

HAWAIIAN SUGAR PLANTERS' ASSOCIATION

PLANTATION ARCHIVES

Register of the

HILO COAST PROCESSING COMPANY
(PEPEEKEO SUGAR COMPANY)
Pepeekeo, Hawaii

1889-1946

Accession: 84-04
11.5 cubic feet
February 1990

Processed By:
Susan M. Campbell &
Patricia M. Ogburn

BRIEF HISTORY

PEPEEKEO SUGAR COMPANY

Pepeekeo Sugar Company, located on the windward side of the island of Hawaii between Onomea and Honomu, held the majority of its land in fee simple. The plantation occupied approximately four miles along the ocean cliffs and extended from three to 18 miles mauka to 1600 feet in elevation on the slopes of Mauna Kea.

The company, called the Metcalf Plantation, was started at Kaupakuea in 1857 by Theophilus Metcalf and the first crop was harvested in 1859. Mr. Metcalf's was the first factory in Hawaii to use the vacuum pan in 1863.

In 1874, after Mr. Metcalf's death, the plantation was purchased by Messrs. Afong and Achuck and the name changed to Pepeekeo Sugar Company. By 1881 the crop was estimated at 1800 tons and the factory was constructed of corrugated iron buildings with machinery manufactured by Honolulu Iron Works.

In 1882, Mr. Akana became the plantation manager and Mr. C. Afong was the company owner as well as the agent. 1886 saw a new mill from Honolulu Iron Works in place and in 1888, Mr. Wong Tuck became the new manager.

Mr. H. Deacon and Mr. Alexander Young, manager of Honolulu Iron Works, purchased Pepeekeo Sugar in 1889. The Company was incorporated on October 14, 1889, with Mr. Deacon as manager and H. Hackfeld & Co. as agents. T.H. Davies & Co. served as agents from 1892 to 1904, when C. Brewer & Co. purchased control from Mr. Young, who used the funds to build the Alexander Young Hotel on Bishop Street in Honolulu.

By 1910 the annual yield was 8,000 tons processed by a 9-roller mill with a capacity to grind 60 tons of cane per day. The warehouse could store 24,000 bags of sugar, which were loaded onto interisland steamers by steel cables from the sea cliff. Plantation fields were connected by good dirt roads and the harvested cane was delivered to the mill by railroad cars and 15 miles of stationary flumes.

There were 700 employees at Pepeekeo Sugar, all of whom worked on the day labor system, there being no contract laborers at the plantation. By 1914, homesteaders were using 625 acres to grow cane that was processed at the company mill.

Manager James Webster had become noted for his farming methods; in 1904 he initiated plowing under cane trash for fertilizer instead of burning it off. The improvement in soil prompted HSPA to take up the method and expand it to other plantations. Another innovation, made during mill improvements, was to place the grinding machinery some 60 feet below the boiling house. This facilitated the delivery of cane by flume and the flume water was used extensively in the mill. The Gartley clarification system, developed by Brewer engineer A.A. Gartley, was also an innovation at Pepeekeo Sugar.

By 1923 Mr. Webster's good farming practices had increased the yield from 3.1 tons to 4.6 tons per acre in 15 years. Most of the cane of the plantation was Yellow Caledonia and Pepeekeo Sugar kept some ratoon crops for as long as 12 to 18 years. The soil was improved annually with 50,000 tons of Waianae coral sand as well as bone meal and guano. Eucalyptus trees were planted as windbreaks, protecting the fields near the ohia forests.

Water sources at Waiaama Stream and Kauku Hill provided clear water from natural filter beds for all plantation uses including turning a water wheel to generate power. Cultivation inventions included the Webster's careful farming dictated deep plowing at 18-20 inches, which improved the soil each year. The manager continued to live in the old Afong residence just above the mill.

In 1930, machinery was installed to dry, sift, and sack bagasse from the mill to be used for livestock feed. The product was sold in Los Angeles through Grace Brothers in Honolulu.

Because the land was bumpy with many winding gulches, road improvement was ongoing, using a rock crusher brought from Scotland in the 1890s. There were 120 mules and 25 horses used on the plantation in 1932, providing transport for the fields split by ridges and gulches. Tractors with caterpillar tracks were used for plowing and trucks now hauled mud press, stable manure, and lime to the fields. 20 miles of permanent flumes brought cane to the mill.

At age 80, after 32 years at Pepeekeo manager, Mr. Webster retired in 1936 and Mr. Andrew T. Spalding, manager at Honomu Sugar, succeeded as manager of Pepeekeo on January 1, 1937.

In 1941, harvested cane was trucked to the mill for the first time, due to a shortage of water for fluming. Though water shortages continued for the next two years, a record crop was produced in 1944.

March 1946 saw Honomu Sugar Co. merged with Pepeekeo and Mr. A. Douglas Ednie became manager of the combined plantations. Mr. Ednie had a difficult year, however, as Pepeekeo Sugar showed a loss of \$141,430, the first loss in 10 years. An industry-wide strike, higher labor costs, unfavorable weather, and the April tidal wave that destroyed the railroad and terminals in Hilo added to the problems of 1946.

In 1947, the Pepeekeo mill was shut down for extensive modernization to accommodate the addition of the cane from the Honomu fields. Reconstruction of over \$2,000,000 required an agency overdraft and a loan from Bank of Hawaii in 1948.

In the early 1950s a number of lots and houses on the plantation were sold to residents, as was the Honomu company store. Due to the increase in mechanical harvesting, the labor force of 460 was reduced to 400 in 1956. The late 1950s brought numerous union slowdowns, walkouts, and shutdowns to Pepeekeo.

Mr. Ednie retired as manager in 1960, replaced by Mr. L.S. McLane from Hilo Sugar Co. The merger of Pepeekeo and Hakalau sugar companies was affected in 1963, with Mr. Herbert M. Gomez becoming manager of the combined company. 1963 was also the year in which the Hilo office of C. Brewer & Co. instituted a computer system to service plantation automotive equipment.

In 1971 Wainaku, Hakalau, Pepeekeo, and Papaikou sugar companies were consolidated in a processing cooperative that also included independent cane growers. Two years later, Pepeekeo Sugar merged with Mauna Kea Sugar to form Mauna Kea Sugar Co., Inc., the state's fourth largest sugar company with 18,000 acres of cane. The mills at Wainaku and Hakalau were closed as the Pepeekeo mill was modernized to double its capacity by 1974.

MANAGERS

Theophilus Metcalf	1857 – 1874
Mr. Akana	1882 – ?
Wong Tuck	1888 – 1889
H. Deacon	1889 – 1904
James Webster	1904 – 1937
Andrew Spalding	1937 – 1941
A. Douglas Ednie	1941 – 1960
L. S. McLane	1960 – 1963
Herbert M. Gomez	1963

Hilo Coast Processing Company

Accession #84-04

11.5 cu. ft.

HSPA PLANTATION ARCHIVES

Pepeekeo Sugar Company
Scope and Content Note

BACKGROUND, UNPROCESSED RECORDS

During January 1990, 14 boxes and 16 volumes of records from Hilo Coast Processing Company were removed from the storage container, fumigated, and brought into the Archives. Processing was finished and the record group was ready for use by researchers in early February 1990.

PROCESSED RECORDS, NOTES

Hilo Coast Processing Company records consist mainly of records from predecessor company Pepeekeo Sugar Company, with six folders of records from Hakalau Plantation Company and one folder from Honomu Sugar Company. The records are organized in the following series or major categories:

- Correspondence
- Financial Records
- Miscellaneous
- Payroll and Personnel

Correspondence

1917-1941. The correspondence series contains a short run, 1936-1941, of incoming letters from C. Brewer & Co., Ltd. (HCP 1/1-9) which includes some references to the effects of World War II. The C. Brewer & Co. circular letters, 1917-1929, (HCP 1/10-14) show the relationship between plantation and agency as well as the effects of World War I.

Financial Records

1889-1946. The Building Valuations, circa 1946, document buildings at Hakalau and Pepeekeo sugar companies. Folders HCP 4/1-6 hold Hakalau records and HCP 4/7-10 hold Pepeekeo valuations. A separate sheet for each building contains a photo, the assessed valuation, tax key, square footage, type of construction material, year built, and present condition. All camp villages are documented including Nanue, Wailea, and Waikaumalo at Hakalau Sugar, and Honomu and Pepeekeo village camps at Pepeekeo Sugar Company. The Pepeekeo Sugar Company Cash Books, 1917-1939, (V.1-10) are

the workbook copies, showing entries to the final cash book record. The Cash Books, 1889-1939, (V.11-14) are the final cash book records. There are gaps in the latter run and both kinds of cash books are a limited source of employee names. The General Journals, 1898-1936, have a gap between 1924 and 1928. In the early volumes, some individual names are found in the store accounts. The General Ledgers, 1894-1920, document operating expenses. The Orders and Requisitions, 1910-1940, document the companies with whom C. Brewer & Co. did plantation business, as well as details of all the materials required on the plantation, i.e. hospital supplies, mill machinery, nuts, and bolts, fertilizer, sugar bags, and paint. The planters Advances and Trail Balances (V.27A-32) are a source of names of adherent planters and contractors growing cane for Pepeekeo Sugar.

Miscellaneous

1941. The Camp Diagrams, n.d. (HCP 4/11-14) provide floor plans of the houses in various camps, as well as the names of many of the occupants. The Honomu Sugar Company Historical Chart notes production, events, and managers of the company between 1900 and 1941. (HCP 2/14)

Payroll and Personnel

1921-1936. There is only one time book (PV.1) in the record group. It is a source for names of skilled employees and bango numbers for all other workers.

Strengths and weaknesses of the Hilo Coast Processing Company record group:

Strengths: Hakalau Plantation Company had the reputation as having some of the best employee conditions in the Islands, a direct result of the interest of Mr. John Ross, manager between 1905 and 1942. The Hakalau Building Valuations reflect this aspect of the company's history. All the Building Valuations are an excellent source of information about living conditions, being especially graphic because a photo of each dwelling is included. (HCP Box 4) The C. Brewer & Co., Ltd. circular letters provide insight into plantation/agency relations over a ten-year period. Additionally, the circular letters combined with the orders and requisitions document the plantation business history of C. Brewer & Co., Ltd. for 30 years.

Weaknesses: The correspondence series is short, only six years, and consists of letters from only one source, the agency. The payroll series is severely limited, one volume only, and there are no production or corporate records in this record group.