

**Excerpt from the book *The Chinese in the West Indies, 1806-1995: A Documentary History***

(Note: Headings in bold were added for ease of reference and do not appear in the original text)

**The First Arrivals: 4 March, 1853**

(1) Report from Immigration Agent-General Henry Mitchell in 1853

Those landed ex Australia numbered 432. Eight were sent to hospitals, and the remainder distributed on estates in the Counties of St George's, Caroni, Victoria and St Patrick, in detachments varying in number from 16 to 33; of the eight sent to hospital five ultimately survived and were assigned in the same manner as the others.

**The First Month of Estate Work**

During the first month matters went on smoothly on most estates; the proprietors anxious to promote this new immigration, allowed the Chinese to take their own way, seldom exacting anything like a full day's labour from the new immigrants, while at the same time, the latter were allowed pay and rations like seasoned labourers in full employment. On some estates, however, they showed their temper before three weeks had passed, refusing to work, and insisting on full rations in terms of their agreements, which stipulated that no man should be mulcted in either allowance or pay, unless he were more than 14 days sick continuously. As the Chinese are not proverbially deficient in cunning, they in many instances laid up during 14 days, and turned out on the 15<sup>th</sup>, turning in again on the 16<sup>th</sup> for the remainder of the month, and then claiming all the privileges of those who had done a full month's work. Finding that no immediate punishment followed this unfair conduct, and that in consequence of cases being in all directions postponed, from the non-ubiquity of the single interpreter whom chance had vouchsafed the colony, they stuck work almost entirely on several estates, and only showed symptoms of industry as they gradually found that, though slow, the punishment for insubordination was more or less sure. On every estate it was explained to them that they might go at once on the current rate of wages, which admitted of the most industrious doubling their rate, as per agreement, or adhere to the latter, provided always the day's labour consisted of nine working hours; it was further explained, that after the first three months they should be placed on money wages, entirely in conformity with the ordinance...

**Work Ethic**

The majority objected to any arrangement except their own pleasure, and hence constant complaints from the employers, and occasionally a good deal of turbulence on the part of the employed. As exceptions to the general rule it must be stated that on seven of the 18 estates where the Chinese per Australia were assigned, their behaviour was good, giving every satisfaction to the employer by their industry and docility, in fact they are there considered in every point of view as the best immigrants hitherto imported.

On nine more estates, at this moment, they are behaving well and working better, encouraging the hope that, as they gradually acquire knowledge of the language and

manners of the country, their value as a labouring population will increase. On the remaining two estates they are working very indifferently, and much reduced by sickness. The Chinese, per Australia, have now been here almost nine months; on the number originally signed, namely 429, the casualties amount to 51, of these 31 have died on three estates where fever prevailed this last year in a malignant form.

### **The Second Arrivals: April 23rd, 1853**

The second ship, namely the Clarendon,... landed 251 immigrants, of whom two were sent to hospital and turned out incurable. The remainder, apparently in the finest health, were assigned to 12 estates; some little difficulty occurred in the apportionment, as the turbulence of their countrymen, per Australia, had made the planters doubtful as to either the safety or propriety of employing them. The Clarendon men were from the vicinity of Canton, and though less bulky than those per Australia, who are from the Fokien district, appear smarter and more civilized. They turned out much more difficult to control, and refused to work more than four or five hours at the most on upwards of eight estates out of the 12. They now understand their position somewhat better, and with the exception of one estate are improving. The deaths amount to 17 on 249 assigned.

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