

COOK SESQUICENTENNIAL COMMISSION, 1927-1931

At a meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Hawaiian Historical Society in 1925, trustee Albert P. Taylor, who was also Territorial Archivist, suggested that the 150th anniversary of the discovery of the Hawaiian Islands by Captain James Cook be commemorated by the Territory of Hawaii in 1928, with invitations to participate extended to the governments of Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. The United States and Great Britain were requested to send warships to join in an international salute to Captain Cook. Bruce Cartwright, president of the Society, then suggested that the Society sponsor a request to the United States Post Office and the Treasury Department for special issues of commemorative stamps and coins. These proposals met with favorable response and a committee was named to draft plans for such a celebration. Their plan was brought before the Chambers of Commerce of the different islands, approved by them and presented to Governor Wallace R. Farrington for consideration. He favored such a proposal but asked for more specific details to work on. This was complied with and the Hawaiian Historical Society's committee was designated by the Governor to act as a temporary "Governor's committee," for preparatory planning and help to draw up a measure to present to the Legislature.

On April 13, 1927, Senator Lawrence M. Judd presented a Senate Concurrent Resolution which called for action on Mr. Taylor's and Mr. Cartwright's proposals. It was adopted by both houses and was followed by the Governor's approval of Act 256 on May 2, 1927, calling for a 5 man commission to take charge of arrangements for a week long (August 15-19, 1928) celebration of the 150th anniversary of the discovery of the Hawaiian Islands. Twenty thousand dollars was appropriated to provide entertainment for delegates who would attend and for the cost of conducting ceremonies.

Albert P. Taylor, Bruce Cartwright, Colonel Curtis P. Iaukea, Commander Victor Houston, U.S.N., and Reverend Henry Restarick were appointed commissioners. They elected Colonel Iaukea, chairman, and Commander Houston, vice-chairman, appointed Edgar Henriques, executive secretary, and named Dr. Herbert E. Gregory of the Bishop Museum and Professor Ralph Kuykendall to an advisory committee. When Commander Houston resigned to serve as Hawaii's Delegate to Congress, he was made a member of the advisory committee with Dr. Gregory replacing him on the commission. Prior to the celebration, the advisory committee was renamed the honorary committee and expanded to include besides Delegate Houston and Professor Kuykendall, James Frank Wood, the Honorable Gerald H. Phipps, British Consul at Honolulu, Major-General Fox Conner, Commander of the U. S. Army in Hawaii, and Rear-Admiral George Marvell, Commandant of the Fourteenth Naval District.

As Delegate to the U. S. Congress, Victor Houston helped push through it Public Resolution 13, authorizing the President to invite the government of Great Britain and other interested dominions to participate in the sesquicentennial celebrations, and Public Resolution 86, which gave the director of the U. S. Mint authority to strike 10,000 fifty-cent coins in commemoration of the event and "for the purpose of aiding in establishing a Captain James Cook memorial collection in the Archives of the Territory of Hawaii." He and the Commission were unsuccessful in their efforts for a commemorative stamp, but were able to have a supply of 2-cent and 5-cent stamps surcharged, "Hawaii, 1778-1928."

Assisting the Commission in carrying out the details of the programs on Kauai and Hawaii were the Kona Civic Club, Kauai Historical Society and the Kauai Chamber of Commerce. Miss Marie von Holt of England helped by forwarding information regarding Captain Cook and especially about his and the crew's descendants, with the thought that invitations might be extended to them to participate in the activities in Hawaii. This project later became too complicated and involved and was dropped.

Although Act 256 mentioned that the official Cook Sesquicentennial celebration was to cover the week of August 15-19, the program actually started on the 13th and ended on the 20th. Four major events were: 1) Unveiling and dedication of a monument commemorating the discovery of the Islands by Captain Cook at Waimea, Kauai; 2) Unveiling of a bronze tablet at Kealahou Bay, Kona, Hawaii, marking the spot where Captain Cook "fell when attacked by natives;" 3) Literary exercises in Honolulu, where different papers pertaining to Hawaii and Captain Cook were read; 4) Pageant at Hamohamo, Waikiki (Queen Liliuokalani's former home) "Hawaii, One Hundred and Fifty Years Ago."

Official representatives of their countries at these occasions were U. S. Secretary of War Dwight Davis, Sir Joseph Carruthers of Australia and Maurice Cohen, Dr. Peter Buck and Commodore G.T.C.P. Swabey, R.N., from New Zealand. Besides these representatives, the different governments sent men-of-war to help make the celebration an impressive and formal event. The United States sent the battleship U.S.S. Pennsylvania, Australia the cruiser H.M.S. Brisbane, New Zealand the cruiser H.M.S. Dunedin and Great Britain the cruiser H.M.S. Cornwall.

The commemorative coins were all sold by the end of September at \$2.00 each, except for a couple of hundred which were presented to certain personages and all participants of the celebration. The Cook Sesquicentennial Commission through commissioner Albert Taylor began to gather the materials for the Captain Cook Memorial Collection in the Archives of Hawaii. Miss Ruth A. Fisher of London assisted by buying, copying and photostating desired materials in various English collections and institutions. Mr. Taylor also compiled a narrative of the entire celebration, "Sesquicentennial Celebration of Captain Cook's Discovery of Hawaii (1778-1928)" and edited a pamphlet containing the papers read at the celebration.

On June 25, 1929, the Cook Sesquicentennial Commission passed a resolution declaring its work ended. But it was not until April 29, 1931, that the Territorial Legislature abolished it with Act 259, which created a special revolving fund, providing for augmentation of the Cook Collection.

The greater part of the Commission's records, as can be seen in the list below, is correspondence.

COM 8:
BOX 1

Minutes, 1927-1929 (2 folders)

Correspondence, 1924 - June 28, 1928

BOX 2

Correspondence, June, 1928- 1935
Fisher, Ruth A.

COM 8

COM 8

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Howay, Judge Frederic W.

BOX 3

von Holt, Marie, 1927-1935 (2 folders)

Miscellaneous

Captain Cook Collection - Archives

Coins

Finances

Narrative of Captain Cook Sesquicentennial Celebration

Pageant at Hamohamo, Waikiki

Payroll for Personal Services

Reports

Resolutions and Acts

BOX 4

Schedule for Captain Cook Sesquicentennial Celebration

Press Articles and Addresses

Press Clippings

Miscellaneous

See Also: Name Index - Cook, Captain James; Sesquicentennial Celebration.

Captain Cook Collection

#23 Photographs of Cook monuments in the Hawaiian Islands.

#35 Film strip of pictures taken during Cook celebration trip to Kauai and Hawaii.

#44A & #44B Photographs of celebration.

#45 Photographs of celebration in Kauai and Pageant at Waikiki.

#52 Congressional Record, U. S. Congress, February 14, 1929 containing remarks of Hon. Victor Houston on Hawaii's celebration.

#56 Report of the Cook Sesquicentennial Commission to the Governor of Hawaii. March 5, 1929.

#59 "How Hawaii Honored Captain Cook in 1928," Washington Historical Quarterly.

#60-61 Clippings of celebration.

Not in file 8/5/98 JT

#66-67 Papers read during celebration.

#84 Sesquicentennial Celebration of Captain Cook's Discovery of Hawaii (1778-1928). Narrative of celebration.

#156 Films of celebration.

#227 The Numismatist. May 1928. Page 287. Reference to Captain Cook 50-cent piece.

#240 American Philatelist. September, 1928.

Museum Items

#152 4 2-cent Cook stamps

4 5-cent Cook stamps

2 half-dollar Cook memorial coins

Spade used in groundbreaking ceremony for monument on Kauai.

Hawaii. Early relations with England-Russia-France; Official papers read at the Captain Cook Sesquicentennial Celebration, Honolulu, August 17, 1928; edited Albert P. Taylor and Ralph S. Kuykendall.