

HAWAIIAN SUGAR PLANTER'S ASSOCIATION

PLANTATION ARCHIVES

Register of the
OAHU SUGAR COMPANY
1897-1940

Accession: 84-01
36.5 cu. ft.
O.S.C.

Processed by
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H.S.P.A.

OAHU SUGAR COMPANY

BRIEF HISTORY

The idea of a 10,000-acre sugar company was inspired by a prospectus written by Benjamin F. Dillingham in 1894. The idea took root, and, led to the incorporation of Oahu Sugar Company.

The company was to be situated on the slopes of the Waianae and Koolau mountains, east of Honolulu. In the late 1900s, this arid land was mostly covered with rocks, lantana and guava.

The major obstacle confronting the young company was the assurance of a water supply. After exhaustive studies of water resources, the Oahu Sugar Company was established in what was once a village called Aualii. Oahu Sugar Company first drilled for water and later constructed ditches to bring water down from the mountains. Eventually, Aualii became known as Waipahu, or, “gushing water” in Hawaiian.

The first sugar cane of OSC was harvested in 1899. Oahu Sugar Co. expanded, reaching nearly 20 square miles. Ninety-four percent (94%) of the land used for cane was leased, usually for a term of fifty years, from various estates. The remaining land was fee simple. The major lessors were: Ii Estate; Oahu Railway and Land Co.; Bishop, Robinson and Campbell Estates.

Organizational Structure

AmFac and its predecessor, H. Hackfeld & Co., have served as factors for Oahu Sugar Co. since its inception. H. Hackfeld maintained branch offices in New York City and in San Francisco.

The first board of Directors for OSC consisted of nine major stockholders: S.C. Allen; C.A. Brown; F.J. Lowry; W. Wolter; Paul Isenberg (President); B.F. Dillingham (Vice-President); M.P. Robinson (2nd Vice-President); J.F. Hackfeld (Treasurer); and E. Suhr (Secretary). Mr. W.F. Allen was elected as auditor.

The Company's managers from 1897-1940 were: A. Ahrens (1897-1904); E.K. Bull (1904-1919); J.B. Thomson (1919-1923); E.W. Greene (1923-1937); and Hand L'Orange (1937-1956).

Plantation Life

The skilled employees at Oahu Sugar Co. came primarily from Germany. As typical of plantations during this time period, OSC faced a shortage of unskilled laborers with the exception of a small number of Hawaiian workers. Mostly laborers came from the Philippines, Japan, China, Portugal, and Norway.

Plantation Life (cont.)

Each employee received a house free of charge, complete with firewood, fuel, and water for domestic purposes. By the 1930s, garbage collection, street cleaning and sewage disposal were provided.

The plantation store sold produce and retail goods to employees at cost. Other store buildings were rented to tenants of various nationalities to give employees a wide choice in the selection of goods.

OSC provided clubhouses, athletic fields, and playgrounds. Baseball was a favorite past time and OSC's team maintained an outstanding record in plantation league tournaments. The Company donated labor and materials to local schools. A hospital was built in 1920 and the services of a resident physician were provided free of charge to unskilled employees. There was a moderate charge to skilled employees and "outsiders", people not employed with OSC, who sought medical assistance.

By 1925, the population of the plantation ranged between 9500-10,000 people. There were approximately 2,850 names on the payroll and it was estimated that at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of the residents of Waipahu earned a living in connection with the production of sugar.

The greatest portion of work performed at OSC was done on the "contract" or piecework system. For example, cutting and piling cane was paid for by the ton; plowing and planting was by the acre; irrigation, cultivation, and general care of the fields was based on crop yield.

Milestones

*A major achievement of the Company was the completion of the Waiahole Tunnel through the Koolau Range. A proposal for the establishment of the Waiahole Water Company was presented to OSC's Board in 1911, by J.B. Lippincott. The proposal was accepted, and Mr. H.K. Bishop was appointed Chief Engineer of the project. The Waiahole Water Co. proposed collecting water from windward Oahu by means of tunnels, ditches, and pipes running to the leeward side. Construction began in 1911, and was completed about 1916. It provided a three-mile tunnel and pumping plants with a capacity of 100 million gallons of water a day.

*In 1907, OSC was the first sugar company in the world to install a 12 roller mill. The Company broke a world's record in 1928 by averaging 12.02 tons of commercial sugar per acre. Oahu Sugar Co. has continued to deliver high yields in its more than 80 years of producing and manufacturing sugar.

Oahu Sugar Co. transformed an arid cattle range, into a highly productive agricultural area. Though hardships existed, people of all nationalities worked, lived, married and died together.

Plantation Life (cont.)

Oahu Sugar Co. contributed not only to the technological advances of the sugar industry, but also to the colorful, multi-cultural and ethnic history of the Islands.

Accession #84-01
36.5 cubic feet

HSPA PLANTATION ARCHIVES
OAHU SUGAR COMPANY

SCOPE AND CONTENTS

BACKGROUND

These records of Oahu Sugar Company were stored in the Company's vault, which accounts for their excellent physical condition.

Nearly all OSC records listed on the Hawaiian Historical Society's 1977 inventory were brought to HSPA in 1983. Six items left behind or not found were: Bango metal tags (#159); Journal Vouchers, 1921-1934 (#131); Ledgers – General, 1905-1931 (#144); Letters – Misc., 1917-1918 (#185); Sugar Sales – Market changes; 1937-1942 (#188).

Many items not listed on the inventory were brought to HSPA. These include: social security records, tax forms, special payroll, and applications for marriage. Ewa and Honolulu Plantations merged with OSC, but unfortunately, most of the Ewa records were destroyed or dispersed.

OSC's collection begins in 1897 and while most series end in the 1940s, some subseries run into the 1950s. The entire collection consists of 15 boxes and 149 volumes.

A general outline follows. Should more information be required, one may use the database located in the Archives.

NOTES

Correspondence

1894-1911, 1918-1919: Boxes 1-10 – The correspondence series of OSC is arranged chronologically. There are name indexes for 1897-1910. Correspondence from 1917 to 1919 is pasted to labor agreements.

Large gaps in the correspondence are summarized below:

Sparse between 1902-1903, none between 1912-1916

None after 1907, except those attached items in Boxes 2-4 and 6-9

None after 1919

Early correspondence (1897-1902) was mostly handwritten and routine in nature; by 1903, letters were generally typed. The use of letterhead and colored paper became more prominent. There are numerous letters written in German, usually pertaining to

SCOPE AND CONTENTS (cont.)

Correspondence (cont.)

equipment or machinery parts. A few letters are written in Japanese from pensioners living in Japan. The effect of the plague during 1900 can be seen throughout the correspondence for that year.

By 1907, there was a significant increase in correspondence. Replies from OSC are often attached to other company letters. Notable at this time was an increase in the uses for molasses and the implementation of the bonus system.

The strike by Japanese sugar workers in 1909 was frequently referred to in the correspondence of the time. Job applicants to OSC and letters of recommendation from OSC can be found under "Applications" or "Recommendations" in the name index (Box 5 & 6).

All letters from 1917 to 1919 are pasted to labor or cultivation contracts. Since 4-6 pieces of correspondence were glued to each contract, it was impossible to arrange them in chronological order. The labor agreements themselves were used for binding and date from approximately 1904-1907. Many of contracts are written in Japanese and English. These letters reflect the impact of World War I on the plantation.

When using the date base, the numbers provided after a keyword are the box/folder location.

Financial Records

1897-1952: Boxes 11, 12, 15, v.1-118, 123-128 – The Cash Books, General Journals, AmFac Journals and General Ledgers subseries are complete. Earlier ledgers (1897-1905) have indexes. The trial balance provides a key to the changing account numbers used in the general ledger. Tax and social security records provide bangos, ethnicity, and field division.

Personnel & Payroll

1898 (one), (1904)-1945: 4/11-17, 5/4, 15/10-12, 15/14-15, v.119-122, v.131-134 – There is a good run of bango books, however, payroll records are few in number.

Production Records

1905-1910, 1921-1933, 1937-1951: 15/1-6, 15/18, v.126-128, v.130 – Sugar shipments, vessels, quantity and crop data are in this series.

Cultivation Contracts

1904-1907: 3/1-12, 4/1-4, 4/6-9, 7/2-28, 8/1-11, 9/1-16 – These contracts are labor agreements pertaining to field work ; laborers names and signatures are provided. With the exception of 4/6-9, contracts were used for binding.

Cultivation Contracts (cont.)

In the database, the asterisk must be used as part of the location to differentiate it from the correspondence series. (Please see one of the archivists).

Miscellaneous Records

Various Dates: For location, see the General Outline. Includes applications for marriage from the Ewa District, land/water lease descriptions, voting ballot (1930), a Filipino brochure in Ilocano, five posters printed by the GPO during WWII, a blueprint of a blower and an insurance form. The latter three are located in roll or oversize boxes.

Records from Other Companies

Ewa Plantation: 1890-1970, Castle and Cooke, agents.

Acquired by OSC in 1970. Many of the company's records were taken by Castle and Cooke to their main office, with the exception of those needed by various OSC departments. Some records were destroyed.

Annual Reports-1892, 1894-1895, 1897-1906, 1927: 15/33

Honolulu Plantation: 1898-1946, C. Brewer, agents.

Ledgers, lease book and household book. Sometimes called Halawa or Aiea Plantation. Acquired by OSC in 1946. V. 139, 140, 148-149

Waiahole Water Co.: In addition to three general ledgers, references to this company can be found in Financial and/or Correspondence series of OSC. 11/13, 14/14-15, v.136-137, 145-147