

Establishment of the Public Archives of Hawaii as a Territorial Agency

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AT THE Honolulu office of the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, on January 26, 1903, William DeWitt Alexander received a caller from Washington, D.C. This stranger was Worthington C. Ford, Chief of the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, then on his way to Manila to inspect the archives of the Philippine Islands. Listed as bound for Hong Kong, Ford had arrived in port the preceding afternoon aboard the liner *Korea* of the Pacific Mail Steamship Co., less than 5 days out of San Francisco.¹ Doubtless he called on Alexander as the corresponding secretary of the Hawaiian Historical Society and the leading Hawaiian historian of his day.

In his diary Alexander recorded the visit with this brief note: "Mr. W. C. Ford of the Congressional Library called, to inquire about the Govt Archives."² Ford learned that the records of the defunct Kingdom of Hawaii were for the most part in Honolulu in various government buildings, particularly in Iolani Palace, which served as the Territorial Capitol. The Secretary of Hawaii was charged with the duty of keeping the legislative and diplomatic archives of the Kingdom, but his custody of them was only legal and perfunctory, with little or no attention given to their preservation. Other records of the monarchy officials were in the care of their successors under the Territory of Hawaii. In general the archives were exposed to destruction by fire, moisture, insects, and careless handling.³ Commenting on the lack of a fireproof depository, Ford filled the mind of Alexander with the apprehension "that the Federal Government will request the Territory to deliver over

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¹ Honolulu *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, Jan. 26, 1903.

² Jan. 26, 1903, in Library of Hawaiian Mission Children's Society, Honolulu. Permission to quote from the Alexander diary has been graciously given by Mrs. E. C. Cluff, Jr., Librarian of the society.

³ W. D. Alexander, "Report of the Corresponding Secretary for the Year Ending November 28, 1904," in Hawaiian Historical Society, *Annual Report*, no. 12, p. 10 (1904); [S. B. Dole], *Governor's Message to the Legislature of the Territory of Hawaii: Session of 1901 . . .*, p. 4 (Honolulu, 1901).

its archives."⁴ Ford wanted to remove the records to the Library of Congress, but apparently he left the impression with Alexander that if a suitable building were erected to house the archives the Territory would be allowed to retain possession of them.⁵

Ford left Honolulu the next day,⁶ but no word of the purpose of his visit appeared in the local press until a month later. Perhaps the story was published then because of the arrival in Honolulu of the *San Francisco Chronicle* of February 16, which contained an editorial protesting the attempt of the Secretary of the Interior to transfer to the Library of Congress the old Spanish archives then housed in that California city. This editorial was reprinted in Honolulu and aroused the community concerning the fate of the Hawaiian records.⁷

A number of citizens, mindful of the relation of the archives to Hawaiian land titles, protested strongly against the possible removal of the old records to Washington. Among these was Curtis Jere Lyons, who had worked as an assistant in the Government Survey, an agency under the monarchy. He reasoned that, even though the Federal authorities might have legal right to the archives, they would be committing an immoral act to remove them from the Islands. He called attention to the fact that Hawaii was not a conquered country but had entered the Union of its own accord. Alexander entered publicly into the argument by declaring that Hawaii should never permit its records to leave the Islands. He based his contention on the difficulties in settling land and other legal disputes were the archives located in Washington. These two men were joined by William Drake Westervelt, a Congregational minister and an authority on Hawaiian lore, in expressing the opinion that the legislature should make an appropriation for a fireproof archival building.⁸

The editor of the Honolulu *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* called on the legislature to provide the needed structure: "With such a building we can make a good fight to retain the archives. Without it we are in a fair way to lose them."⁹

⁴ Honolulu *Evening Bulletin*, Feb. 27, 1903.

⁵ *Report of the Governor of the Territory of Hawaii to the Secretary of the Interior*, 1905, p. 18 (Washington, 1905; hereafter cited as *Report of the Governor*); *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, Mar. 1, 1903.

⁶ *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, Jan. 27, 28, 1903.

⁷ *Evening Bulletin*, Feb. 27, 28, 1903; *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, Feb. 28, Mar. 1, 1903.

⁸ *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, Mar. 1, 1903.

⁹ *Ibid.*

These men in Honolulu reasoned that they had the moral law on their side, but they knew that the civil law was against them. The Senate of the Republic of Hawaii on September 9, 1897, had approved the treaty for annexation to the United States, which provided for the cession of all "public property of every kind and description belonging to the government of the Hawaiian Islands, together with every right and appurtenance thereunto appertaining."¹⁰ Although the United States never ratified this treaty, the consent of the Republic of Hawaii to the accord had been acknowledged the following year in the joint resolution of Congress by which the Islands were annexed to the United States. The language of the treaty concerning public property was transferred to the resolution with the stipulation that "all and singular the property and rights hereinbefore mentioned are vested in the United States of America."¹¹ Even the archives of Hawaii had been legally federalized. The editor of the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* made the public aware that "Hawaii is but a Territory, with no voting representation, no law defending it from spoliation and the Secretary of the Interior is in control of our governmental affairs to a great extent."¹²

In spite of the fear that filled the minds of some of Hawaii's citizens in 1903, it appears now that Ford's threat to remove the archives was more imaginary than real. Apparently Ford in his conversation with Alexander was speaking unofficially and without authority from Herbert Putnam, the Librarian of Congress. Officials of the Library of Congress had been giving attention to the formulation of a policy concerning the disposition of public archives from areas that had been acquired by the United States. Since the fall of 1897 the Library had been in the process of settling down in its new building. In 1902 Ford had been employed as Chief of the Division of Manuscripts. The editor of the 14-volume *Writings of George Washington* (New York, 1889-93), he was ambitious to build up the manuscript holdings of the library.

On his westward trip Ford inspected the Spanish archives at Santa Fe, San Francisco, Manila, and Guam. Back in Washington, he made a report to the Librarian of Congress. The entire collection of Spanish and Mexican records, which had been left at Santa

¹⁰ "Resolution of the Senate of Hawaii Ratifying the Treaty of Annexation of 1897," cited in *Revised Laws of Hawaii, 1955*, 1:15 (San Francisco, [1957]).

¹¹ "Joint Resolution To Provide for Annexing the Hawaiian Islands to the United States," 55th Cong., 2d sess., *H. Res. 259* (Public Res. 51), cited in *Report of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the President of the Republic of Hawaii . . . 1899*, p. 4 (Honolulu, 1900).

¹² Mar. 1, 1903.

Fe in the custody of the Territorial authorities, had been brought to the Library of Congress for examination and repair. As a result of the petitions of societies and individuals in California, the Spanish archives in San Francisco had been left in that city. With the cooperation of the Navy Department the records at Guam were being searched with the "purpose of the transfer to Washington of such as may be of concern to the investigator in history and colonial administration." Ford had found the Spanish archives in the Philippines jeopardized by moisture and insects but made no recommendation concerning their administration, and his report contained no mention at all of the Hawaiian archives.¹³

In his report to the Librarian of Congress in 1904 Ford again made no reference to the records of the Hawaiian Islands. Rather he was then concerned with the idea of bringing together in one place all the Spanish archives of Florida, Mississippi, Texas, California, and New Mexico. He envisioned a collection of records in the Library of Congress to document the history of Spanish rule in the territory that once was New Spain.¹⁴ That year Ford published an article on "Public Records in our Dependencies" in the *Annual Report* of the American Historical Association. Still Hawaii was not included.¹⁵

In 1904 the Library of Congress announced that in the interest of research the sources of history should be located where they would render the greatest service. "The Library does not compete with local institutions in the purchase of material of merely local interest, nor does it seek to obtain by gift manuscripts that possess only a local value."¹⁶ It appears that Ford in his contact with Alexander in 1903 had been officious and that the Library of Congress had had no real intention of taking possession of the Hawaiian archives.¹⁷

¹³ "Report of the Librarian of Congress for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1903," 58th Cong., 2d sess., *S. Doc.* 10, p. 26-27.

¹⁴ "Report of the Librarian of Congress for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1904," 58th Cong., 3d sess., *H. Doc.* 18, p. 61.

¹⁵ 1904, p. 129-147.

¹⁶ "Report of the Librarian of Congress . . . June 30, 1904," p. 58.

¹⁷ The correspondence files of the Library of Congress contain no letters dealing with the Hawaiian archives except one from Alexander to Putnam about the opening of the new building. This letter will be cited later. The Hawaiian records are not mentioned in the Worthington Ford papers in the New York Public Library, nor the letter books (1898-1905) of the Bureau of Rolls and Library of the Department of State, nor the despatches of Harold M. Sewell to the Department of State, nor the correspondence of the Secretary of the Interior and of the Office of Territories with the Governor of Hawaii and other officials (1898-1907). All these record groups except the Ford papers are in the National Archives. Letters to the writer from David C. Mearns, Nov. 1, 1961, Oct. 17, Dec. 2, 1963; Mildred C. Portner, Dec. 13, 1962; Eliza-

The story of Ford's "threat" to remove the archives to Washington is an example of the mythologizing of history. It has been told and retold with additions through the years. Twenty-two months after the event Alexander wrote of it as an "inquisitorial" visit and placed it "some three years ago."¹⁸ In 1905 Governor George R. Carter identified Ford as "the Chief of the United States Bureau of Archives" and dated his visit "shortly after annexation."¹⁹ In a paper read before the Hawaiian Historical Society the next year, Archivist Robert Colfax Lydecker also placed the happening "shortly after annexation" and Ford as employed by the "U.S. Archive Bureau."²⁰ At times the story was used as a stick with which to beat the heads of the legislators, as when Archivist Albert Pierce Taylor sought funds for an addition to the archival building in 1929.²¹

Jason Horn, in an article in the *American Archivist*, put Ford's stop in Honolulu "shortly after the annexation of Hawaii in 1898."²² Even though Horn's use of the year 1898 was perhaps intended to date annexation rather than Ford's visit, 3 months after the publication of the Horn article in 1953 Clarice Taylor (using Lydecker's and possibly Horn's papers) fixed the date in the fall of 1898, when the Cullom Commission "was sitting in Iolani Palace behind closed doors and keeping mum."²³ By her account 5 years elapsed before the legislative grant for the building was allowed, when in actuality only a little over 5 months passed until the appropriation. Mrs. Taylor said, "Mr. Ford wrote tart letters to the Territorial officials . . . reminding them of their promise." Five months perhaps did not produce many "tart letters," for he was in Hong Kong, the Philippines, and Guam part of that time. In Ethel M. Damon's biography of Governor Sanford Ballard Dole, Ford was identified with the National Archives, which was not founded until 1934—31 years after his Pacific voyage.²⁴ The Ford

both E. Hamer, Oct. 17, Dec. 16, 1963 (all of the Library of Congress); from National Archives personnel to the writer: Jane F. Smith, Dec. 4, 1963; W. Neil Franklin, Dec. 3, 20, 1963; from the New York Public Library to the writer: Robert W. Hill, Dec. 30, 1961.

¹⁸ "Report of the Corresponding Secretary for the Year Ending November 28, 1904," in Hawaiian Historical Society, *Annual Report*, no. 12, p. 10 (1904).

¹⁹ *Report of the Governor*, 1905, p. 18.

²⁰ Robert C. Lydecker, "The Archives of Hawaii," in Hawaiian Historical Society, *Papers*, no. 13, p. 7 (1906).

²¹ *Report of the Board of Commissioners, Archives of Hawaii . . . to the Legislature of Hawaii*, 1929, p. 7 [Honolulu, 1929].

²² "The Archives of Hawaii," in *American Archivist*, 26:106 (Apr. 1953).

²³ "Hawaii's Archives Building Dates to Incident in 1898 [*sic*]," in *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, July 30, 1953.

²⁴ *Sanford Ballard Dole and His Hawaii*, p. 349 (Palo Alto, Calif., ca. 1957).

story did, however, serve a useful purpose in bringing about the establishment of an archival agency in Hawaii, for at that time fear of the "threat" existed in the minds of many citizens even though its force was not so great as was imagined.

At a special session of the legislature in 1903, called by Governor Dole to consider certain financial matters, a "loan fund" bill was passed to provide money for various public improvements. Approved by the Governor on July 11, this act contained an appropriation of \$75,000 to construct a "Fire-proof Building for the Preservation of the Government Archives."²⁵ During the 5 months after Ford's visit to Honolulu, public sentiment for an archives building had increased considerably. Its advocates were composed of three groups. First, there were businessmen concerned about land titles. Then, there were scholars, such as Alexander and Westervelt, who were genuinely interested in the preservation of the Islands' history. On the other hand Hawaiians gave support to the movement because of their desire to conjure up an image of the departed glory of their former rulers. With them it was a romantic embalming of a past now dead. "It was a popular measure, as the preservation of those ancient archives appealed to the love the people had for the monarchy," James Walter Girvin, librarian of the *Hawaiian Gazette*, wrote 2 years later to the editor of the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*.²⁶

The loan fund was financed by the sale of bonds authorized by Act 42 of the 1903 legislature, the first time the Territory had used this method to provide capital for internal improvements. The issuing of \$5 million in bonds was planned, but later the sale was limited to \$2 million.²⁷

As the money from the sale of bonds came to hand, there developed in the Territorial government the idea of a "hall of records." This term seems to have been used first by Lyons and Alexander in an interview with a reporter from the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*. They favored "a hall of records, fire-proof and set apart especially for the storage of these valuable papers." Lyons proposed that the hall be erected between Aliiolani Hale and Kapuwaiwa Hale.²⁸ Girvin indicated that the 1903 legislature intended the archives building to be an isolated building, with the

²⁵ *Laws of the Territory of Hawaii*, [1903], p. 473 [Honolulu, 1903].

²⁶ Feb. 22, 1905.

²⁷ *Laws of the Territory of Hawaii*, [1903], p. 235-237; *Report of the Governor*, 1905, p. 3.

²⁸ Mar. 1, 1903.

ground floor for current records and the second floor for the archives of the monarchy.²⁹

In November 1903 George Robert Carter succeeded Dole as the Territory's second Governor. C. S. Holloway, his appointee as head of the Department of Public Works, in January 1904 devised a plan for the hall of records to be located behind Aliiolani Hale. The ground floor would be used for office space, the second floor for the Supreme Court and the Survey Department, and the basement for vaults in which to store noncurrent records. He secured from each Territorial department an estimate of the storage space needed.³⁰

Secretary of Hawaii Alatau L. C. Atkinson, who had the legal custody of the records of the ministries of foreign affairs and the legislatures of former governments, replied to Holloway's request:

It will be necessary for this office to have considerable space if any systematic arrangement is to be made of the various valuable records in its custody. . . . These are at present deposited in various vaults and storerooms and are not readily accessible, it being necessary to refer to some of them continually.³¹

Holloway's plan for the hall of records called for the expenditure of the entire appropriation. When word of his proposal was made public, the editor of the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* immediately raised objection to such an expensive building:

It may be that fireproof halls of archives cost a great deal of money in large cities, but there is no reason why there should be a similar extravagance here. Hawaii, in contemplating a structure in the back yard of the Judiciary building at Honolulu, for the safe preservation of Government records, does not conjure up a massive pile of granite and chilled steel, but would be satisfied with a very ordinary fireproof storeroom indeed. For example a small building of double brick walls . . . would answer the needs of the Territory very well. . . . Such a building would look very well for a back yard and if put well away from the Judiciary building would not suffer from the burning of the latter edifice.

The Legislature was prodigal enough to appropriate \$75,000 from the loan fund for a Hall of Records—enough to build a hotel. In the Advertiser's opinion \$25,000 of that money would build all the Hall of Records Hawaii needs, leaving \$50,000 for other purposes. . . .

This is an era of economy and here is a chance to prove it.³²

²⁹ *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, Feb. 22, 1905.

³⁰ Holloway to W. E. Wall, Jan. 12, 1904, Letter Book 22, p. 165, Records of the Department of Public Works, Public Archives of Hawaii. (Hereafter the Public Archives of Hawaii is indicated by the symbol AH.) This letter was sent also to W. F. Frear, J. H. Fischer, Charles H. Merriam, A. T. Atkinson, and A. L. C. Atkinson.

³¹ Jan. 13, 1904, Letters of the Office of the Secretary of Hawaii, AH.

³² *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, Jan. 13, 1904.

In 1904 Honolulu was a small city of about 40,000. The expenditure of \$75,000 for this single project would have been an immense venture for that time. The editor knew that the Territory was in financial straits and that thrift was in order.³³

The Superintendent of Public Works had paid \$2,100 for the architect's plans and was ready to advertise for bids for the hall of records.³⁴ When presented to the Governor in April 1904, however, the plans were turned down, even though Carter was sympathetic to the need for archival care. Later he gave three reasons for disapproving the hall of records: (1) the difficulty in selecting a site, (2) the need for an administration building,³⁵ and (3) the unnecessary expenditure for such a hall.³⁶ Holloway reported to the press that the Governor was of the opinion that "it would be far better to put the money into a permanent government building, in which each department could have its own fire-proof vaults."³⁷ The need for a modern office building to relieve the crowded conditions of Iolani Palace was sorely felt by the administration,³⁸ but a greater need existed to balance the budget by reducing the cost of government. Even though the loss in postal and customs revenue (which Hawaii had sustained through annexation) was offset somewhat by an income tax, the Territory still did not have adequate financial resources. In 1904 the income of the Territory was \$2,415,356.33; the expenditure was \$2,844,054.81. When Carter rejected the plans for the hall of records, a special 12-day session of the legislature had adjourned a few days before. The session had performed effective work both in reducing prior appropriations and in curtailing expenditures. The result was an expected excess of some \$200,000 in receipts over the proposed expenses for the year ending June 30, 1905. Moreover, the public debt in 1904 stood at \$3,317,000, a sizable amount for a population of 154,000. The government was unable to borrow money except for certain public improvements.³⁹ In the face of such economy the "Hall of Records" movement was dead.⁴⁰

³³ *Hawaiian Almanac and Annual*, 1905, p. 18.

³⁴ *Fourth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Works to the Governor . . . 1904*, p. 56 (Honolulu, 1904).

³⁵ Carter to the legislature, Feb. 15, 1905, Messages, p. 49, Records of the Legislature, AH.

³⁶ *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, Apr. 30, 1904.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Carter to the legislature, Feb. 15, 1905, Messages, p. 42.

³⁹ *Hawaiian Almanac and Annual*, 1906, p. 31; *Report of the Governor*, 1904, p. 12 (Washington, 1904).

⁴⁰ Honolulu *Hawaiian Star*, Aug. 23, 1906; Holloway to Carter, May 12, 1904, Public Works file, Territorial Department Series, Records of the Office of the Governor, AH.

When the legislature of 1905 convened in Iolani Palace on February 15, Governor Carter urged the members to consider the problem of caring for the public archives:

Stored in the attic and vacant rooms of this building are numerous old books and papers and a large amount of correspondence, valuable as records of our past history. It has been recognized by previous administrations and by the present one that these should be preserved and at least so arranged and provided for as to be of service to the people.⁴¹

From some source had come a proposal that the Honolulu Library and Reading Room Association (the predecessor of the Library of Hawaii) assume the function of a government library, in addition to its work as a private subscription library, and that the public archives be deposited in this proposed agency. The Governor thought that this was praiseworthy, but that it was not expedient because of the financial condition of the Government.

With the desire to place the archival work of the Territory beyond the consequences of political change,⁴² Carter recommended "the creation of a Bureau of Archives under the control of a volunteer board, with the Secretary of the Territory as its executive officer."⁴³ The need for such a board was recognized by the writer of a letter to the editor of the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*:

Now that the government has settled down it is its duty to collect and rearrange all those archives of the beloved government of the Kamehamehas and preserve all for reference. There is nothing which so much appeals to the natives and old *kamaainas*⁴⁴ as a showing of respect for the old flag and the muniments of the old Hawaiian Government, which was represented at the court of St. James as well as at other foreign capitals for upwards of a century, and which had its consuls in every civilized country.⁴⁵

Acting upon the Governor's proposal, Senator S. W. Wilcox of the Island of Kauai introduced a bill on March 2, 1905, to provide for a Board of Commissioners of Public Archives. No one in either house voted against the measure. The "immediate approval" of the legislature enabled Governor Carter to sign it into law as Act 24 a month and a day after its introduction.⁴⁶

Act 24, destined to continue in force for more than half a cen-

⁴¹ Carter to the legislature, Feb. 15, 1905, Messages, p. 50.

⁴² *Report of the Governor*, 1905, p. 18.

⁴³ Carter to the legislature, Feb. 15, 1905, Messages, p. 50.

⁴⁴ Hawaiian for native-born persons.

⁴⁵ Feb. 22, 1905.

⁴⁶ *Report of the Governor*, 1905, p. 18; *Third Legislature of the Territory of Hawaii: Regular Session: Journal of the Senate*, 1905, p. 167, 243-244, 536 (Honolulu, 1905); *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1905, p. 817, 820-821 (Honolulu, 1905).

tury, authorized the Governor to appoint a three-member board with the responsibility "to collect all public archives, to arrange, classify and inventory the same; to provide for their safe keeping; and to compile and furnish information concerning them." The members were to receive no pay for their service but were to be reimbursed for expenses incurred in carrying out their work. The board was authorized to make "such contracts as are necessary to the proper performance of its duties."⁴⁷

On April 25, 1905, Governor Carter nominated Prof. William DeWitt Alexander and Albert Francis Judd II as members of the Public Archives Board.⁴⁸ Both were descendants of Congregational missionaries to the Hawaiian Islands. Alexander represented the past—he was 72. Judd represented the present—he was 30.

The Governor described Alexander as "an eminent scholar, exceptionally qualified for this work."⁴⁹ He had been educated at Punahou School in Honolulu and at Yale University. From 1858 to 1871 he was employed by Oahu College, Honolulu, first as professor of Greek and then as president. As a member of the Board of Education and head of the Government Survey he served both Kingdom and Republic. For use in the public schools he published *A Brief History of the Hawaiian Islands* (New York, 1891).⁵⁰ Alexander was one of the leaders in the organization of the Hawaiian Historical Society. He was chairman at a meeting in Honolulu on December 29, 1891, "to consider the expediency of forming an organization for co-operation in the study, preservation, and utilization of material relating to the condition and progress of the Hawaiian people and cognate races." At a second meeting, January 11, 1892, at which the society was organized and its constitution adopted, he served again as chairman and was elected corresponding secretary. On December 2, 1904, he became the society's president, and he was holding this office when appointed by the Governor to the archival board.⁵¹

Judd, a lawyer and a graduate of Yale University, was a first cousin of Governor Carter. In 1905 he was serving as a member of a commission to compile the laws of Hawaii.⁵² By law the third

⁴⁷ "An Act Providing for a Board of Commissioners of Public Archives" (Act 24), *Laws of the Territory of Hawaii*, 1905, p. 27-28 (Honolulu, 1905).

⁴⁸ Carter to the legislature, Apr. 25, 1905, Messages, p. 195.

⁴⁹ *Report of the Governor*, 1905, p. 18.

⁵⁰ *Hawaii Nei: A Series of Historical and Biographical Sketches Illustrated, Including the History of Honolulu for a Hundred Years*, p. 75 (Honolulu, 1899).

⁵¹ Minutes, Library of the Society, Honolulu.

⁵² John W. Siddall, ed., *Men of Hawaii*, 1:155 (Honolulu, 1917).

member of the board was the Secretary of Hawaii, who at that time was A. L. C. Atkinson.

Even before Alexander and Judd were sworn into office on May 2, the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* suggested that the "large front room" in the Capitol attic be used as a temporary archives office.⁵³ This idea had merit because it would place the office near the greater part of the archives. On April 29 Judd inspected the records in the Capitol, where "he saw enough to convince him it was high time some care was taken of the papers."⁵⁴

Among the first acts of the Board of Commissioners of Public Archives was the employment of Robert Colfax Lydecker as the first archivist of Hawaii.⁵⁵ In his message to the legislature, Governor Carter had suggested the employment of "some person to undertake the arrangement of papers."⁵⁶ The *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* had urged the securing of "a competent man to arrange and classify the papers."⁵⁷ Since the board members served without compensation, it was necessary to hire a worker. Lydecker's appointment as "clerk" was made on May 10 at an informal meeting of Alexander and Judd while Atkinson was out of town.⁵⁸

At first Lydecker referred to himself as the "Secretary of the Board."⁵⁹ On September 29, 1905, at the first meeting of the board for which official minutes survive, he proposed that his position be called "Custodian of The Archives." The commissioners did not approve, but instead gave him the title "Librarian of the Public Archives." His prior appointment was confirmed at the same meeting, to date from May 11, 1905—the day he began work.⁶⁰

Born on April 9, 1857, in New York City, Lydecker had been educated at the College of the City of New York. He first went to Hawaii in 1896. He had had no formal training in historical methodology, and his experiences as a Federal Government employee, a merchant, a bookkeeper and freight agent for Oahu Railway & Land Co. in Honolulu, and a meteorologist for the Territory of Hawaii did not necessarily equip him for the duties of an archivist.⁶¹ Nevertheless, his performance as archivist shows that

⁵³ *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, Apr. 29, 1905; Alexander, Diary, May 2, 1905.

⁵⁴ *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, Apr. 30, 1905.

⁵⁵ *Report of the Governor*, 1905, p. 18.

⁵⁶ Carter to the legislature, Feb. 15, 1905, Messages, p. 74.

⁵⁷ Apr. 29, 1905.

⁵⁸ Alexander, Diary, May 10, 1905; Lydecker to the Board of Commissioners of Public Archives, Sept. 29, 1905, Minutes of the Board, AH.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Minutes, Sept. 29, 1905, Records of the Board of Commissioners of Public Archives, AH.

⁶¹ Siddall, *Men of Hawaii*, 1:181.

he possessed some natural aptitude and inclination for this work, which in a measure compensated for his lack of training in the methods of research.

Lydecker presented his view of the importance of Hawaiian archival work in a letter to the Governor:

It is a matter of congratulation that the work of caring for and preserving these valuable documents, tracing as they do the history of Hawaii from the darkness of heathenism through the sunlight of christianity and down to present time, is at last to be undertaken in a manner that will ensure their future preservation. It is a duty that has been too long neglected, and one which the country owes to posterity.⁶²

No sooner had the Board of Commissioners of Public Archives been appointed than it discovered the abandoned plan of the Department of Public Works for a hall of records, the cost of which would have consumed the entire 1903 appropriation of \$75,000. This plan included space for the Survey Department on the second floor and separate departmental vaults for storing noncurrent records on the first floor. The board objected strenuously to the "Hall of Records" idea by which governmental units would have retained control over archives deposited separately by departments in a central building. It asked the Superintendent of Public Works to secure an architect to draw plans for a building adapted to the single purpose of housing public archives, over which the board would exercise complete authority. O. G. Traphagen, a Honolulu architect, was employed to plan such an archival building.⁶³ The board was prodded along in its duty by an occasional article or editorial in the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*.⁶⁴ In time the work of Traphagen was accepted by both the Archives Board and the Superintendent of Public Works.

Apparently at that point Commissioner Judd had to use his influence with his cousin the Governor to secure consent to spend a part of the 1903 funds. The Governor was making great strides in his program to reduce the expenses of the Territory, and without Judd's intervention the project might have been lost. At any rate the appropriation would have expired on June 30, 1905.⁶⁵

With the Governor's approval to spend part of the appropria-

⁶² Lydecker to Carter, Sept. 21, 1905, Reports of Archivist, Records of the Board of Commissioners of Public Archives, AH.

⁶³ Minutes, Sept. 1, 1906, Records of the Board of Commissioners of Public Archives, AH.

⁶⁴ Apr. 30, 1905; editorial, May 12, 1905.

⁶⁵ Minutes, Sept. 1, 1906, Records of the Board of Commissioners of Public Archives, AH.

tion, a concerted effort was now made to let a contract for the building before June 30. C. S. Holloway, public works superintendent, advertised for bids on June 15. Eight days later these were opened in his office at noon before an interested audience, including Alexander and Judd. The lowest of six bidders was the American-Hawaiian Engineering & Constructing Co., whose tender was \$35,217. The contract was signed on June 27—just 3 days before the funds would have reverted to the treasury.⁶⁶

The building was to be constructed on the Capitol grounds east of Iolani Palace on the roadway leading to the Likelike Street gate. Ground was broken on July 10, and the work moved along slowly over a period of more than 13 months. The contract had called for its completion in 185 working days.

It was difficult to eliminate entirely the "Hall of Records" idea. The Archives Board discovered in September that the plans for the new building specified an inscription on it: "Hall of Records." A request was promptly made of Superintendent Holloway to change the inscription to "Archives."⁶⁷

The Territory accepted the new structure on August 23, 1906, and on the following day it was inspected by the public. There were indications of general approbation. The *Hawaiian Star* commented editorially, "The Archives building . . . is highly creditable to the public sentiment of the Territory. It is evidence of a recognition of the value of the treasures that are to be stored in it."⁶⁸

The one-story, T-shaped edifice was constructed of brick with cement finish and consisted of two sections—vault and offices. The vault measured 30 by 40 feet and was fitted with steel cases and shelves for the storage of records. Its only entrance was by a steel door. The office section (28 by 54 feet) was divided into three rooms, the middle one a lobby and business office. Across the rear of this room ran a marble counter, behind which the desk of the archivist was located. From his office opened the vault door. To the right of the lobby was a private room for board meetings; to the left was the searchroom.⁶⁹ This structure was the first building

⁶⁶ *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, June 16, 1905; *Evening Bulletin*, June 23, 1905; *Fifth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Works to the Governor . . . , 1905*, p. 35 (Honolulu, 1905).

⁶⁷ Minutes, Sept. 29, 1905, Records of the Board of Commissioners of Public Archives, AH.

⁶⁸ Aug. 25, 1906.

⁶⁹ Lydecker to Carter, Sept. 21, 1905, Reports of Archivist, Records of the Board of Commissioners of Public Archives, AH.

in the United States erected solely for the custody and preservation of public archives.⁷⁰

On the morning of Monday, August 27, 1906, Lydecker began to direct the transfer of the diplomatic and legislative records from the attic of Iolani Palace to their new home next door. In the main the archives were in camphor trunks and *koa* chests. These containers, with their cargo of paper, were piled up in the vault of the new building.⁷¹

On Saturday of that week the board held its first meeting in the new Archives Building. Atkinson, Alexander, and Lydecker were present; Judd was in Manila on a mission for the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association to bring the first Ilocano laborers to Hawaii. It was voted to notify the Librarian of Congress that the Board of Commissioners of Public Archives was now in possession of a fire-proof building and to send him a description of the structure. Alexander was appointed to write the letter of notification.⁷² Two days later he recorded in his diary, "Wrote to . . . Herbert Putnam, librarian of Congress, and sent him a copy of Hist. Soc. pamphlet."⁷³ The letter stated:

I have the honor to send you herewith the latest number of the Hawaiian Historical Society papers,⁷⁴ believing that you will be interested in the account of the present status of the Archives of the Hawaiian government. After long delays, they are at last securely housed in a suitable, fire-proof building, under the care of a competent librarian, and our island community is beginning to appreciate their value.⁷⁵

The tone of his letter is that of one concerned person to another and not that of an official reporting the fulfillment of a demand.

By 1906 the Archives of Hawaii was fully established as an agency of the Territory. It had an archivist, a new home, a body of archives, a board of commissioners, and an archival law. No other jurisdiction in the country possessed an archival building, and archival establishments existed in only 14 States.⁷⁶ The archives of the Hawaiian monarchy were now safe from fire and from the presumed possibility of Federal seizure.

⁷⁰ Horn, in *American Archivist*, 26:105; Mary Givens Bryan to the writer, Jan. 5, 1962, Atlanta, Ga.

⁷¹ *Hawaiian Star*, Aug. 27, 1906. *Koa* is a Hawaiian hardwood.

⁷² Minutes, Sept. 1, 1906, Records of the Board of Commissioners of Public Archives, AH.

⁷³ Sept. 3, 1906.

⁷⁴ No. 13 (1906) included Lydecker's article on the Archives.

⁷⁵ Sept. 3, 1906, typed copy, Correspondence of the Librarian, Library of Congress.

⁷⁶ Herman V. Ames, "Conference of Archivists: Introductory Remarks by the Chairman," in American Historical Association, *Annual Report*, 1909, p. 340.