

HAWAIIAN SUGAR PLANTERS' ASSOCIATION

PLANTATION ARCHIVES

Register of the

KAU SUGAR COMPANY
(Hutchinson Sugar Plantation Company)
Naalehu, Hawaii

1870-1951

Accession: 84-07
35.0 cu. ft.
June 1990

Processed by
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BRIEF HISTORY HUTCHINGSON SUGAR PLANTATION COMPANY

Hutchinson Sugar Plantation Co. was located in the Kau district 65 miles southwest of Hilo, HI. Situated in Naalehu at the foot of Mauna Loa, Hutchinson Plantation had the distinction of being the “farthest south” sugar mill on Hawaii. It was also the most isolated sugar company on the island, which often made it difficult to get and keep permanent workers. The land was rolling and somewhat hilly with the lower lands being poor and the higher lands more fertile. The valleys were shallow, sterile, and rocky while the ridges were composed of rich soils of considerable depth. These conditions were exactly opposite of those found in plantations on the Hamakua Coast and required different agricultural methods.

Hutchinson Sugar Plantation Co. was one of the oldest sugar companies dating from the American Civil War period. The company was formed in 1868 by Alexander Hutchinson, although there were cane farms in the area before that. Hutchinson brought in a small mill and called his company Naalehu Plantation. When Mr. Hutchinson died in 1879 while pursuing two runaway Chinese laborers, Wm. G. Irwin and Claus Spreckels bought Naalehu Plantation and changed its name to Hutchinson Plantation. The company was chartered on September 11, 1884. The plantation headquarters remained at Naalehu, the point from which it made its early growth. In 1910, C. Brewer & Co. acquired controlling interest and became agents for Hutchinson Sugar Plantation Company.

Hutchinson Sugar Plantation Co. was a small plantation with approximately 7 ½ square miles planted in cane. Cane was grown from sea level up to the 2,000-ft. elevation. The bulk of the cane lands were above the 1,600-ft. level. The cane at the lower levels of the plantation matured in 18 months, whereas, the cane at higher elevations required from 24 to 30 months to mature. As a result, there was no harvesting schedule and the fields were cut as near as possible to ripeness. Rose Bamboo was the principal variety of cane planted in the early days. Later on, it was replaced by the “Java Wonder” or POJ 2878, which was drought resistant. Hutchinson Sugar Plantation was an unirrigated plantation and depended on rainfall, which was exceedingly variable in the Kau district. As a result, the plantation suffered from recurrent droughts.

Cane was transported to the mill primarily by flumes due to the terrain of the area. By 1920, the company had over 70 miles of permanent flumes. Water for the flumes came through a system of tunnels driven through the hills. Manager Wm. Campsie developed spring and runoff water in the forest reserve about nine miles above the top of the cane land. In 1921, construction work was started on the Kahilipali tunnel using Korean gangs. The Mountain House tunnel work was also started in that year and by 1927, it was nearly 7,000 ft. long. Construction on the Plantation Springs and Tanaka tunnels began around the same time. Four main flumes were built to serve every section of the plantation in harvesting the cane and transporting it to the mill at Honuapo.

The early plantation had two mills, an 8 roller mill at Naalehu and a 9 roller mill at Honuapo. Hilea* also had its own mill, but it was dismantled in 1907. Around 1911, the Naalehu mill wore out and a new central mill was built at Honuapo to grind all the cane. The landing was located at Honuapo and it had the reputation of being able to load and ship sugar cheaper than any other port in the islands. Hutchinson Sugar Plantation Co. was in charge of the stevedoring operations. A permanent gang of eight men was in charge of the equipment and on steamer days stevedore gangs, mostly Hawaiians, were employed.

Over the years Hutchinson Sugar Plantation Co. employed people of many nationalities including, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Spanish, Portuguese, Filipinos, Hawaiians, and Anglo-Saxons. In 1920 the plantation had approximately 500 employees. The 1946 census lists 1,192 persons living on the plantation of which 607 were men. From these figures, it would appear that the population remained relatively steady without much growth. This was no doubt due in part to the isolation of the area.

In order to make the lives of the occupants as comfortable as possible under plantation conditions, Manager J. Beatty tried to “citify” the property by gradually doing away with the sparse and scattered camps and concentrating the workers in four main villages situated at Naalehu, Kaalaki, Hilea, and Honuapo. Older homes were either demolished or moved and renovated. More modern houses were built with kitchens, hot and cold water, laundries and showers. Good schools and recreational facilities were constructed. The plantation employed a resident physician and nurses at the dispensaries. Serious illnesses and surgical cases were handled at Pahala’s hospital twelve miles away. The morale of the workers improved as living conditions progressed.

A small dairy and a large cattle ranch were operated in conjunction with the plantation. In 1936, the George Campbell ranch adjoining the plantation was purchased, adding 914 acres to its fee holdings. Hutchinson’s Kaalualu Ranch had over 6,200 head of Herefords, which thrived, on a ration of bagasse, molasses, bonemeal, and peanut or cottonseed meal.

In 1948, the Hutchinson Sugar Plantation Co. stopped all fluming of cane. Roads had been built through formerly inaccessible fields and Manager Beatty introduced several innovations to aid in transporting the cane. A Louisiana invention called a “Jitterbug” was used to accommodate the steep hillsides. Several of these trailers containing cane were hooked behind a truck making a train, which transported it to the mill. Beatty also introduced an aerial tramway in 1948. This was the first of its kind to be employed in cane transportation on Hawaii’s plantations.

In 1972, C. Brewer & Co. decided to consolidate the two sugar companies in that area and combined Hutchinson Sugar Plantation Co. with Hawaiian Agricultural Co. The new entity was named Kau Sugar Company.

*The Hilea Plantation was purchased by Hutchinson Sugar Plantation in 1890.

MANAGERS

H. Center	1888 – 1891
George C. Hewitt	1891 – 1903
Carl Wolters	1903 – 1913
George Gibb	1913 – 1921
William Campsie	1922 – 1937
James S. Beatty	1937

Kau Sugar Company

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HSPA PLANTATION ARCHIVES

Hutchinson Sugar Plantation Company Scope and Contents

UNPROCESSED RECORDS, BACKGROUND

During January 1990, the records from Kau Sugar Company, 83 boxes and 156 volumes, were removed from storage, fumigated and brought into the Archives. Hutchinson Sugar Plantation Company material accounted for approximately 26 boxes and 121 volumes. Hawaiian Agricultural Company comprised the remainder. By June 1990, processing of both plantations was finished and the records were ready for use by researchers.

PROCESSED RECORDS, NOTES

The Kau Sugar company records consist of materials generated by two predecessor companies: Hutchinson Sugar Plantation Company and Hawaiian Agricultural Company. The Hutchinson Sugar Plantation Company records are organized into the following series or categories:

- Corporate Records
- Correspondence
- Financial Records
- Personnel & Payroll
- Production Records
- Miscellaneous
- Other Company Records

Corporate Records

1870-1925. The Land Books, V.40-48, contain leases, deeds, surveys and rental information. Land and business matters are included in the miscellaneous document folders.

Correspondence

1884-1917. A small amount of correspondence with C. Brewer & Co. is contained in Box 33/3-4. The General Correspondence folders (29/3-8, 30/2-7) include routine correspondence regarding field, factory, labor, land, water, livestock and legal

matters. Press copy books also contain orders for merchandise and sugar shipments. A few letters are written in German.

The Irwin & Co. (1887-1899) Correspondence contains letters from the agents, as well as a few letters from Japanese Consulate, the Department of Immigration, Theo. H. Davies & Co., and the Board of Health. Subject matter includes mill machinery, and leases and deeds, laborers from Japan and China, and shipping goods and sugar. A few letters are also written in Hawaiian. The Letters to San Francisco include letters to the directors and secretary in the San Francisco office concerning accounts and shipments of sugar and goods. There are three folders containing correspondence from the plantation stores: Naalehu and Hilea Stores. These documents consist largely of orders placed with Irwin & Co. in Honolulu for goods carried by the Plantation stores: food, dry goods, building supplies, animal feed, and miscellaneous small goods.

Financial Records

1879-1948. In the early Cash Books (V.49-63) can be found lists of names of employees paid in cash. Generally these are Hawaiian and Caucasian names. By V.64 lists of Japanese names are likely to be found. The Contractors' Accounts (V.134-143) include contractor names as well as man and animal hours spent in all phases of cultivation and harvest. The early Day Books (V.72-85) give lists of names of Hawaiian workers. The early Journals contain lists of employees in the labor, sundries, and butchershop accounts. (V.111-114, include distribution sheets with an excellent run from 1889 to 1948.) The Ledgers contain contractors' and planters' names. Box 33/5-7, Financial Information, includes: annual statements, interest paid and received, crop costs, supplies, trial balances, water and cane purchases, dairy and ranch accounts, rents paid and received, hospital expenses, sugar freight, landing operations, pensions, taxes, store profit and loss, and donations. The Journals, V.111-114, include distribution sheets with an excellent run from 1889 to 1948.

Personnel & Payroll

1890-1948. The Time Books, PV.3-52, include names of employees, race, days worked, rate of wages, amount, cash on payday, store accounts, and notes concerning deserters and deaths.

Production Records

1889-1944. These records deal with the amount of sugar grown and produced by the plantation.

Miscellaneous

1897-1951. The Landing Book, V.149, contains detailed information regarding ships loading and unloading at the plantation. R2/1 contains tax plat maps of the entire plantation made in 1949-1951.

Other Company Records

1889-1950. The Hilea Store records, V.150-157, cover the years 1889-1905 and contain names of individuals who held accounts at the store. V.158-165, Naalehu Store records, cover the years 1891-1910 and are also sources of individual account holder names. The Kau Construction Company records, 1947-1950, contain employee names, wages, taxes and insurance. Also included is financial information about the company and depreciation records list all equipment held by Kau Construction.

NOTE: The researcher is advised that additional records of Hutchinson Sugar Plantation Company are available on microfilm D00032 at Hamilton Library, University of Hawaii at Manoa. These include correspondence with Irwin & Co. – 1885-1910, correspondence with C. Brewer & Co. – 1906-1937, other correspondence – 1916-1936, and financial records – 1870-1938.