

HAWAIIAN SUGAR PLANTERS' ASSOCIATION

PLANTATION ARCHIVES

Register of the
HONOKAA SUGAR COMPANY
Haina, Hawaii
1875-1959

Accession: 84-09
105 cubic feet
September 1989

Processed By
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HONOKAA SUGAR COMPANY

Honokaa Sugar Company is located on the northeast coast of the Island of Hawaii approximately 51 miles above Hilo. The northern side of the plantation has an ocean frontage ten miles long bordered by a high cliff. Kahaupu Gulch forms part of the eastern border and Waipio Valley, the western. The lands, which extend from the sea a distance of about three miles toward the mountains, range in elevation from 280 feet at Kukuihaele landing to 1,955 feet inland on the slope of Mauna Kea. The region is cut by a number of gulches and the slopes are generally steep. This presents considerable problems in growing and harvesting cane due to temperature and rainfall variations at different elevations and the problem of transporting it over rough terrain. The search for better varieties of cane has been one of the most important phases of work at Honokaa Sugar Company.

The history goes back to a predecessor company, Honokaa Sugar Plantation started in 1876 by two men Messrs. Siemsen and Marsden, who began with 500 acres. They planted the first crop in 1876 with the help of Hawaiian laborers and installed a 2-roll crusher mill. This small mill was the first one in the Hamakua area. In 1878, F.A. Schaefer organized a new concern with J. Marsden, J.F.H. Siemsen, J.C. Bailey & M. McNerny. The Honokaa Sugar Company was chartered on May 8, 1878 and Schaefer served as its president for a period of forty years. After the change in ownership, great improvements were made and by 1899 a new six-roller mill was installed making Honokaa Sugar Co. a nine-roller mill.

Schaefer organized another sugar firm adjoining the Honokaa Plantation in August 1879 and named it Pacific Sugar Mill. In 1913, Pacific Sugar Mill sold its mill and sent its cane to be ground at Honokaa. At this time, the two companies came under one management, although retaining their separate entities. In February 1928, the two plantations were finally merged into one company under the name Honokaa Sugar Company. The plantation eventually grew to encompass over 9,000 acres, half of it in fee simple lands.

In the early days, cane was hauled to the railroad or to the mill by means of mule & horse-drawn wagons. Between 1904 and 1910, two ditches were constructed by Hawaiian Irrigation Co., Ltd. to bring water from the Kohala Mountains and from Waipio Valley. The irrigation company was taken over by Honokaa Sugar Company in 1915. The greatest use of the water was for fluming of harvested cane and the plantation had an alaboate system of flumes for transporting cane from the hillsides to railroad cars. The Company's railroad system extended over a distance of six and a half miles and in connection with the flumes, offered an effective means of moving cane to the mill.

The mill was connected to the boat landing by an inclined tramway, which transported bags of sugar to the warehouse at the wharf. By means of a wire rope extending down the cliff to a steamer below, sugar was loaded directly onto the ship. In 1919 Honokaa Sugar Co. was able to ship sugar directly to the mainland using this method. Formerly sugar bags were sent by inter-island steamer to Honolulu and reloaded only mainland-bound vessels.

At the time of Honokaa's inception, most of the working force was Hawaiian. As the Company grew people from various parts of the world came in this order: Chinese, Portuguese, Japanese, Puerto Ricans, Koreans and Filipinos. A few Russians and Spaniards also worked at Honokaa for brief periods. The plantation furnished for free use about two hundred houses for its employees. The houses were laid out in villages containing outdoor cookhouses, bathhouses, laundries, and running water. Free fuel was also supplied for cooking and heating water. In case of illness, the plantation provided free medical care at its hospital. A Government school, Oriental school and several churches were located nearby. A store and dairy offered staple goods for sale. Later most of the labor on the plantation was performed by contractors, whose earnings were greater, but they did not receive housing.

Honokaa Sugar Company also had the distinction of being the world's oldest commercial producer of macadamia nuts. The first trees were planted in 1916 as part of a reforestation project at elevations where cane would not grow.

The Honokaa Ranch division was also started in 1916. It consisted of about 2,600 acres of grazing land above the cane fields and 600 head of cattle. Approximately 120 animals were slaughtered each year and the meat consumed locally.

In spite of several severe droughts and continuing problems with plague in the early 1900's, Honokaa Sugar Company managed to progress in producing low cost sugar. Much credit for this success goes to Mr. W.P. Naquin, Plantation Manager between 1916 and 1944. In 1978, Honokaa Sugar Company merged with Laupahoehoe Sugar Company, a T.H. Davies Company plantation, and became known as Davies Hamakua Plantation Inc. Later on it was bought by Francis S. Morgan and renamed Hamakua Sugar Company.

(See following page for a list of managers.)

MANAGERS OF HONOKAA SUGAR COMPANY

- J.G. Tucker: First manager appointed May 10, 1878.
Resigned August 23, 1878.
- Probart: Appointed by the Directors August 23, 1878, but declined
so that Mr. Tucker remained until his successor could be
appointed.
- J.C. Bailey: Appointed 1878.
Resigned August 9, 1880.
- W.H. Rickard: Appointed August 16, 1880.
Resigned March 5, 1892.
- John Watt: Appointed March 5, 1892.
Resigned March 31, 1903.
- K.S. Gjerdrum: Appointed March 16, 1903.
Resigned December 31, 1910.
- A. Morrison: Appointed October 24, 1910, effective January 12, 1911.
Resigned January 31, 1915.
- G. Jamieson: Appointed July 1, 1915.
Resigned February 29, 1916.
- W.P. Naquin: Appointed March 1, 1916.
Retired March 15, 1944.
- Leslie W. Wishard: Appointed March 15, 1944.
Retired June 30, 1955.
- Richard M. Frazier: Appointed July 1, 1955.
Retired February 28, 1972.
- P. Ernest Bouvet: Appointed March 1972.
Resigned 198?

HSPA PLANTATION ARCHIVES

Honokaa Sugar Company Scope and Contents

BACKGROUND, UNPROCESSED RECORDS

During October, 1987, all Hamakua Sugar Company records, approximately 445 cubic feet, were removed from storage, fumigated and brought into the Archives. The Honokaa Sugar Company records were segregated for processing in November 1988 and were ready for use in September 1989.

After processing, the Honokaa record group contained 46 boxes and 150 volumes. 23 additional boxes of records were received from Hamakua Sugar Company in June 1989 and processed during July and August.

NOTES, PROCESSED RECORDS

Honokaa Sugar Company records are organized in the following series or major categories:

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

Corporate Records

1885-1959. This series includes Board of Directors and Stockholders Meeting Minutes, Annual Corporation Exhibits, Schedules of Tariff and various Sundry Documents, which are items referred to in the General and Agency correspondence, i.e. Copies of agreements, leases, reports, etc. These documents also contain lists of employees for various years. (See itemized index for a complete list of the documents.)

Correspondence

1879-1943. There are four major categories in this series: Letters to and from F.A. Schaefer & Co., 1879-1939; General Correspondence, A-Z 1910-1919, & 1921-1938; HSPA Correspondence, 1915-1939; Miscellaneous.

Correspondence between Honokaa Sugar Co. and the agency, F.A. Schaefer & Co., begins in 1879 and continues to 1939. Between 1879 and 1921, there are generally separate “In” and “Out” files. After 1921, each file contains both incoming and outgoing correspondence. Press copybooks, which are very fragile, hold the correspondence through 1902. Correspondence to Schaefer & Co. from the plantation manager contains weekly and monthly reports and also mentions weather, goods & sugar shipping, orders, drafts, labor situations, railroads, land matters, construction, planters & machinery. In 1913, reference to Pacific Sugar Mill becomes included in the Schaefer correspondence. From the mid 1920’s on, detailed steamer reports were made by Honokaa Sugar Co. to Schaefer, documenting steamer calls at the landing. Because of the variety in titles, the folder arrangement in the register is not always in chronological order. The researcher is advised to examine the series completely to avoid missing any years or subjects.

The early General Correspondence from 1910-1919 is arranged alphabetically by writer’s last name, company or government agency. The filing is inconsistent, i.e. Kukuihaele Lighthouse—some letters are in “L” and others in “C” & “D” for Dept. of Commerce. The remaining correspondence from 1921-1938 is arranged chronologically. The General Correspondence contains many laborers’ names, particularly those requesting passage back to the Philippines.

The HSPA General Correspondence 1915-1939 mentions numerous individual Filipino laborers, including those who died on the plantation. Dr. Nils Larsen’s Ewa Health Project reports contain information on numerous health subjects: nutrition, disease, birth control, sanitation, dentistry and clinics. The HSPA Labor and Statistics Correspondence also mentions individual laborers, their work records, families, and requests to return to the Philippines.

The Miscellaneous letters include correspondence from C. Brewer regarding sugar shipments and applications for passage to Hilo with laborers’ names. The Employee Correspondence, 1922- 1938, was originally labeled “Employee Letters, General.” The subject matter pertains to personnel and labor, such as, vacations, resignations, re-entry permits, proposed pension plan, store credit policy, rules & regulations, hospital & nursing charges, etc. It also contains some handwritten letters and petitions from laborers. Correspondence from the Honokaa and Pacific Sugar Mill stores, 1918-1924, provides information about store inventory and orders with F.A. Schaefer & Co., Honolulu Iron Works, T.H. Davies, Benson Smith Drugs, Gregg & Co., American Factors, E.O Hall & Son, and Henry May & Co. Orders included food, Japanese & Hawaiian rice, machinery, clothing, furniture, fuel, animal feed, building materials, etc.

Financial Records

1875-1944. This series has an extensive run of general journals dating from 1878, when Honokaa was first incorporated, through 1942. The early volumes include the names of many Hawaiian laborers and the early Chinese immigrants. The general ledgers also date back to 1879 and contain information regarding buildings, equipment, livestock, etc. The series includes some early invoices, 1882-1907, which provide a glimpse of early plantation activities, such as, receipts for runaways, hospital expenses, and lists of

patients and boarders. A good picture of the growth of Honokaa Sugar Co. from its beginning in 1876 up through the 1940's can be gleaned from this set of records.

Personnel & Payroll

1876-1944. This series contains an excellent run of payroll and bonus records from the plantation's beginning in 1876 to 1941. They generally include bango number, name, days worked, contractor, and are often listed by nationality, including women and minors. Those laborers listed only by bango number can often be cross-referenced with lists of unskilled workers in the Sundry Documents or correspondence. Many of the volumes and cards are divided into Honokaa Division & Kukuihaele Division after Pacific Sugar Mill's records were transferred to Honokaa. As a general rule, the 10,000 bango numbers refer to Honokaa contract laborers and the 20,000 bango numbers refer to Kukuihaele contract laborers. The labor agreements from 1910-1922 include a copy of the worker's HSPA labor contract, a health certificate and work record card, which often contains the date of arrival, name of steamer, bango number, place of birth and relatives.* The employment slips dating from 1927-1940 are divided into aliens, citizens, Honokaa and Kukuihaele Divisions. These include name, bango, birth date and place, family members, schooling, previous employer & social security number. The Filipino Affairs Records, 1915-1941, contain material similar to Laupahoehoe Sugar Co. correspondence series Labor and Statistics. V.73A contains lists of laborers' Chinese, Hawaiian & Portuguese, at W.H. Rickard's Plantation from 1879 to 1884. *24/12-27/18

Production Records

1892-1941. Records and reports dealing with fields and harvesting, cane weights, mill statistics, sugar shipments and other production data can be found in this series.

Miscellaneous

1908-1963. A statistics book, V.69, covering the years 1911-1963 offers an excellent overview of the Honokaa Sugar Co. It contains valuable information in concise summaries regarding most aspects of the plantation. A freight book and landing account record reflect shipping transactions. Insurance policy books offer information regarding buildings and dwellings, including the names of some residents. The macadamia nut invoices show the type and amount of nut products sold to various markets. The miscellaneous material also contains numerous blueprints of the mill and villages.