

Finding Aid

For

A LETTER FROM ROBERT CRICHTON WYLLIE TO QUEEN EMMA

And

LADY FRANKLIN AND THE SANDWICH ISLANDS

By

Ethel Damon

Kaua'i Historical Society

Lihu'e, Kaua'i, Hawai'i

MS 30

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A Letter from Robert Crichton Wyllie to Queen Emma
And
Lady Franklin and the Sandwich Islands by Ethel Damon

Abstract: A Letter from Robert Crichton Wyllie to Queen Emma

On August 2, 1863 Mr. Wyllie wrote a letter to Queen Emma in which he talked about naming Emmaville, part of his plantation at Hanalei, Kaua`i, in her honor. He also discussed his friendship with Lady Jane Franklin.

Abstract: Lady Franklin and the Sandwich Islands by Ethel Damon

In 1953 Ethel Damon presented a paper, "Lady Franklin and the Sandwich Islands," to the Kaua`i Historical Society. Lady Jane and her niece set sail for America and the Sandwich Islands in 1860. The reason for the journey was the search for information about Lady Jane's explorer husband, Sir John Franklin who was lost during a trip to the Arctic attempting to find the long sought Northwest Passage to China. Damon paints a very vivid picture of Lady Franklin's adventures in Hawai`i where she became a close friend of the royal family, and a close friend of Robert Wyllie. Lifestyle of the day is described with flare and detail.

Robert C. Wyllie Letter to Queen Emma, and Ethel Damon's Paper on Lady Jane Franklin and the Sandwich Islands, processed in 2007 by Bette Layton, MS 30

Biographical Sketch of Robert Crichton Wyllie

Mr. Wyllie was born in Scotland where he attended Glasgow University. He made a small fortune in Mexico and South America and traveled the world before coming to Hawai'i in 1844 with General William Miller, the new British consul.

A confirmed bachelor, Wyllie had a sense of chivalry that was many years out of date. In 1845 he became the minister of foreign affairs for the Hawaiian Kingdom, a post he held for 20 years, under three kings. During these years he lived on a beautiful estate, "Rosebank" located in O'ahu's Nu'uuanu Valley. However, as the years went by he looked around the islands for a country estate and in 1853 he bought the lease of Godfrey Rhodes' coffee plantation in Hanalei where he employed Godfrey Frederick Wundenberg as estate manager.

In "Shoal of Time" author Gavan Daws described Wyllie as "the most influential member of the cabinet; devoted to the idea of monarchy and a hierarchical society; an aristocrat who above all, flicking at specks of political dust with his handkerchief and speaking always and only of honor; a perpetual bachelor, eternally patting little children on the head and pressing coins into their hands, inviting groups of older girls to his home for meetings and for what he called his Tea and Twaddle Society, appearing at children's fancy dress balls dressed as Little Bobby Wyllie in kit and sporran; dancing elaborate and delicately safe attendance on the respectable married ladies of Honolulu, making mystifying references to a vague, hopeless, heart breaking romance (with a Chilean nun?) that had completely unmanned him years before he came to the islands, and never, never mentioning marriage; he was long winded to the point of absurdity and was a prodigal spender."

When Wyllie learned that a group of restless young bloods in San Francisco decided in October 1851 to set sail for Hawai'i and overthrow the Kanaka Majesty's government, he was convinced the island kingdom was headed for trouble. In addition to his position as minister of foreign affairs, Wyllie was Secretary of War and of the Navy. He devised a defense plan that involved of Hawaiians and militiamen. The whole scheme fizzled out. However, Wyllie wanted to maintain a strong standing army but when the tax payers complained it cost too much numbers were reduced to a skeleton force.

In 1860 King Kamehameha IV, Queen Emma and two year old Prince Albert Edward Kauikikeaouli made a visit to Hanalei where they were guests of Wyllie. In honor of the event he named his plantation "Princeville."

Wyllie's life was anything but boring. In 1861 he hosted a visit by Lady Jane Franklin, widow of the explorer, Sir John Franklin who disappeared on his fourth expedition to the Artic. Lady Jane was a lively, energetic 69 year old who delighted 63 year old Wyllie. He housed her in a spacious apartment at Rosebank. It appears that the confirmed bachelor was rather smitten with Lady Jane. Wyllie was taken with the idea that she should visit Princeville and she quickly agreed. While waiting for construction of a luxury home, he rented Kikiula, a house located on a hill overlooking the Hanalei Valley.

There Lady Jane enjoyed a restful twelve day visit. After her departure Wyllie returned to his duties on O`ahu.

Wyllie converted his plantation from coffee to sugar in 1862. The same year he built a sugar mill, at an estimated cost of \$40,000 near the river at the east end of the Hanalei Valley. Most of the mill machinery was brought from Glasgow, Scotland. He increased his Kaua`i holdings by purchasing the na ahupua`a of Kalihiwai and Kalihikai. In 1863 Wyllie purchased 700 acres in Hanalei from Charles Titcomb. This part of his holdings he named Emmaville after Queen Emma.

Wyllie never realized his dream of retiring to Princeville. In correspondence written to Reverend Rufus Anderson, Wyllie complained of poor health. His last letter to King Kamehameha V, written September 12, 1865 described his serious condition. Wyllie died October 19, 1865 and was buried at the Royal Mausoleum in the Nu`uanu Valley on O`ahu. At the time of his death his Princeville plantation was heavily encumbered.

Biographical Sketch of Ethel Moseley Damon

Ethel Moseley Damon was born in Honolulu April 2, 1883, the daughter of Edward Chenery Damon and Cornelia Beckwith Damon. Her family was very involved in the early history of Hawai`i. Her grandfather was the Rev. Samuel Chenery Damon, New England missionary, and chaplain of the Seamen's Chapel 1841- 1842. She was a direct descendant of John Damon, who came from Kent, England to Massachusetts in 1633, and of John Moseley, who moved from Lancastershire, England, to Dorchester, Massachusetts during early colonial days. She was the niece of Samuel Mills Damon, banker and minister of finance under the Hawaiian Monarchy, and of the Rev. Francis W. Damon of the Chinese Mission in Honolulu. Miss Damon's mother, Cornelia Beckwith, was a niece of the Rev. Dr. Edward Griffin Beckwith, first president of O`ahu College (Punahou School) and first pastor of the Central Union Church, Honolulu.

Miss Damon grew up in Honolulu, graduated from Punahou School in 1901, and the Normal School in 1903. She continued her education at Wellesley College where she received her Bachelor's Degree in 1909.

From 1912 to 1917 she was on the faculty of Punahou School where she taught history, French and German. Following the United States entry into World War I, she enlisted in the canteen service of the American Red Cross in New York in December 1917. After Miss Damon arrived in France, she served as an interpreter in Paris and as a nurse's aide before being transferred to the children's department and assigned to serve under Miss Mabel I Wilcox in caring for refugee Belgian and French children in LaHavre, France.

When French authorities took over the work in March 1919, Miss Damon was decorated by the Mayor of LeHavre with the medal of the city. She also received the Order of Elizabeth from the Queen of Belgian.

Before Miss Damon went overseas, she had written the 75th Anniversary Pageant of Punahou School. In 1920 she was author of both the historical pageant and the play which celebrated the Hawaiian Mission's Centennial.

Miss Damon was a prolific author, devoting a good part of her life to recording the early history of Hawai`i. Her works were carefully researched and documented. Best known of her historical works is the two volume "Koamalu: A Story of Pioneers on Kaua`i and of What They Built in That Island Garden" published in 1931. This outstanding work is accepted as the basic history of Kaua`i.

She has written and edited many historical articles including the life of "Father Paris" of the Kona Mission. For her book, "Father Bond of Kohala," published in 1927, she made many visits to Kohala and also went to Boston to consult the archives of the American Missions as well as to Hallowell, Maine, birthplace of the venerable Kohala missionary.

For many years Miss Damon lived as a close friend and companion of Miss Mabel Isabel Wilcox in Lihue. She is responsible for much of the recorded information about George N. Wilcox, his life and work at Grove Farm Homestead.

After a long illness, Miss Damon passed away at Wilcox Hospital on April 1, 1965. She was survived by two nephews, Damon Gifford and Wayne L. Damon, both of Honolulu, and a niece, Mrs. Damon Riddle of Connecticut.

Scope and Content

A Letter from Robert Crichton Wyllie to Queen Emma

On August 2, 1863 Wyllie wrote a letter to Queen Emma in which he discussed two topics: (1) how he named part of his plantation Emmaville, and (2) his friendship with Lady Jane Franklin.

Wyllie's style of writing is formal, flowery and very elaborate. He described to the Queen an evening when sitting on his veranda with Monsieur de Varigny and M. Bourgong that he decided to name part of his Princeville Plantation, Emmaville. He had hardly uttered the word when a bright light blasted into the sky from that direction. By coincidence it was a bonfire started by one Captain Morse. Wyllie went on to say that he hoped he had not been too audacious in using the Queen's name.

Next Wyllie went to great lengths to clarify with the Queen his relationship with Lady Jane Franklin lest the Queen be under the impression that there was a serious romance under way. Wyllie, a confirmed bachelor, explained there was not to be any match between him and the good lady. He goes on to write that the foolish rumor, started as a joke, came from General Miller who had learned that Lady Jane had been a guest at Rosebank, Wyllie's home on O`ahu. The fact that he had offered a prime piece of land on his Kaua`i Ranch added fuel to the rumor which spread like wild fire. However, he clarified his actions by stating he had given the land to induce Lady Jane as inducement to remain in the kingdom as a public blessing.

Lady Franklin and the Sandwich Islands

In 1953 Ethel Damon presented a paper, "Lady Franklin and the Sandwich Islands," to the Kaua`i Historical Society. Mrs. Damon described Lady Jane as one of Hanalei's legendary figures, a sprightly, little English lady walking along the Princeville cliffs. Lady Jane was accompanied on her travels by her husband's niece, Miss Sophia Cracroft, her companion for 30 years. The ladies journey to America and the Sandwich Islands began in 1896.

The circumstances that brought Lady Jane to the Sandwich Islands were most unusual. Her husband, Sir John Franklin, a world class explorer, was lost in 1847 during a trip in which he discovered the long sought Northwest Passage to China. As the Sandwich Islands lie at the cross roads of the Pacific, both north-south and east west they were an ideal place to obtain information as ships came and went. While monitoring her husband's rescue trips and waiting for news she became well acquainted with the royal family.

En route to the Sandwich Islands Lady Jane and her niece went around South America and stopped in California. Upon arrival in Honolulu they became house guests of Robert Wyllie at his Nu`uanu Valley home, "Rosebank." Wyllie arranged for the ladies to be presented to King Kamehameha IV and Queen Emma. The friendship that developed was very beneficial for Lady Jane.

When the ladies embarked on a trip to Maui and the Big Island, the King put at their disposal his own gig and six oarsmen for use at any port. Lady Jane's description of her trip to the volcano and a visit there is done with excellent detail. Upon their return to O`ahu the two ladies enjoyed a number of activities with the royal family and had open access to the palace.

A visit to Wyllie's plantation at Princeville, on Kaua`i is described with color and panache. Both Lady Jane and her niece describe in detail people, lifestyle, visits to plantations, and a trip across the island. At Nawiliwili they boarded the "Kilauea" for the two hour trip to Koloa and on to Waimea then back to Koloa. After disembarking they went by carriage two miles up the valley to visit Dr. and Mrs. Wood before again boarding the "Kilauea" bound for Honolulu.

Upon arriving back on O`ahu, Lady Jane's first visit was with the King at the palace. They discussed a wide range of topics. Lady Jane and her niece were very involved with social events of the community, attending musicals, teas, receptions, excursions into the country side and dances, all of which are described in great detail giving a superb feel for the lifestyle of the day.

Next Lady Jane went to California for a brief time then returned to Hawai`i to visit the royal family when en route to Japan. Again she was the guest of Robert Wyllie at Rosebank. From Hawai`i she proceeded to Calcutta before making her way home to England. She communicated with the royal family and Robert Wyllie after returning home.

In 1864 Lady Jane wintered in Spain but hurried back to England to host a visit from Queen Emma which is described in detail. At the age of 78 she made a trip to Alaska (1870).

Although Lady Jane never returned to Hawai`i (Sandwich Islands) she maintained close contact with Queen Emma and Robert Wyllie through correspondence.

CONTAINER LIST

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| Box 1 | Folder 1 | Letter from Robert C. Wyllie to Queen Emma, 8-2-1863.
Typewritten copy of the letter. |
| | 2 | Letter from Robert C. Wyllie to Queen Emma, 8-2-1863
Copy of handwritten letter. |
| | 3 | Lady Franklin and the Sandwich Islands by Ethel Damon,
1953.
Working copy of lecture on onion skin paper, fragile. |
| | 4 | Lady Franklin in the Sandwich Islands by Ethel Damon,
Typewritten copy of the lecture. |

