

# **BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF PUBLIC ARCHIVES 1905-1959**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The records of the Board of Commissioners of Public Archives date from 1905-1959. The majority of records focus on the middle years (1931-1955) of the Board's existence, when Stella Maude Jones was the archivist. Records from her tenure include projects with the Works Progress Administration (WPA) from 1936-1941, and her efforts to obtain a new archives building, which was completed in 1953.

The collection includes annual reports, minutes, archives building plans, organizational charts, Archives projects with the Works Projects Administration, and a 1944 Public Archives report. The records are arranged chronologically. Most of the documents are copies and in good condition. The collection contains a total of 8.12 linear inches.

The Annual Reports document the largest time span, and then the Minutes. However, there is a gap in the Minutes from March 1947 to September 1955. In addition to the gap, there is very little information and records covering the years 1905-1930 and 1955-1959.

## **AGENCY HISTORY**

Robert Crichton Wyllie, Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1845-1865, was the first government official to recognize the need to preserve the government's records. His efforts lead to the passing of a resolution in 1847 ordering all the Chiefs to collect any papers and letters they may possess, pertaining to the government and to the Chiefs, and send them in to the minister of foreign affairs for examination. These records today form the nucleus of the collection in the Public Archives.

Various actions, including legislative appropriations, were attempted to provide for the arrangement and preservation of government records. After Hawaii became a Territory of the United States, there was a concern that Federal officials would transfer Hawaiian government records to Washington D.C., so the territorial legislature appropriated funds for a dedicated archives building in 1903.

In 1905, Governor George R. Carter urged the legislature to consider the problem of caring for the public archives. Act 24 was enacted creating the Board of Commissioner of Public Archives for the Territory of Hawaii. Appointed by the Governor, with Senate approval, the three member board served without pay. The Board was empowered 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."

Funds were appropriated by the legislature for an archivist and staff to do the work. It was the Board's responsibility to employ the archivist (often referred to as the Librarian of the Public Archives). There were only five archivists during the Board's 54 years existence, 1905-1959. The archivists were: Robert Colfax Lydecker (1905-1924); Albert Pierce Taylor (1924-1931); Charles Edward Hogue (1931, 3 months); Stella Maude Jones (1931-1955) and Agnes Catherine Conrad (1955-1959; who became State Archivist 1960-1982). Under the Board, two archives buildings were built, in 1906 (now named the Kanaina building and commonly referred to as the "old archives building"), and in 1953 (now the State Archives and named the Kekauluohi building). The State Reorganization Act of 1959 abolished the Board of Commissioners, and placed the Archives in the Department of Accounting and General Services (DAGS) under the State Comptroller.

### SERIES DESCRIPTION

**44 MINUTES OF THE BOARD.** 1905-1947; 1955-1959. 3.25 lin. inches; 2 vols.; 2 folders.

Arranged chronologically.

Includes the appointment of the first Librarian of the Public Archives; the title of the new archives building, plans for the fire-proof archives building, ground-breaking and completion of the building; librarian's annual report to the governor; revision of the Hawaiian dictionary; expansion of the building; archives in the reorganization of the state government; recommendation to establish a records center; proposal to establish a central microfilming unit and request to raise the educational level of the archives staff. One folder consists of memo directives to the Archives staff.

**45 ANNUAL REPORTS.** 1905-1959. 2.5 lin. inches.

Arranged chronologically by fiscal year.

Contains the annual reports to the Governor by the Board of Commissioners as submitted by the Librarian of the Public Archives.

**46 ORGANIZATIONAL CHARTS.** 1941; 1944; 1946; 1957; 1959. .12 lin. inch.

Arranged chronologically.

Contains proposed reorganizational charts for the Public Archives.

**47 PUBLIC ARCHIVES REPORT.** 1944. 1.0 lin. inch.

Arranged alphabetically by topic.

Contains procedures manual of functions, policy, new building report and includes some Board minutes compiled by archivist Stella Maude Jones.

**48 BUILDING PLANS.** 1913; 1941; 1944; 1948. 1.0 lin. inch.

Arranged chronologically.

Contains correspondence, proposed inventory list, plans, drawings, periodical clippings related to a new archives building, and a blueprint of the archives building (1913).

**49 WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION (WPA) RECORDS.** 1936-1940. .25 lin. inch.

Arranged alphabetically by files, items chronologically arranged.

Contains correspondence from the local federal agency (1936-1939) and projects and proposal file (1937-1940).

### CONTAINER LIST

<u>Series</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Contents</u>
44 vol. 1	Box 1	Minute book. Sept. 29, 1905 only.
44 vol. 2	Box 1	Minute book. Sept. 29, 1905-March 3, 1947.
44 folder 1	Box 1	Minutes. Sept. 30, 1955-July 14, 1959.
44 folder 2	Box 1	Memo directives to Archives staff. 1932-1941.
45 folder 1	Box 2	Annual Reports. 1905-1924.
45 folder 2	Box 2	Annual Reports. 1925-1927.
45 folder 3	Box 2	Annual Reports. 1928.
45 folder 4	Box 2	Annual Reports. 1929-1936.
45 folder 5	Box 2	Annual Reports. 1937-1943.
45 folder 6	Box 2	Annual Reports. 1944-1954.
45 folder 7	Box 2	Annual Reports. 1955-1959.
46	Box 2	Organizational Charts. 1941; 1944; 1946; 1957; 1959.
47	Box 2	Public Archives Report. 1944.
48	Box 2	Building Plans. 1913; 1941; 1944; 1948.
<u>Works Progress Administration (WPA):</u>		
49 folder 1	Box 2	Correspondence. 1936-1939.
49 folder 2	Box 2	Projects and Proposal File. 1937-1940.

D. Yap, archivist.  
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