

HAWAIIAN SUGAR PLANTERS' ASSOCIATION

PLANTATION ARCHIVES

Register of the
KEKAHA SUGAR COMPANY
1880-1946

Accession : 84-08
62.5 cubic ft.
K.S.C

Processed by
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KEKAHA SUGAR COMPNAY HISTORY

The Kekaha Sugar Company is located in the Southwest region of the island of Kauai. KSC property varies from one mile to one and a half miles in width and runs approximately 12 miles in length. The acreage of the plantation can be divided into three distinct areas. One area, the low-lying marshlands, runs the entire length of the plantation. Some of these marshlands are below sea level and the soil is of a loose calcium type. The middle fields constitute the acres between the marshlands and the foothills. The soil here is red, alluvial and clay-like. The mauka fields are where cane can be grown at an elevation of over 1850 feet and the soil is red and heavy. This typography gives Kekaha the unique distinction of growing cane on the highest and lowest fields on any irrigated plantation in Hawaii.

KSC's first pioneer, Valdemar Knudsen, a native of Norway, arrived in Kekaha in 1856. He acquired a 30-year lease on crown lands in the Waimea district where he established a ranch. Using an old Hawaiian ditch at Waiele, he drained and reclaimed about 50 acres on which he and Captain Han L'Orange planted sugar cane in 1878. This cane, of the Lahaina variety, was the first commercially grown sugar cane in Kekaha. In 1880, Anton Faye and W. Meier bought and harvested the first crop, introducing the first member of the Faye family into KSC history.

By 1886, there were three separate concerns in this district dealing with the production of sugar; under a lease from Valdemar Knudsen, Mr. H. P. Faye planted cane in Mana; Messrs. Meier and Kruse were growing cane in Kekaha; and the Kekaha Sugar Mill Company took over the milling interest, grinding cane on shares. The first mill was jointly owned by Otto Isenberg, Carl Isenberg, Mr. Brady, Paul Isenberg, Albert Wilcox, G. N. Wilcox, and S. M. Wilcox. From 1884 to 1899, Otto Isenberg was the mill manager. In 1898 all three concerns were brought together to form the present Kekaha Sugar Company.

Although the climate of Kekaha was ideal for raising sugar cane, the major drawback was the lack of rainfall. Water resources, therefore, were a major concern. In the early days, all water for irrigation was pumped from springs located around Kekaha. As early as 1881, G. N. Wilcox was making surveys to bring water from the mountains and in 1884, H. P. Faye bored artesian wells in the Mana section. Engineers pursued other resources to accommodate the demand for irrigation water and by 1907, 12 miles of ditches brought Waimea River water to the uplands. The ingenuity of these early pioneers eventually materialized into an elaborate network of water supply from mountain streams, the Waimea River, wells and springs. Teams of Japanese workers specialized in building the tunnels, which connected the irrigation systems under mountain ridges. Through the use of ditches, drains, flumes, and pumping stations to move water, arid land that had been unfit even for pasture was turned into productive growing land. One Kekaha field, planted in 1891 with Lahaina cane, was still producing over 8 tons of cane per acre in the 1920s. In 1942, the record of 17.97 tons of sugar per acre was set by cane grown in those same fields.

Around 1922, H. P. Faye started to drain low lying salt marsh areas intending to make wasteland into productive cane land. Using ditches and planting the new acres with the salt tolerant cBadilla type of cane, 2,000 to 3,235 acres were reclaimed by 1931. When the soil became less salty, the more productive H-109 cane was planted. This reclamation project, the largest undertaken in the Territory, was complemented by the practice of creating new cane land from the deposition of silt brought down by freshets from the hills.

In 1910, the plantation had a railroad system of 15 miles of permanent track with two locomotives and cane was transported by flume from the mauka fields to collection points on the railway. The nine-roller mill at the factory produced 80 tons of sugar a day and the sugar bags were sent by rail to the steamship landing at Waimea. KSC used the cultivation contract system or piecework system whereby individuals or “gangs” cultivated certain fields and were paid according to the amount of cane harvested. Kekaha Sugar employed about 1000 people in the early 1900s and approximately 300 families lived in plantation houses. Serving the plantation population were four independent stores, Waimea Hospital, public schools, and the Foreign Church.

Kekaha’s agricultural land, over 7,000 acres in the 1930s, had always been leased from the government, which required lease negotiation every 15 to 35 years, depending on the terms of the latest lease. In 1922, at the time of the lease renegotiation, the company purchased outright the mill and campsites, an area of about 40 acres. With the assurance of the new lease agreement, a contract to rebuild and improve the Kekaha sugar mill was given to the Honolulu Iron Works. By 1924, a new 15-roller mill was in operation, grinding nearly 40 tons of cane per hour. When negotiating a new 21-year lease in 1938, the Honolulu Advertiser stated that KSC was the Territory’s most valuable single piece of property. The current lease is in effect until 1993.

Kekaha was well known in its pursuit of diversified farming efforts. The plantation helped support a large community garden in Mana. During the 1930s a 16-acre vegetable garden was started at an elevation of 1600 feet. One year later the garden produced approximately 95 tons of vegetables and was expanded to 24 acres, helping to make KSC self-sufficient in food supply. Currently, farming of vegetables is not done at KSC.

By 1940 Kekaha had changed completely to mechanical cane harvesting, partly in response to a labor strike that took 300 men out of the workforce, and trucks had replaced flumes for transportation of cane from the mauka fields. One of Hawaii’s first cane cleaning plants was installed at Kekaha to prepare the mechanically harvested cane for the mill rollers. In 1947, trucks took over completely from the railroad, bringing cane to the mill and transporting newly manufactured sugar for shipment to the refinery.

During World War II, when manpower on the plantation was in limited supply, the Waimea and Kekaha schools provided work-for-victory teams of students to help on the plantation. Other war work included The Red Cross, Kauai Volunteers, The USO, and truck farming. At the end of the war, in 1945, the ILWU Local 149 Unit 9 was formed at Kekaha Sugar Company.

In 1951, KSC management changed from a system of three divisions; Mana, Mauka, and Kekaha, to a functional system with one superintendent for a particular function covering the entire plantation. In 1954, Honolulu Iron Works built for KSC the longest and heaviest mill train in Hawaii; a 100 foot long series of 17 rollers, capable of crushing 125 tons of cane per hour. That year a four-phase improvement plan was completed; the new crushing plant, a hydro-electric plant in Waimea Valley, a low-grade centrifugal station in the factory, and a new steam generator that replaced seven old type boilers.

The Faye family has been connected with growing cane on Kauai since 1880, when Anton Faye and W. Meier harvested the first crop for Kekaha Sugar. In 1927, H. P. Faye retired as manager after nearly 30 years with the company. In 1935 Lindsay A. Faye became manager, retiring in 1963, and L. A. Faye, Jr., the current manager was appointed in 1973.

Like other sugar companies in Hawaii, KSC served by an agent company in Honolulu which functions as merchant, shipper, and business manager. Initially Hoffschlaeger Company was the agent company followed in 1887 by H. Hackfeld & Company, which became American Factors in 1919. Today Kekaha Sugar Company is a subsidiary company of AmFac.

Improved techniques in cultivation and manufacture have documented KSC's contemporary history, most notably advances in steam generation and experimentation in the Silver ring diffusion process. In 1983 Kekaha Sugar employed about 400 people and produced 54,819 tons of sugar, a dramatic change from the 1000 tons produced in 1883.

Accession #84-08
62.5 cubic feet

HSPA PLANTATION ARCHIVES
KEKAHA SUGAR COMPANY

SCOPE AND CONTENTS

BACKGROUND

Kekaha Sugar Company records were removed from storage containers located on HSPA's grounds on July 9, 1985. They were fumigated and two days later brought up to the Archives. In total, there were 73 boxes, 34 items, and bundles of unprocessed records. While at Kekaha, these records were kept in an attic and/or upstairs vault in the plantation office. The dry conditions at Kekaha provided a very good environment for record storage. Only one box of materials was damaged by mold and it was treated by the archivists.

NOTES

Kekaha records span from 1880 to 1946. Financial records began in 1880 and correspondence begins in 1884. (See Finding Aid). KSC series consists of:

- Corporate Records
- Manager's Personal File
- Correspondence
- Financial Records
- Personnel and Payroll
- Production Records
- Cultivation Contracts
- Miscellaneous Records
- Records from Other Companies

Corporate Records

1893-1945, Box 1: Agreements, annual reports, Board of Directors minutes, a few stock records.

Manager's Personal File

1885-1945, Boxes 2, O-1: H.P. & L.A. Faye's correspondence, a number of administrative records, bill of sale between V. Knudsen and H.P. Faye, German letters.

Correspondence

1884-1946: Boxes 3-32

General time span:	1884-1929 Box 3-22	1935-1939 Box 25-29
	1930-1934 Box 23-24	1940-1946 Box 30-32

Scope and Contents (cont.)

Correspondence (cont.)

Feb. 1891. In boxes 19-32, arrangement is alphabetical by folder title, then chronological by earliest letter date in the folder. Folder descriptions and dates of significant letters are noted in the Finding Aid.

Interspersed in this series are other types of records: reports, audits, blueprints – which were left intact because of related correspondence. The original KSC filing system was followed as closely as was reasonable.

Overall, these records show KSC's ties with other businesses, its agent and the community. Many letters are on attractive letterhead.

Financial Records

1880-1954, v.1-47, v.67-76, 39/1-6: This series provides a fairly comprehensive financial picture of KSC. From 1880 until 1898, KSC was divided into three separate concerns and in 1898 these concerns were brought together to form the present day Kekaha Sugar Company.

Cash Books – Gap between June 1931-March 1938

General Journals – Complete

General Ledgers – Gap between 1884-1886

Cash Vouchers include signatures of tunnel contract workers from Kekaha, Mana, and Waiawa Ditch. They were written in Japanese with English translations.

Personnel and Payroll

1882-1920, 1933-1939, Pv.1-65, O-3 and O-4, Box 18, 38/6a-7: Payroll records provide names, nationalities, cash advances, board, wages and workdays. They are bi-monthly and divided into three main categories: Kekaha, Mana, and bonus. Care must be taken when handling these journals because they are bulky and heavy.

Personnel records contain reports and/or contracts with signatures and bangos of all field workers at KSC between 1933-1937. There is an early (1885) skilled labor contract (18/4) in English and German, as well as a laborers account book from 1882 (38/6a), complete with index.

Cultivation Contracts

One payroll volume, KSCPv.3a, Dec. 1896-Feb. 1898 was photocopied.

Unfortunately, this volume was so badly laminated together that only the names, which appeared on the left-hand side of the payroll book, were able to be copied. Although the page heading in this volume indicates Mana Plantation, the personnel names are the same as in the preceding KSC volume.

1909, 1917-1939, 1/3-3, O-2-25, O-5, O-6, 35/1-4, 38/8-14:

These contracts are agreements, receipts or other related papers regarding work done at KSC. Signatures, rates, and folios are provided.

Scope and Contents (cont.)

Miscellaneous

Various dates: contents by subseries –

Blueprints – Earliest blueprint is of a standard rock car (1903). The most recent is from 1945, a Kenworth truck. There are some blueprints, which were left in the Correspondence series due to related letters or proposals. Blueprints are arranged by subject, with a brief description, company name, and date.

Comparative Crop Reports for AmFac Plantations, 1920-1925 – These reports include costs, labor reports, quality of sugar, crop and some stable (ranch) reports for all AmFac plantations. Incomplete.

KSC Orders, 1938-1943 – This subseries reflects the accountability between agent and plantation. It affords a glimpse of the volume of materials and supplies ordered over a five year time span covering the early part of WWII.

Monthly Statements, 1922-1937, 1941 – Includes operating expenses, permanent improvements, income accounts, sugar reports.

Tax Receipts, 1904-1905, 1913, 1918-1920 – Includes poll, road, school and personal taxes, names and bangos, income and property taxes.

Oversize Box #2, 1900s – Miscellaneous records too large for foldering. They include stamps, pay envelopes, land issues, U.S. Corps of Engineers and KSC, laborer information, newspapers and articles.

Records from Other Companies

1880-1898, 1904-1944, 34/1-10, V.67-78, 39/1-6: This series contains annual reports from some foreign companies, other plantations, and financial records from KSC's predecessor companies. A cashbook from Meier & Kruse, dated 1880 (39/1), is KSC's oldest record. Other records include Waimea Dairy Cash Book (1904-1916), and Waimea Store Accounts (1910-1915).

PHOTOGRAPHS

Most photographs in this record group accompany mill machinery proposals. The photographs may be found in the Correspondence series, or under "photograph" in the PA database.