

**MEMOIRS OF THE AMERICAN
FOLK-LORE SOCIETY.
VOLUME XIII. FOLK-TALES OF
ANDROS ISLAND, BAHAMAS**

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Memoirs of the American Folk-Lore Society. Volume XIII. Folk-Tales of Andros Island, Bahamas by Elsie Clews Parsons

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ELSIE CLEWS PARSONS

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ANDROS ISLAND, BAHAMAS**

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BY

ELSIE CLEWS PARSONS.

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INTRODUCTION.

ALTHOUGH Andros is the island nearest both to Nassau, the capital of the colony, and, excepting Bimini and Grand Bahama, to the Florida coast, it is the least visited of whites of all the more settled islands in the Bahama group. Its only regular means of communication with New Providence or the other islands is a bi-weekly mail schooner. Out of its population of about seventy-five hundred, but a dozen or so are white,¹ and of them only half are European-born. These men are priests or resident commissioners or sponge merchants. The seven schoolmasters are colored. The population is strung out in small groups along the east coast, a stretch of about one hundred miles, the chief settlements being Nicolls Town, Mastic Point, Stanyard Creek, Calabash Bay, Fresh Creek, Behring Point, Mangrove Cay,² Long Bay Cays, Pure Gold, Kemp's Bay. The west coast and the interior are uninhabited; parts of the interior are even unexplored.

The colored as well as the white population of the island is of a very composite character. The bulk of the original settlers, I was told by Ex-Commissioner Forsyth, migrated to the island from two sources, — from the Mosquito coast in 1783, when the British relinquished control, a mixed stock of Scotch, Indian, and Negro blood; and from about 1830 to 1836 from the Florida everglade region, Negroes with Indian blood.³ The ancestors of one of the most prominent families on the island were Carolinians, being among the United Empire loyalists who migrated to the Bahamas during the American Revolution.⁴ Andros has also been a dump-heap, as it was put to me, for the other islands, a place of refuge for the restless, or a resort for the ambitious. I did, indeed, meet many who had been either bred or born elsewhere.

The inhabitants of Andros are of a mixed origin and of a mobile

¹ Many Bahamans accounted white have Negro blood. Not uncommonly white Bahamans marry women with Negro blood.

² Now the chief settlement. In 1852 Nicolls Town was the chief settlement, and the island population was 1032.

³ I met individuals who stated that they had Indian ancestry; but with the exception of two women, mother and daughter, I saw no physical suggestion of it. The Indian descendants are located for the most part, however, at Nicolls Town, and my stay there was brief.

⁴ These Southern loyalists migrated also to Jamaica. They took their slaves with them. In comparing certain tales in the following collection with tales collected in our Southern States, these facts of migration should be borne in mind.