee herein contained to be paid, observed or performed. In the event of such re-entry, the Lessee shall not be entitled to compensation for any growing crop or improvements upon the land, which shall become the absolute property of the Lessors:
11. The Lessors undertake that the Lessee duly paying the rent hereby reserved, and performing this agreement so far as it is on his part to be performed, shall hold and enjoy the premises pursuant to this agreement without eviction or disturbance by the Lessors:

In witness whereof the General Manager of the said Lessors and the said Lessee have hereunto set their hands the day and year first above written.

Witness to the signature of _____

For and on behalf of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, Limited

Witness to the signature of _____

General Manager.

Memorandum of Agreement, CSR with lessees. Source: D 3.0 2 5. Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, Canberra.

Appendix 6:



Circa 1890. Booklet distributed by Agent-General for Queensland to encourage immigration of farmers and agricultural workers to Australia. Source: Sugar planting in Queensland, Emigration pamphlet, *The Times London*, circa 1890. Fryer Library, University of Queensland.

Appendix 7:

**THE SECRETARY OF THE HERBERT RIVER
FARMERS' ASSOCIATION TO THE PREMIER.**

25th September, 1885.

Sir,—I am instructed to respectfully place in your hands some definite information respecting the effort the farmers of this district are now making to obtain a central public sugar factory.

A joint-stock company is now in process of formation amongst us for the erection of a mill of which the machinery will cost about £18,000, and of which rolling stock, necessary tramways, cost of erection, &c., is estimated at about £12,000. It is our conviction that if the Government will assist to the extent of £15,000, we shall be in position to at once proceed with the work before us, and to raise, without further help from the Government, the sum necessary to complete the enterprise.

As soon as our plans are sufficiently matured, it is our intention to place them fully before you by deputation, and to solicit from the Government the help we require.—I have, &c.,
JOHN ALM, Hon. Secretary.

One of two letters. Source: "The Central Sugar-Mill Project," *Brisbane Courier*, October 27, 1885, 2.

NORTHERN QUEENSLAND AND THE LABOUR TRAFFIC.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

SIR,—It is a very difficult task as this distance from England to compile with correspondence, but in relation to ourselves as sugar planters in northern Queensland, sentenced abroad in the Times of June 10, we stand under the attack.

In the first place, we see all hell from the old country we have as great a horror of slavery and kidnapping as any individual in Great Britain, and it is with the greatest grief we see a gross account of maintaining an establishment which we unhesitatingly condemn, and in evidence which we have invariably offered ourselves in the opinion.

As, notwithstanding our most urgent efforts, it appears impossible to prevent these atrocious (and most degrading) the most atrocious crimes in connection with the supplying the mines from the South Sea Islands, we have repeatedly requested the Queensland Government that where assistance we were thus induced to embark in sugar planting in Queensland, to furnish us with some other means of coloured labour, or to grant us some facilities for obtaining the same at our own cost.

The various Governments will do nothing, but will as we grow angry in the struggle with white labour—a commercial responsibility.

At present we apply to the Queensland Government for assistance from the South Sea Islands, and the Government then issue licences to vessels and agents to accompany these Government agents, whom we have been obliged to be certified by the Government in regard to the agents. We, as sugar planters, have not the least possibility of control, having once put the matter into the hands of the Government, and have no any power to refuse or take the labourers when landed in Queensland. We are, therefore, in no way responsible for the crimes of the vessels.

We have no slaves whatever in possession, the South Sea Islands labour traffic, which we have repeatedly pointed out and have to serious abuse, but we do wish to get some idea of coloured labour suitable for tropical cultivation in the tropics, under proper regulations and Government supervision, in the same way as in all the other tropical colonies of England.

We are utterly powerless to obtain this very essential assistance so long as we are shut to the north of our present position of Queensland, where there is not the same necessity for coloured labour, where the necessity of the white population has, and consequently where the political power resides.

Now, there has been nothing to a head for some years past a widespread agitation in the north of Queensland for separation from the southern portion of the colony, on the grounds of diversity of interests, misappropriation of resources and loss, and hardship of representation with a to the maintenance of the seat of Government.

We, as settlers in northern Queensland, sympathize strongly with this movement, having an object of our own being attended to, while such an extraordinary preponderance of political representation is derived from southern or temperate Queensland.

Even if separation is effected, the certificate issued to the political and mining interests will largely transfer to agriculture, which is a sufficient element of the colony, to form a self-sustaining colony of her own, and we should have some chance while of justice we have some of satisfying the colonial of those who are living under such the same almost certificate as presented to be allowed to employ coloured labour under proper regulations in tropical cultivation along the coast line.

The whole object of the letter of April 23, 1886, from your Brisbane Correspondent is political, and is written with the object of bringing into discredit the movement for the separation of northern from southern Queensland by attributing it to a determination on the part of the sugar planters to obtain coloured labour from the South Sea Islands at any cost, no matter what atrocities are committed.

This accusation is utterly and entirely false, and we as a body desire to repudiate so outrageous and calumnious an assertion.

Your obedient servants,
THE PLANTERS' AND FARMERS' ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTHERN QUEENSLAND.
 For the Herbert River Planters' Association,
WILLIAM CANNY, Chairman.
 For the Herbert River Farmers' Association,
HAROLD J. HOFFENSETZE, Chairman.
 For the Mackay Planters' and Farmers' Association,
M. R. MACRAE, Chairman.
 Mackay, Queensland, Oct. 7, 1885.

The whole object of the letter of April 23, 1886, from your Brisbane Correspondent is political, and is written with the object of bringing into discredit the movement for the separation of northern from southern Queensland by attributing it to a determination on the part of the sugar planters to obtain coloured labour from the South Sea Islands at any cost, no matter what atrocities are committed.

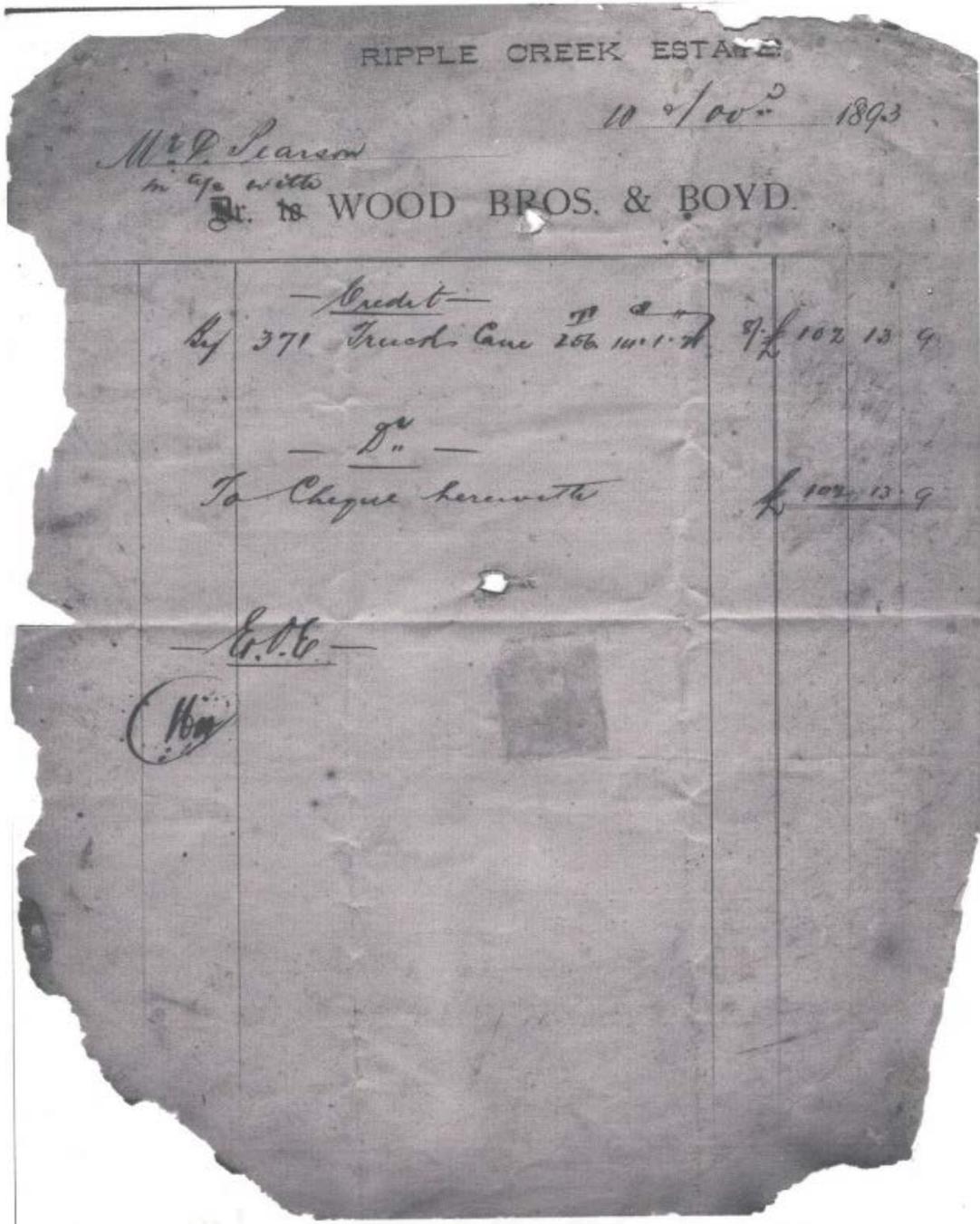
This accusation is utterly and entirely false, and we as a body desire to repudiate so outrageous and calumnious an assertion.

Your obedient servants,
THE PLANTERS' AND FARMERS' ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTHERN QUEENSLAND.
 For the Herbert River Planters' Association,
WILLIAM CANNY, Chairman.
 For the Herbert River Farmers' Association,
HAROLD J. HOFFENSETZE, Chairman.
 For the Mackay Planters' and Farmers' Association,
M. R. MACRAE, Chairman.
 Mackay, Queensland, Oct. 7, 1885.

Mackay, Queensland, Oct. 7, 1885.

“Northern Queensland and the Labour Traffic.” Source: *Times*, January 25, 1886.

Appendix 9:



1893. Ripple Creek Estate Mill Docket, small farmer Daniel Pearson. Source: Pearson family, Brooklands.

Appendix 10:

THE FARMERS' MEETING IN YE OLDEN TIMES

The Cockies' League of Lannercost — a mob that takes some beating —
Thought not a moment should be lost until they held a meeting.
So word passed round per Royal Mail — each member got a docket
To meet on Sunday without fail for a “confab” at the Pocket.

But as they gathered around the board — to view the work before them —
The Meetings' dignity was lowered — they couldn't find a quorum
The Clerk reviewed some words in type — the silence was provoking —
The Chairman slowly filled his pipe and then he started smoking.

Then heads all turned towards the door and hearts and hopes grew larger —
As down the road from Ginnane's store came “Angus” on his charger.
'Twas then they settled down to “biz” — few were the stops or pauses —
They beat the Parliament in Bris. With motions rules and clauses.

They spoke hard words of every pest, both native and imported —
Rats and mice and all the rest of the rodent tribe assorted.
They then reviled the wallaby and wished that some mishap —
Some foul disease or malady — would wipe him off the map.

No one took the beetles' part — 'twas moved by the Convenor —
That anyone who'll fill a quart — they'd give that man a Deaner.
When all the motions were proposed, dissected and amended —
The Chairman said “The Meeting's closed” and no one was offended!

Source: Dan Sheahan, *Songs from the Canefields* (Ingham: Josephine Sheahan, 1980 reprint), 81.

Appendix 11:

LET THE CANEFIELDS BURN

There's a painting of my grandfather, on my mothers' side
In the hallway of our homestead, in a special place of pride
With his bulldogs and kanakas, back in eighteen-ninety-three
In a linen suit and a panama, they say he looked like me.

And the story goes he came out, to make a brand new start
In an effort to forget, a sad affair of the heart
So with these romantic notions, to the colonies he came
Where he settled in the tropics and made his fortune growing cane.

Chorus:

Well let the canefields burn, let the flames rise
Let the politicians and the bankers in the city look up
In wonder at the glow up in the sky.
Let the canefield burn, let me feel no pain
When I drown my soul in whisky, and dance in the flames.

There's a photo of my parents, taken in between the wars
In London, Rome or Paris, I don't know for sure
But it hangs there in the hallway and there's one for every year
Fortunes made, and fortunes paid, for champagne souvenirs.

Chorus:

Well let the canefields burn, let the flames rise
Let the politicians and the bankers in the city look up
In wonder at the glow up in the sky.
Let the canefield burn, let me feel no pain
When I drown my soul in whisky, and dance in the flames.

And they say they're gonna take this all away from me
The cars, the cane, the homestead, all my family history
Let the auctioneer open with a price for charred remains!

Chorus:

Well let the canefields burn, let the flames rise
Let the politicians and the bankers in the city look up
In wonder at the glow up in the sky.
Let the canefield burn, let me feel no pain
When I drown my soul in whisky, and dance in the flames.

Source: Graeme Connors, *North* (Australia: The Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 1988).

Appendix 12:

1862	BRITISH INDIA LABOURERS PROTECTION ACT or COOLIE ACT	QUEENSLAND	allowed for the introduction and protection of labourers from British India.
1864	SUGAR AND COFFEE REGULATIONS	QUEENSLAND	regulations which provided for the lease of large blocks of land by individuals or companies for sugar and coffee growing.
1868	POLYNESIAN LABOUR ACT	QUEENSLAND	legislated to regulate and control the introduction of Melanesians labourers into the colony.
1868	CROWN LANDS ALIENATION ACT	QUEENSLAND	this Act incorporated the provisions of the earlier 1864 Sugar and Coffee Regulations and allowed for selection of land for the growing sugar or coffee. Blocks of agricultural land were to be no less than 320 acres (130 hectares), but no more than 1 280 acres (518 hectares). Also opened up land to individuals with limited capital, and was designed to encourage the small agriculturalist to take up homestead leases of no more than 80 acres, and leases of agricultural blocks no less than 40 acres and no more than 640 acres.
1872	PACIFIC ISLANDERS PROTECTION ACT	QUEENSLAND	required all recruiting vessels to be licensed and the consent of the islanders to be secured before they embarked.
1876	CROWN LANDS ALIENATION ACT	QUEENSLAND	resulted in speculative selection, over and above what had ensued with the 1868 Act, allowing for individual members of a company to each secure a 5 120 acre (2 072 hectares) block. Also allowed for the taking up of homestead selections between 80 and 160 acres (32 to 65 hectares) and brought the colonial government's vision of yeoman farmers to reality in the tropical sugar districts.
1880	PACIFIC ISLAND LABOURERS ACT	QUEENSLAND	legislated for the requirement of proposed recruiters to be appropriately licenced. A government agent was to travel with each recruitment ship. The legislation set out requirements for terms of recruitment, ship's provisions, who could be recruited and the conditions under which those recruited, or being returned to their islands, should travel and be treated.
1881	COLONIAL SUGAR REFINING COMPANY'S ACT	QUEENSLAND	enabled CSR to acquire land in northern Queensland for the purpose of growing and milling sugar cane under preferential conditions. With this legislation Queensland Government effectively legislated in favour of the plantation mode of production.
1884	CROWN LANDS ACT	QUEENSLAND	with this Act the Government put a halt to the land rush, and promoted the selection of land by smaller selectors with the suspension of the 1876 Act and the reclassification of alienable land.
1884	PACIFIC ISLAND LABOURERS' AMENDMENT ACT	QUEENSLAND	restricted both indentured and time-expired Melanesians to the unskilled jobs in the sugar industry.
1885	CENTRAL MILLS (Legislative Assembly vote)	QUEENSLAND	Government was to contribute the sum of £50,000 towards the establishment of co-operatively owned mills. Faltered on the commitment to process only cane grown by white labour.
1885	PACIFIC ISLAND LABOURERS ACT or PACIFIC ISLAND LABOURERS ACT 1880 AMENDMENT ACT (1885)	QUEENSLAND	legislation to phase out indentured labour. Legislated for their exclusion and decreed that after December 31, 1890 no more licenses to import Melanesian labour would be issued.
1892	PACIFIC ISLAND LABOURERS EXTENSION ACT	QUEENSLAND	decision to extend the importation of Melanesian labour gave temporary reprieve to both planters and

			small farmers and quickened the movement of breaking up the large estates and plantations.
1893	SUGAR WORKS GUARANTEE ACT	QUEENSLAND	allowed for farmers to group together to float companies to erect mills, financed by government loans secured by a first mortgage over the farms of the shareholders.
1898	WEIGHTS AND MEASURES ACT	QUEENSLAND	legislated for consistent standards for weighing instruments including weigh-bridges at sugar mills
1900	SUGAR EXPERIMENT STATIONS ACT	QUEENSLAND	created the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations (BSES) under the supervision of the Queensland Minister for Agriculture and Stock. Responsibility was research and development for the sugar industry.
1901	PACIFIC ISLAND LABOURERS ACT	QUEENSLAND	White Australia policy required the end of recruitment from 31 March 1904, and deportation of all Melanesians by 31 December 1906, except ticket holders and those born in Australia.
1901	IMMIGRATION RESTRICTION ACT	C'WEALTH	legislated to exclude all non-European migrants.
1902	EXCISE TARIFF ACT	C'WEALTH	allowed for the imposition of excise duties on certain goods including sugar. Sugar growers in turn would receive a rebate of 4s per ton of cane delivered to the mill which had only been worked by white labour.
1903	SUGAR REBATE ABOLITION ACT	C'WEALTH	withdrew the provision for the payment to sugar cane farmers of a rebate of excise duty on sugar.
1903	SUGAR BOUNTY ACT	C'WEALTH	provided for a bounty of 4s per ton to be paid to those farmers producing sugar cane grown using white labour only.
1905	SUGAR BOUNTY ACT	C'WEALTH	provided for a bounty of 6s per ton to be paid to those farmers producing sugar cane grown using white labour only.
1905	CONTRACT IMMIGRANTS ACT	C'WEALTH	allowed for non-British workers to be contracted to work in the sugar fields.
1905	SHEARERS AND SUGAR WORKERS ACCOMMODATION ACT	QUEENSLAND	set minimum standards of diet and accommodation for shearers and sugar workers.
1906	PACIFIC ISLAND LABOURERS AMENDMENT ACT	QUEENSLAND	this Act liberalized the exemption categories. Deportation completed by mid-1908.
1912	INDUSTRIAL PEACE ACT	QUEENSLAND	set conditions for wages, work place and arbitration for workers including sugar field workers
1913	SUGAR CULTIVATION ACT	QUEENSLAND	allowed for the imposition of a dictation test in order to be able to obtain a certificate to work in or farm sugar cane in Queensland. Effectively excluded aliens.
1913	SUGAR GROWERS ACT	QUEENSLAND	legislated for standard rates of payment to be paid to sugar cane farmers by millers
1913	SUGAR GROWERS EMPLOYEES ACT	QUEENSLAND	set rates of pay and conditions for all workers in the sugar industry in compliance with the Industrial Peace Act of 1912
1915	REGULATION OF SUGAR CANE PRICES ACT	QUEENSLAND	created a central sugar cane prices board and local sugar cane prices board which were made responsible for providing a just distribution of raw sugar returns between growers and millers. Initiated the complex regulatory system that would come to govern the sugar industry and legislated for the place of the small grower in the industry
1915	SUGAR ACQUISITION ACT	QUEENSLAND	legislated for the Queensland Government to acquire all raw sugar manufactured in Queensland and to sell it to the Commonwealth Government.
1922	PRIMARY PRODUCERS' ORGANIZATION ACT and PRIMARY PRODUCTS POOLS ACT	QUEENSLAND	provided the mechanism to form a body representing a primary industry with power to compel all persons in that industry to become members

1923	PRIMARY PRODUCERS' ORGANIZATION AMENDMENT ACT	QUEENSLAND	provided for the imposition of levies on primary producers by order of the Primary Producers' Councils of particular industries
1923	PRIMARY PRODUCTS POOLS ACT AMENDMENT ACT	QUEENSLAND	an act to amend the 1922 Act
1925	PRIMARY PRODUCERS' ORGANIZATION ACTS AMENDMENT ACT	QUEENSLAND	an act to amend the 1923 Act
1925	PRIMARY PRODUCTS POOLS ACT AMENDMENT ACT	QUEENSLAND	an act to amend the 1923 Act
1926	PRIMARY PRODUCERS' ORGANISATION AND MARKETING ACT	QUEENSLAND	replaced the former Act and its amendments merging the Primary Products Pools Acts of 1922-25, and the Primary Producers' Organisations Acts of 1922-25. Made special provisions for the sugar industry which resulted in the formation of the statutory organization the Queensland Cane Growers' Association with governing body: The Queensland Cane Growers' Council.
1991	SUGAR INDUSTRY ACT	QUEENSLAND	an Act to regulate the sugar industry and presaged deregulation of the industry.
1999	SUGAR INDUSTRY ACT	QUEENSLAND	with this Act the level of regulation would be reduced. The Queensland Government repealed the Regulation of Sugarcane Prices Act, and the Sugar Acquisition Act, and replaced them with a new regulatory framework under this Act.
2000	SUGAR INDUSTRY AMENDMENT ACT	QUEENSLAND	an amendment of the 1999 Act
2005	SUGAR INDUSTRY AMENDMENT ACT	QUEENSLAND	new legislation created a framework for the sale of sugar cane. Millers and growers required to enter into contracts and determine contractual terms for the supply of cane. Government no longer set formula for setting the cane price or enforced 'cane production area' restrictions. Also removed restrictions on the marketing of raw sugar for export. Legislation was amended to no longer prohibit others, other than QSL (Queensland Sugar Limited), from marketing raw sugar for export.
2013	SUGAR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES ACT	C'WEALTH	Sugar Research Australia (SRA) declared as a statutory body, with compulsory membership levies to be shared equally by millers and farmers. As the peak research and development organization for the sugar industry it would receive Commonwealth funding.
2015	SUGAR INDUSTRY (REAL CHOICE IN MARKETING) AMENDMENT ACT	QUEENSLAND	this act allowed for disputes between millers and growers over intended supply contracts to go to arbitration and be resolved by an arbitral tribunal at the expense of the each party. These arrangements allowed for the farmers to choose who marketed their sugar.
2017	COMPETITION AND CONSUMER (INDUSTRY CODE—SUGAR) REGULATIONS	C'WEALTH	to regulate the conduct of growers, mill owners and marketers of sugar in relation to contracts or agreements for the supply of cane or the on-supply of sugar; to ensure that supply contracts guaranteed a grower's choice of the marketing entity for the grower economic interest (GEI) of sugar manufactured from the cane the grower supplies and provided for pre-contractual arbitration of the terms of agreements if the parties failed to agree to those terms.

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