

Finding Aid to the

Henry Birkmyre Papers

KAUA'I HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Lihue, Kaua'i, Hawaii

Ms 18

HENRY BIRKMYRE PAPERS

.05 c.f.

Abstract

Henry Birkmyre was born August 30, 1867 at Port of Glasgow, Scotland the second son of the wealthy co-owner of the Gourock Ropework, a firm engaged in the manufacture and sale of rope, canvas and other supplies for sailing ships. On the retirement of his father and his uncle who had jointly headed the family business, management of the business was handed over to Henry and his brother William. Henry left the management of the firm to his brother and came to Hawaii in April 1888. He was initially employed by the Kilauea Sugar Plantation Company on Kauai, worked briefly for the Kipahulu Sugar Company and the Pioneer Mill Company before returning to Kilauea Sugar where he was head overseer. The earliest items in his papers are issues of Glasgow newspapers containing obituaries and articles relating to the history of the Birkmyre family and the family business. The majority of the records are from the period when Birkmyre resided on Kauai and consist of personal correspondence, records concerning Birkmyre's business affairs, and a record of his ownership of a share in the Waihina Hui. The August 1, 1944 issue of The Garden Island contains an obituary of Birkmyre on page 1.

Scope and Contents

The Waihina Hui

The Waihina Hui came into being as a result of the complex financial arrangements made by Chief Kekaunohi to sell title to the land in the Waihina Valley to the families residing there at the time of the grand Mahele. The original Hui consisted of 71 persons each of whom owned an undivided one seventy-first share in the entire land holding. As time went on some of the original owners sold their shares, and some shares were subdivided as the original owners died leaving their holdings to several descendants. The Rev. John M. Lydgate's "Affairs of the Waihina Hui" published in the Hawaiian Annual, 1913 pp. 125-137 recounts the origins and early years of the Hui. Documents in the Birkmyre papers, lists of owners of the Hui recording the percentage of the land owned by each for the years 1942 and 1943 and a Treasurer's Report for the year 1943, show the status of the Hui during that period.

Records Found in Collections

Accession number 19xx—068

Processed in 1999 by Mary Lou Bradley and Helen and Robert Stevens

Emma Makee Will and Ledger Pages for the Makee Sugar Co., Kapa'a for the months of January through December 1889.

As executor of the will Birkmyre was charged with the task of selling and accounting for the household goods and property of his wife's sister Emma Makee who died in 1942. As various household objects were sold Birkmyre sent checks to the Bishop Trust which was handling the funds for Wilhelmina Tennet the legatee. The documents accompanying the checks record the items sold, the price, and in many cases the buyer. There are receipts for these transactions and for payment of household bills due as well as correspondence inquiring about use of the Makee land by the U.S. Armed forces in 1942. The ledger pages record the number of man days spent each month in plowing, cultivating, clearing new land, work on drainage, fertilizing, plowing ratoons, and maintenance of the railroad and warehouse.

Business letters papers and receipts

These include notices of semi-annual remittances from the Grourock Ropeworks, correspondence relating to stocks held, and receipts for household expenses, safe deposit box rental, and other routine expenses. There is a copy of Birkmyre's will revised in June 1942 to take account of his second marriage and an inventory of the furnishings of the Birkmyre house dated September 1944.

Personal letters

The earliest letters are from Birkmyre's brother William and his sister informing him of the death of their mother in March 1889. Other letters are from friends of Miriam Stephen sent to her prior to her marriage to Birkmyre after the death of his first wife. There are also letters addressed to Birkmyer and Miriam, and letters to her after his death in 1944. Many of the last are notes of thanks for hospitality at her home in Hanalei.

Obituaries

Clippings from the Port Glasgow Express and Observer reporting the death of Birkmyre's mother and of his Uncle John contain biographical data and information about the family business and donations to charity. A memorial record of the death and services for Birkmyre's first wife, Maude Hatfield Birkmyre includes a brief biography, a photograph of a memorial window in Christ Church, Kilauea, and the record of cremation and burial of her ashes in Nuuanu Cemetery, Honolulu.

Memorabilia

This is a collection of Christmas cards, bookmarks, wedding invitations, clippings from newspapers and magazines, and some cancelled stamps.

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Postcards

The earliest postcard was written in 1928 and contains a brief message from Henry Birkmyre Senior sent from Torquay where he was wintering asking for an "olo" of Kauai. Ten of the postcards are to the second Mrs. Birkmyre; the earliest bears a 1935 postmark and is addressed to her under her maiden name Miss Miriam Stephen, Haverford, Pennsylvania. Most of the cards are from the 1940s and 50s, are sent to her at Hanalei and are expressions of thanks for her hospitality. Some unused postcards contain pictures of the Kauai Inn, Lihue, the torchlighting ceremony at Coco Palms, and photos of buildings and places on Oahu.

Folder

- 1 Wainiha Hui Documents
 Lists of owners of shares September 1942 and September 1943 and
 Treasurer's Report September 1943.

- 2 Emma Makee Will and Makee Sugar Company Ledger Pages
 Monthly ledger pages for the Makee Sugar Co., Kapa'a showing
 man days spent in plowing, cultivating, fertilizing, etc. for the
 year 1889.

- 3 Business Letters, Papers, and Receipts
 A detailed record of Birkmyre's personal finances required by the Military
 Government in 1942

- 4 Personal Letters

- 5 Obituaries
 A clipping from the Port Glasgow Express and Observer of March 29, 1889
 gives the details of the death of Birkmyre's mother who fell in front of a
 train. . A Memorial document for Maude Hatfield Birkmyre who died Dauber
 21, 1939 includes a list of contributors to installation of a memorial
 window in Christ Church, Kiluaea

- 6 Memorabilia
 An astrological document "Planetary tendencies for 1937-1938 for Miriam
 W. Stephen".

- 7 Postcards
 A post card of June 1945 from Pfc. Lin Ping Ching thanks Mrs. Birkmyre for her
 gift and kind wishes on his induction into the armed forces.