

HAWAIIAN SUGAR PLANTERS' ASSOCIATION  
PLANTATION ARCHIVES

Register of the  
KAIWIKI SUGAR COMPANY  
1879 – 1943

Accession: 84-09  
68 cubic feet  
October 1988

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# KAIWIKI SUGAR COMPANY

## BRIEF HISTORY

The history of Kaiwiki Sugar Company begins in the 1860s when the sugar industry was young and sugar production was more an individual effort than a corporate venture. J.M. Lydgate, who grew up in Hilo, traced Kaiwiki's history to one of four small plantations extending northward from Hilo. In 1869 a real estate transaction showed that the Ookala Sugar Co. purchased 8,679 acres for \$15,500 to establish a plantation. The new owner was Judge F. H. Harris with General William H. Soper as the president and manager.

In 1872 Ookala had 650 acres planted to cane and 175 laborers were employed. Ownership changed in 1875 when the Hitchcock Brothers purchased the Ookala plantation for \$15,000. In 1879 Ookala was chartered with a capital of \$100,000 represented by 100 shares at \$1,000 each. Under the new charter, Hackfeld & Co. served as the new agent and W. L. Green, the new president. Several changes in agents followed: from 1878 to 1884, G. W. Macfarlane & Co.; from 1885 to 1887, W. G. Irwin; from 1888 to 1889, J. N. Wright; from 1890 to 1902, W. G. Walker; and from 1903 to 1909, C. Brewer & Co.

Although Ookala Sugar Company owned a total of 8,679 acres, its cane land was limited to 1,405 in fee simple and 3,005 acres of leased land. Located between the Hamakua district and the rain-drenched lands of the Hilo district, the land rose to an elevation of 1,800 feet, with steep slopes and a frontage on the sea of about 4 ½ miles and a depth of 2 ½ miles. Because of its adverse natural location, both irrigation and fluming were impossible and the plantation depended entirely on natural rainfall. Thirteen great gulches divided the Ookala fields making the land subject to erosion and transporting the cane to the mill was a major problem. Although the soil supported good crops of cane, the plantation was not profitable. In 1909 bankruptcy was finally declared, and the controlling interest passed to Theo. H. Davies & Co., the Honolulu agents. The defunct Ookala Sugar Company was renamed Kaiwiki Sugar Company.

Growing sugar under adverse natural conditions did not, however, dampen the new Kaiwiki management. The steep slopes and the thirteen great gulches became challenges. In 1910 Kaiwiki increased its annual yield to 2,134 tons and by 1932, the first million ton year of Hawaii sugar production, Kaiwiki Sugar produced 12,1389 tons.

Increased production came about as a result of modern scientific methods of agriculture and milling. For example, until 1913 planting was almost restricted to the Yellow Caledonia variety of cane, but with the introduction of the D-1135 seedling which was better suited to the higher fields, the Yellow Caledonia cane was confined to the lower areas. In addition, a short railway system extending along the lower fields transported the cane to the mill. For the higher fields, a five-mile wire rope system was used to carry the cane downhill by gravity in sling loads to be dropped into rail cars for mill delivery.

Sacked sugar from the mill was delivered to Hilo Railroad Company for shipping. Since steam plows were too heavy to transport from one field to another across the gulches, mules were used for plowing. In 1914 water for the mill and all domestic use was piped three miles from Kaawailii Gulch.

In 1920 Kaiwiki Sugar Company produced 5,939 tons of sugar and about 600 laborers were employed. Improvements included a clubhouse, cottages for single men, and a tennis court.

Corollary to Kaiwiki's mechanization program in the 1930s, the company also improved its skilled labor force. Manager Leslie Wishard sought capable Hawaii-born workmen and mechanics, paid them high wages, and provided them with modern houses and above-average surroundings. A new water and sewer system was built for the plantation camps, including hot water in all the houses. In addition, fully equipped boarding houses provided community kitchens, dining rooms, and the company hired first-class cooks.

The company also maintained a small but well-equipped hospital with a staff of registered and visiting nurses who held daily clinics in all the plantation villages. A baseball field and grandstand were constructed for the sports aficionados and an old hall was converted into a modern air-conditioned 300-seat talkie theater where Waikiki first-run pictures were shown three weeks after they were seen in Honolulu.

In 1939 the aerial cable form of cane transportation was being discontinued and the crop of 1940 was the first in which all the cane was trucked directly to the mill. Also in 1940, a new mill yard cane derrick was installed as were new boilers in the mill. Kaiwiki Sugar Company not only became one of the three lowest-cost plantations in the territory; it also gained the distinction of being the first plantation to mechanize its entire crop operations.

In February 1950 Kaiwiki set a new all-time weekly production record of 631 tons of 96-degree raw sugar. Kaiwiki's previous records were toppled again when 18,560 tons of raw sugar was produced in 1953.

In 1954 Kaiwiki Sugar Company took its place among the leaders in the sugar industry by giving its employees an opportunity to become independent homeowners. Plantation land was used for employee-owned housing sites.

Kaiwiki Sugar Company's almost fifty years of existence ended when the company and neighboring Laupahoehoe Sugar Company merged on January 3, 1957. Both plantations were owned by Theo. H. Davies & Co. With the merger, the number of Hawaiian sugar plantations decreased to 27.

The managers of Kaiwiki Sugar Company from its reorganization in 1909 to its merger in 1957 included:

George McCubbin, 1909-1913

James Johnston, 1914-1933

Leslie W. Wishard, 1933-1941

Andrew J. Walker, 1941-1944

David E. Larsen, 1944-1956

Andrew J. Walker, 1956-1957

HSPA Archives

October 11, 1988

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HSPA PLANTATION ARCHIVES  
KAIWIKI SUGAR COMPANY

SCOPE AND CONTENTS

NOTES

Correspondence

The correspondence series of Kaiwiki Sugar Company is identified by folder titles beginning with: KAI, C. The folder titles vary and include the following:

KAI, C, General Corres. In – date  
KAI, C, General Corres. Out – date  
KAI, C, General Corres. Alpha or Subject – date  
KAI, C, Ookala Correspondence Out – date  
KAI, C, T.H. Davies Co. In – date  
KAI, C, T.H. Davies Co. Out – date  
KAI, C, T.H. Davies Co. Out-In – date  
KAI, C, T.H. Davies Co. Hilo, In/Out – date

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.

1888-1909: The Ookala correspondence (LSC30/1-6, 31/1-3) is contained in copybooks, the pages of which are brittle and require careful handling. Correspondence and orders to agents, W. G. Irwin & Co., comprise the majority of this material until December 1898, when C. Brewer & Co. became the agents. An Ookala Sugar Co. letter to C. Brewer & Co. dated December 16, 1898, (LSC30/4) indicates that the account with Irwin was closed and subsequent correspondence includes many letters and orders to Brewer as the new agents. A list of Ookala employees (1901) is found in LSC31/4.

1909-1939: The Kaiwiki general correspondence (See General Outline for box and folder locations) includes monthly orders to T.H. Davies Co. or Bishop Bank for cash for payroll, transportation applications for Filipinos to return to the Philippine Islands, doctor's reports, HSPA census sheets, reference to various community activities, tax correspondence, HSPA Experiment Station correspondence, correspondence with various companies; Standard Oil, Gregg Co., Ruggles Sales, Bishop Bank; and reports to Federal Emergency Relief Administration. There is a gap in the 1938 outgoing correspondence.

The T. H. Davies Co. correspondence (some in letter books) includes letters and orders from both the Hilo and Honolulu offices. Unless the folder title indicates Hilo, the Honolulu office is assumed. The Honolulu office correspondence is divided into "IN" and "OUT" categories. The Hilo office correspondence contains some storage orders as well as general material between plantation and agent. There is a gap for the year 1936. Among the routine correspondence, the Honolulu office material includes monthly reports of the race and number of laborers in Hawaii as well as letter concerning Spanish and Portuguese immigrants. An immigration official from Poland visited Hawaii (LSC49/1) to report on possible immigration. Correspondence in the spring of 1917 (LSC50-4) addresses rice shortages, vegetable and livestock raising, and emergency sugar storage resulting from conditions of World War I.

Other interesting documents in the correspondence series include expatriation regulations for Japanese, descriptions of charitable organizations on Hawaii, and livestock diseases. Starting in 1935 (LSC39/3) the general correspondence filing system became alphabetical by writer's last name or company name. In May 1941 Davies & Co. and Kaiwiki paid persons enlisted in the military a partial salary for first year in the service (LSC57/1). LSC54/1 consists of order letters, one of which includes the phrase "Ookala Sugar Plantation Company in Dissolution." LSC57/3 contains a resolution by the HSPA Trustees extending medical coverage to all plantation employees earning \$100.00 or less a month. Aside from the routine correspondence in LSC58/1, the folder contains a memo about Cayetano Ligot's statement encouraging the plantation to hire Filipinos with families settled permanently in the Islands.

## Financial Records

General Journals begin with one volume from Ookala Sugar Co.; General Journal, 1879-1885 (v.172A). There is a gap in the journals until v.173 which begins in 1913 and the journals end in 1942 (v. 173-179). Volumes 178 and 179 contain names of store customers.

Field Journal, 1931-1933 (v.192) details costs for individual fields for preparation, cultivation, fertilizing, hoeing, plowing, furrowing, seed cane, and replanting.

General Ledgers, 1909-1941 (v.180-186) include accounts by crop year and individual planter accounts and ledgers.

General Supplies Inventory, 1928-1934 (v.187-188) include lumber, railway, and feed supplies, field and shop equipment, and dollar amounts.

Inventory and Assets Book, 1922 (v. 190) includes age, original and depreciated values of mill & buildings, wagons, furniture, wire rope equipment.

Insurance Record Book, 1933-1936 (v.191) includes insurance companies, name, policy number, amount, and name of insured item.

Cash Books, 1909-1938 (v.164-172) are in good condition and show the company's strike expenses in 1937.

Day Book, 1922-1928 (v.189) includes individual names and some bango numbers.

Order Books, 1909-1918, 1936-1937 (LSC54/1-9), consist of order letters to T.H. Davies Co., some of which were reduced to lists when the plantation could phone in orders. There is a gap between 1918 and February 2, 1936.

Store Order Book, 1912-1913 (LSC55/1) includes ethnic items such as Chinese shoes and Japanese food and medicines.

Invoices, 1913-1917 (LSC55/2-3) are fragile.

### Personnel and Payroll

Accident Reports, 1931-1939 (LSC55/4-5) include names, nationalities, age, marital status, dates, type and length of injuries, payments, physician's reports, and death expenses.

Payroll Books, 1908-1943 (Pv.28-34) contain names, bangos, deductions for tax, advances for electricity and laundry, arrival date, citizenship, camp, birthdate, social security number.

Bonus Book, 1935-1936 (Pv.35) includes names, bangos of laborers in cultivation gangs.

### Production Records

These records include Cane Trash Reports, 1934-1939 (LSC 40/14), Crop Information & Estimates, 1941 (LSC42/19), and Field Records, 1940-1941 (PRv. 15). The Cane Trash Reports have weekly and monthly entries including cutters, bundlers, weight, tare penalty, and bonus. The Field Records include cane varieties and estimated tons of cane and sugar.

### Corporate Records

Comprising this collection are Manager's Reports from 1910 to 1943 (LSC46/1-6). These reports cover crop statistics, improvements, housing, and financial records. Some folders contain loose-leaf pages and require careful handling.

### Miscellaneous Records

These records include Blueprints, 1940-1943 (LSC40/12) of millyard equipment; Brochures, 1940 (LSC42/13); and Reports, 1935-1937 (LSC41/15), of Hilo students' earnings, contract rates, Niu boarding house, and garden contest rules. -2 binders of photos of homes shelved at end of Laupahoe things.

### Other Company Records



The Ookala Store Inventory, 1925 (v.193) contains lists of merchandise on hand at the plantation store.