

ABSTRACT

RURAL LAND TRANSACTIONS IN JAMAICA, 1866-1900

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This study examines the changing patterns of land ownership in rural Jamaica between 1866 and 1900 through a quantitative analysis of the land conveyance deeds at the Island Record Office. After discussion of the data and methodology, a summary of the historiography, a review of the economy of the late nineteenth century and the land laws enacted by the new government after 1866, attention is paid to the patterns of transfers of public and private lands. Emphasis is placed on sizes of holdings, statuses of conveyors and conveyees and the types of holdings conveyed. From the results of the analysis it is demonstrated that, although the pattern of land ownership varied from period to period, the policies of the new government and the development of the fruit/banana industry encouraged the concentration of large holdings in the hands of few landowners. It is shown that the ownership structure of the large landowning class changed. The traditional plantocrats were now joined by agrarian capitalists in the form of professionals, business companies and merchants who acquired multiple holdings to become agriculturalists. The corollary of this concentration was the decline in the amount of land available for small settlers' expansion.

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