

Dewey in Hawai‘i—1899

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Dear Bob,

All I know about the lectures Dewey delivered in Honolulu is what I have from you. It is all new, and I will really appreciate your following through and digging up anything we can add to the information you sent. In any event, I'd like to have copies of what you have already found—the newspaper accounts, everything. It's a new and apparently untouched field for exploration. And you're the only one who can really pursue it. Please do.

March 30, 1971, Dr. Jo Ann Boydston, Project Director,
Co-operative Research on Dewey Publications, Southern Illinois University

Dear Jo Ann,

I've tossed in the sponge. I cannot locate anything else on the Honolulu lectures. I've exhausted our own microfilms, the State Archives, the Hawaiian Mission Children's Society Library, and what have you. One of the newspaper stories mentions Henry Townsend, who was then Superintendent of Schools, and a great admirer (he said "disciple") of Dewey. I even called Townsend's surviving daughter, now in a retirement home, to see if by any chance he'd saved a copy of the syllabus referred to in the news stories—but no luck. I wrote Adrienne, but she didn't reply.

July 13, 1971, Dr. Robert Clopton, Chairman,
Department of History and Philosophy of Education, University of Hawai‘i

Forty-three years after the preceding exchange between Jo Ann Boydston and Robert Clopton on the subject of Dr. John Dewey's trip to Hawai‘i, the quest to find evidence about the effect that Dewey's 1899 trip had still continues.

Last semester, I labored through a class reading Dewey's *Democracy and Education* and *Art As Experience*—often without disguising my irritation and impatience with his writings during class discussions. Whether my professor or classmates wanted to hear it, I imparted a healthy amount of critique about the value of John Dewey's contributions to the chronicles of American education. Aptly focused on philosophy, I felt that Dewey spent more time thinking about teaching and learning than he did working with any students in the classroom. Similarly, I felt, within the realm

of art and aesthetics, that Dewey seemed to be arguing more about their value to society than trying to do anything to bring them about.

As a Native Hawaiian educator whose kuleana (responsibility, obligation, privilege) is to facilitate increased college enrollment, persistence, graduation, and transfer/career entry for Native Hawaiian students at Leeward Community College, I have honored my personal and professional vocations by investigating how Hawaiian students' cultural well-being intersects with our college's teaching and learning structures. To find "best practices" that provide authentic cultural contexts for teaching and learning, researching origins of Hawaiian knowledge production and dissemination is an essential cornerstone of

my practice. However, because most of the documentation about Hawai'i's public education system was written by haole (foreign) and often missionary descendant or affiliated educators, I have eagerly sought out sources of "our story"—accounts of the development of teaching and learning in Hawai'i that have been told via the voice, worldview, and most importantly, the lived experience, of Hawai'i's aboriginal people.

It was this same kuleana that influenced me to focus this paper on what led to John Dewey's six-week visit to Hawai'i in 1899, and what effect, if any, it had on Hawai'i's school system. Unfortunately, as was previously conveyed within the correspondence between Drs. Boydston and Clopton, very few sources of evidence from the 1899 visit credit John Dewey for directly affecting Hawai'i's school system. However, through letters, newspaper accounts, and secondary sources, there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that through the relationships he had with the American missionary descendant Castle family, and their affinity for and application of his philosophies, Dewey could be credited with indirectly affecting Hawai'i's schools. This essay will outline the personal and historic contexts that motivated the Castle family to invite Dr. and Mrs. Dewey to Hawai'i, while appropriately recognizing the Native Hawaiian ali'i who established government sponsored public education within the kingdom.

Dewey's Acquaintance with Hawai'i

At initial glance, one might wonder how a Vermont born, John Hopkins educated, and Chicago established professor such as Dr. John Dewey found himself with a personal invitation to come to Hawai'i at the end of the nineteenth century. It came about due to a connection with the Castle family via a close, personal friendship with George H. Mead. The connection between Dewey and Mead facilitated an introduction to Mead's young Hawai'i-born missionary descendant roommate from Oberlin College, Henry N. Castle.

George Mead and Henry Castle were college classmates at Oberlin College in 1877 (Heubner, 2012 p. 51). So close were George and Henry that their friendship fueled a love interest between George and Henry's elder sister, Helen K. Castle and the two married in 1891 (Heubner, 2012, 52).

In 1891, Mead secured a teaching position at the University of Michigan. It was at the University of

Michigan where Mead met John Dewey. After establishing their working relationship as professors of philosophy at the University of Michigan, Dewey and Mead continued to be intimate friends and colleagues, as seen in their work and writings. In fact, when the University of Chicago offered Dewey the position of department chair of philosophy in 1894, he requested that the University also offer a teaching position to Mead. This deal paid off well for the University of Chicago as Mead spent the rest of his academic career there—a total of thirty-six years (Huebner, 2012, p. 88.)

In 1892, Helen Castle Mead traveled home to Hawai'i, accompanied by Mrs. John Dewey for an extended period.¹ In 1893, Henry Castle decided to leave Hawai'i for Michigan, motivated to take classes at the University of Michigan and to participate in the lectures offered by Dewey and Mead (Heubner, 2012, p. 53). Henry wrote to Helen and George Mead on April 24, 1893: "I want to go to Ann Arbor before the term closes, in order to see the work, go into classes, and get acquainted with Mr. Dewey, etc. Want to spend the summer with you somewhere. Want to brush the cobwebs of our brains by contact with your superior minds." (Castle, H. N., 2012, p. 32).

The close relationship between George Mead and his friends Henry Castle and John Dewey was nurtured by a shared set of common beliefs about the social sciences, philosophy, religion, education, and psychology. So intimate were these bonds between the Castles, Meads, and Deweys that their wives also participated and lent their energies to the progressive academic and community work. Correspondence between the philosophers' wives—Helen Castle, Frida Steckner Castle (Henry Castle's first wife), Ethel Wing Castle (Henry Castle's second wife,) and Alice Chipman Dewey—point to their involvement in the Chicago Lab School where Dewey's pedagogical ideas were in development, in the settlement houses, in Free Kindergartens, and in his university extension lectures. These bonds, solidified by loyal friendship, intellectual ideals, and a shared nurturing of progressive visions for education and society, reveal the motivations behind the Castle family's invitation to John and Alice Chipman Dewey to visit Hawai'i in 1899.

Who were the Castles?

The Castle family descended from Rev. Samuel Northrup Castle and Mary Tenney, one of the many New England

based Congregationalist and Presbyterian missionary families who were sent to Hawai‘i by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). Reverend S. N. Castle came to Hawai‘i with his first wife, Angeline, to serve as the mission’s financial agent in 1837 (Heubner, 2012, p. 51). When Angeline died in 1841, Reverend Castle asked his late wife’s sister, Mary, to become his “companion” on the mission (Castle, A. L., 2004). Samuel N. Castle and Mary Tenney married in 1842.

While S. N. Castle may have come to Hawai‘i to advance the Christian mission, his Ivy League educated male children reached maturity at a time when Hawai‘i’s economic value as a sugar exporter and her military value as a central port bridging America and Asian and Pacific nations were emerging as highly coveted commodities. Together, the Castle family’s sons and their contemporaries, consisting of fellow Ivy League educated missionary children and grandchildren, quickly realized that whoever controlled Hawai‘i’s arable lands and protective harbors would catapult Hawai‘i into global prominence. Their only obstacles were Hawai‘i’s status as an internationally recognized nation-state and her lineal and constitutional monarchs who maintained her sovereign rule. To claim the prize they sought, William B. Castle, Henry Waterhouse, and Lorrin A. Thurston—each of whom were Hawaiian kingdom subjects—and ten other similarly focused Anglo-Saxon, protestant men formed the “Committee of Safety” and committed treason against the reigning queen of the Hawaiian Kingdom, Lili‘uokalani.

To advance their ambitions, the annexationists sent emissaries to Washington D.C. to petition the U.S. Congress and President Grover Cleveland directly to support their petition to illegally annex Hawai‘i to America. One of the messengers carrying this plea appears to have been Henry Castle. An account by his descendant, Alfred L. Castle states

In 1893, he [Henry] returned to the United States to attend the Hawaiian Commission in Washington, which was investigating American intervention in the Hawaiian revolution that overthrew Queen Lili‘uokalani....When word reached him in December 1894 of a counterrevolt by Hawaiian royalists, Castle and his daughter left immediately for Hawai‘i on the steamship *Elbe*. Both Castle and his daughter were killed...on January 30, 1895, in the North Sea. (2004, p. 24)

The most poignant and compelling history detailing the illegal overthrow was authored by Queen Lili‘uokalani in her autobiography, *Hawai‘i’s Story by Hawai‘i’s Queen*. Our Queen explained exactly what she saw in her nation’s subjects travels to Washington D.C., the capitol city not of their nationality, but rather, of their parents,

When I speak at this time of the Hawaiian people, I refer to the children of the soil—the native inhabitants of the Hawaiian Islands and their descendants. Two delegations claiming to represent Hawai‘i have visited Washington at intervals during the past four years in the cause of annexation, besides which other individuals have been sent on to assist in this attempt to defraud an aboriginal people of their birthrights—rights dear to the patriotic hearts of even the weakest nation. Lately these aliens have called themselves Hawaiians. They are not and never were Hawaiians. Although some have had positions under the monarchy which they solemnly swore by oath of office to uphold and sustain, they retained their American birthrights. (Queen Lili‘uokalani, 1991, p. 325)

Progressive Education in Hawai‘i

One of the major shared visions between George Mead, Henry Castle, John Dewey, and their wives was that education could bridge divides across diverse ethnic, economic, social, religious, and intellectual groups. The Meads and the Deweys were applying these ideals in late nineteenth century Chicago, while the Castle women were experimenting with their vision of social change in Honolulu via the Free Kindergarten movement.

The Meads, Deweys, and Castles’ social initiatives shared common objectives such as wanting to address new immigrant populations, post-agrarian economies, and industrial technology education. At the end of the nineteenth century, both Chicago and Honolulu offered comparable microcosms within which to launch trials of new teaching and learning strategies.

In communities where schools could serve as a force for social change, progressive education methods could be employed as a tactic. The John Dewey Progressive Education Project (JDPEP) defines “progressive education” as that which, “...describe(s) ideas and practices that aim to make schools more effective agencies of a democratic society.”

Further, if a truly progressive education is to be realized, JDPEP has identified the need for

...two essential elements: (1) Respect for diversity, meaning that each individual should be recognized for his or her own abilities, interests, ideas, needs, and cultural identity, and (2) the development of critical, socially engaged intelligence, which enables individuals to understand and participate effectively in the affairs of their community in a collaborative effort to achieve a common good.

Using JDPEP's definition, King Kamehameha III (Kauikeaouli) should be recognized as Hawai'i's first progressive educator. Dr. Malcolm Chun's *No Na Mamo* credited Samuel Kamakau for documenting Kauikeaouli's far-reaching vision and high priority for education in his kingdom. In *Ruling Chiefs of Hawaii*, Kamakau recalled in 1824, the eleven year old king, Kauikeaouli proclaimed, "He aupuni palapala ko'u" (My kingdom shall be a kingdom of learning) (Chun, 2011, pg. 103). Inspired by the king's vision, Hawaiian chiefs accomplished "widespread literacy" by proactively identifying accomplished scholars to become teachers, first in their households, then throughout the villages within their lands. (Ibid, pg. 106)

By 1840, Kauikeaouli advanced his vision further by establishing free schools for all his subjects, regardless of age, and by establishing a constitution that required literacy in order to marry or own land. As N. Goodyear-Ka'ōpua has written, "King Kamehameha III established the kingdom as a constitutional monarchy in which literacy and an emergent national public school system became key features in forming and formalizing the modern Hawaiian state (2013.) In addition, in *Ruling Chiefs of Hawaii*, historian Samuel M. Kamakau (1992) described the prominent role education played during Kauikeaouli's reign.

The chiefs saw the value of education...and teachers were sent all about the country districts. ...There were as many as forty such schools in Honolulu and an equal number at Waikiki and education spread widely in those few years. (p. 270)

Though the King appointed a prominent Native Hawaiian educator, David Malo, as his first superintendent of public schools, Malo's deep loyalty to the Protestant mission made learning and literacy more of an occupational

extension of faith than a facilitator of national democracy. Hawai'i's second progressive educator was Mataio Kekūānā'oa, a Hawaiian of noble birth and governor of O'ahu. In 1860, Kekūānā'oa was appointed the Kingdom's fourth Board of Education superintendent. In *The Seeds We Planted*, Dr. Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua's (2013) critical analysis of emerging culture-based charter schools, the author recalls two of Mataio Kekūānā'oa's major initiatives while he served as the Hawai'i's foremost public education leader: 1) removing schools from churches and 2) defending 'ōlelo Hawai'i (Hawaiian language) as the primary mode of instruction as a means to preserving nationhood. First, Dr. Goodyear-Ka'ōpua points to Kekūānā'oa's 1886 annual report:

In many places the schools, for want of special buildings, are kept in the meeting houses or chapels of [the] Protestant or Catholic population...The result is that in almost all of these places, the public schools are merely tenants at the will of this or that religious denomination...It is necessary to provide as far as possible for all the people the advantage of a common school education...The common schools should come to be regarded as strictly neutral ground in religious matters. (pp. 18, 19)

Next, in an almost eerie foretelling of what would happen to Hawaiian language if it were not defended in the public education system, Dr. Goodyear-Ka'ōpua recalls Kekūānā'oa's impassioned statement:

The theory of substituting the English language for the Hawaiian, in order to educate our people is as dangerous to Hawaiian nationality, as it is useless in promoting the general education of the people. If we wish to preserve the Kingdom of Hawaii for Hawaiians, and to educate our people, we must insist that the Hawaiian language shall be the language of all our National schools, and that English shall be taught whenever practical, but only as an important branch of education. (p. 19)

Punahou School serves as a well-suited contrast to Hawai'i's ali'i-initiated school system. While Punahou is seen today as a very progressive school, its foundation and history could be seen as exclusive and formalist. Punahou was established by American missionary parents who did

not want to be separated from their young children for lack of a suitable, protestant primary school education in Hawai'i. Though King Kamehameha III established free, public schools to educate all citizens of his nation, the missionaries sought to establish a separate school because they felt the need to 1) shield mission children from the 'corrupting' influence of the Hawaiian tongue, 2) prepare for the ever-increasing possibility that missionaries and their offspring would become permanent residents of the islands...., and 3) safeguard mission children from the sexual attitudes and practices of the Hawaiians (*To Teach the Children*, 1982).

After completing their education at Punahou School, the Castle sons and daughters used their education to achieve remarkably different ends. The sons—William, Henry, George, and James—completed their university education at Ivy League universities. They used their knowledge of economics, government, and law to not only increase wealth for their numerous family estates and foundations, but also to overthrow Hawai'i's Queen. The daughters—Helen and Harriet—led by their social justice-oriented and abolitionist matriarch, Mary Tenney Castle, led very different social change efforts in Hawai'i in their work to establish free kindergartens and university extension lectures.

In his book, *A Century of Philanthropy*, descendant Alfred Castle places his grandmother and aunts' works within a historical context of the Progressive Era. In his chapter, "Women and Philanthropy," Castle refers to historian Robert Crunden's research on one hundred so-called "progressives" who were born between 1854 and 1874—the generation that included Helen and Harriet Castle. Castle uses Crunden's findings to describe the character of Protestant reformers like his relatives.

Caught between these two worlds, their lives were both creative and problematic...includes birth in a home of devout Protestantism, restlessness, religious doubt and indecision, psychosomatic illness, a solid education at a small denominational college, and a vocation invested with religious and moral significance. In broad outline, these are the key characteristics for a large number of reformers who, like Henry Castle, wrestled with their past to find a new identity and cause through social reform. (2004, p. 23).

Castle goes on to describe missionary children of this era as being concerned with professionalism, regulation, and a search for political order,...art, music, literature, and architecture, as well as the general climate of opinion (2004, pp. 22–23).

Dewey's Invitation to Hawai'i

Tracing Dewey's invitation to Hawai'i can most easily be done in chronological sequence. After meeting George Mead at the University of Michigan in 1891, John Dewey starts to learn about Hawai'i from Henry and Helen Castle. By 1892, the wives of this progressive pair of thinkers have become close friends, as evidenced by Alice C. Dewey's travels to Hawai'i with Helen Castle Mead. In 1894, both Dewey and Mead took positions at the University of Chicago where they become acquainted with the newly established (1889) settlement house Hull House. The settlement house movement that took hold in urban America sought to ...help immigrant families adapt to the language and culture of their new country...and housed middle-class college women in order to facilitate their service to the poor (Castle, A. L., 2004, pp. 10–11). As progressive social philosophers, Dewey and Mead (and their wives) were intrigued by the prospects of how settlement houses could serve as venues to apply their ideals for democratic social change.

Meanwhile in Hawai'i, another Castle sister, Harriet was working with the matriarch of the Castle family—"Mother Castle" as she was known—on establishing the German kindergarten movement in Hawai'i. Alfred Castle chronicles his aunt's work in *A Century of Philanthropy*. He notes that by 1897, having done extensive research throughout America on the kindergarten movement, Harriet went to visit her sister in Chicago and had the opportunity to visit the Hull House and become acquainted with Dewey's philosophical and pedagogic ideas. Harriet brought her conviction for free kindergartens home to Hawai'i and waged a grassroots fundraising campaign. Part of her argument for support described early education as, a saver of future tax expenses for jails, prisons, and almshouses (Castle, A. L., 2004, pp. 36–37).

Finally, the lack of a university in Hawai'i at the time motivated some of the highly educated elite to establish public lectures by which a larger number of Hawaii's population could access academic lectures and perhaps earn university credit. University extension lectures were introduced in

Great Britain in the mid-nineteenth century and spread to the United States. *The Hawaiian Star* newspaper described the university extension process as follows: “a lecturer of great note is sent to the city requiring him and gives a series of lectures in which he is a specialist. At the end of the course, he is succeeded by another and so on.” The article goes on to say that people could benefit from the lectures either for personal development or to complete a course for credit (*The Hawaiian Star*, December 14, 1898, p. 1).

The most intriguing part of this article is the title and introduction, “University Extension: Three Ladies Interested in a Great Work.” At the time, even though they had not yet received the right to vote in America, nor own property, this article credited three Hawai'i women with the vision to hold world-class intellectual enrichment activities on the most isolated islands in the Pacific! The author noted that “[f]oremost in the work is Mrs. Mead [sic] (nee Helen Castle), wife of Professor Mead [sic] of Chicago, Mrs. F.M. Day, and Mrs. Ethel Wing Castle.” (*The Hawaiian Star*, December 14, 1898, p. 1). Mrs. Ethel Wing Castle was Henry Castle's second wife and widow.

Though Dewey wrote voluminously of his educational ideals in his published work, his personal correspondence between friends, colleagues, and acquaintances are the only sources that reveal his personal observations about Hawai'i.

In 1894, Harriet Castle wrote to both Dr. and Mrs. Dewey about her enthusiasm to start free kindergartens in Hawai'i. In 1898, Dr. Dewey wrote to Ms. Flora Cooke about the Castle family's desire to memorialize both Henry and his daughter Dorothy by launching a kindergarten. It seems a completely natural consequence of events, given the Castles' vision and personal aims to further develop the reach of progressive and early childhood education in Hawai'i, that the Castles (especially Helen Castle Mead) invited Dr. and Mrs. Dewey to the newly introduced university extension lecture series. The choice of Dewey's five lecture topics that focused on child development and the ethical implications therein, leave one little doubt that his invitation to lecture for the university extension program in 1899 was to further the work that the Castles and their colleagues were preparing to devote to the creation of free kindergartens in Hawai'i.

I ka wā ma mua: Look to the past to see the future

This study explored documents that illustrated the friendships that led to John and Alice Chipman Dewey's collaborations with the Meads and Castles. Together, they can be credited for leading a collaborative effort that resulted in the establishment of Hawai'i's free kindergartens, Pālama Settlement, university extension lectures, and one of the oldest family philanthropic organizations in America.

While these were all meritorious outcomes, this study's aim has also been to show how these events were circumstantial beneficiaries to Native Hawaiians' zeal for learning and our ali'i's inspired vision for their citizens to be educated. It was these Hawaiian leaders' visions and priorities that led to a government-funded infrastructure that launched free public education to all citizens throughout Hawai'i.

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ENDNOTE

- ¹ In a letter dated April 23, 1892, John Dewey wrote to Thomas Davidson that “...Mrs. Dewey has departed on a sudden visit to Honolulu Hawaiian Islands & won't be back till July sometime—She may not care for a farther vacation of long time...” (1892.04.23 (00467).