
Inventory of the Sereno Edwards Bishop Collection, 1795-1937, bulk 1852-1884

The Huntington Library

San Marino, California

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Sereno Edwards Bishop Collection,

Date (inclusive): 1795-1937,

Date (bulk): bulk 1852-1884

Creator: Bishop, Sereno Edwards

Extent: 956 pieces

Repository: The Huntington Library

San Marino, California 91108

Language: English

Provenance

Acquired from Robert H. Van Dyke, October 1977

Access

Collection is open to qualified researchers by prior application through the Reader Services Department. For more information please go to following [URL](#) .

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Sereno Edwards Bishop Collection, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Biography

This collection condenses nearly a century of missionary life on the Sandwich (Hawaiian) Islands, in the papers of the Bishop family. It would be difficult to remain detached as we observe three generations meet the challenges of an area so remote that, especially during the decades 1820-1850, six months more or less were required to travel from the east coast of the United States to Honolulu via Cape Horn and San Francisco in tiny, crowded, uncomfortable sailing ships.

Artemas Bishop was 27 years old and had been married about 10 days when he and his wife Elizabeth Edwards sailed on the Thames in November of 1822 from New Haven, Conn. with the second missionary company. 158 days later they reached Honolulu, which was no more than a cluster of native grass habitats. Elizabeth lived only 6 years after leaving her home, and left two children, Jane Elizabeth and Sereno Edwards, and a husband faced with the responsibility of small children added to his arduous missionary duties. Before the year had ended he married Delia Stone, who had arrived as an unmarried member of the third missionary company. Delia was a great help to her husband, a loving mother to the children, and a teacher in the missionary school.

Missionary children during those first decades on the Islands were kept apart from the native children in order to avoid any adverse moral influence on them by the precocious children of nature. The Bishops were kind and devoted parents who developed a relationship that remained close throughout their lives. Schools were early established on the Islands, but it was customary to send the missionary children to the States to study as soon as the elementary studies had been completed, usually at age 12 or 13. There the homesick children remained until they could return fully trained as teachers, missionaries or physicians, often 10 or 12 or more years later. So it was with Sereno Bishop, and Sereno's own children.

Modern literature and films have often been unkind to those early pioneer missionaries, picturing them as exploiters of the natives, becoming wealthy at the expense of cheap or slave labor. Yet it is clear from reading their letters that life was far from easy, luxurious or even comfortable, and that most of the missionaries struggled with debt and poverty for many years. They suffered isolation, loneliness, shortages of necessities, inflated costs for essential goods, physical exposure and discomforts. They watched almost helpless when loved ones became ill; babies often died in infancy, and when death came, there was only faith to help them. Travel from island to island meant days of seasickness in rough water, and travel overland was normally through mountains and jungle by horseback. Parents who sent their island born children to cold northern climates knew they might never see them again, for they easily fell victim to mainland diseases. Those who survived all such ordeals to adulthood, however, might look toward longevity, for the climate on the Islands seemed to contribute to a long life.

Mainly the papers of Sereno Edwards Bishop, the collection contains letters from Artemas to Sereno, and from Sereno to his father. Father and son consulted and discussed widely affairs of family, mission and school, world events, and biblical interpretations in the candid, open way possible only between persons who fully trust each other. These discussions undoubtedly had a great influence on Sereno's attitudes and success as a writer and editor, and encouraged him in his scientific investigations such as the effects of volcanic eruptions on atmospheric conditions. Letters between Sereno and his wife, Cornelia Ann (Sessions) Bishop, give a comprehensive picture of life on the Islands through the decades 1850s-1880s. There are also letters from other family members, and from friends, missionaries, and business associates, both in the Islands and on the mainland. The collection also contains several journals.

- Hawaii and Hawaiian life
- Education - Hawaii
- Education - Amherst, Mass.
- Diaries and Journals - Hawaii
- Diaries and Journals - Voyages and Travel (BSH 708)
- Missions and Missionaries - Hawaii
- Ships - William Lee (BSH 708)
- Whaling (BSH 708)

BSH 708

BISHOP, Sereno Edwards. Journal kept in passage from Sandwich Islands to Newport, R.I. in the ship William Lee. 1839-1840

BSH 709

BISHOP, Sereno Edwards. Childhood Recollections of the Old Mission House, between 1831 and 1839. [1896<]

BSH 509

BISHOP, Cornelia Ann (Sessions). Journal. 1856<>1862.

American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions

Physical Description: 5 pieces

American Seamen's Friend Society

Physical Description: 9 pieces

Andrews, Claudius B.

Physical Description: 17 pieces

Andrews, Lorrin A.

Physical Description: 10 pieces

Andrews, Martha

Physical Description: 5 pieces

Bicknell, James

Physical Description: 13 pieces

Bingham, Elizabeth K.

Physical Description: 10 pieces

Bishop, Alice (Moore)

Physical Description: 5 pieces

Bishop, Artemas

Physical Description: 262 pieces

Bishop, Cornelia Ann (Sessions)

Physical Description: 173 pieces

Bishop, Edward Fletcher

Physical Description: 25 pieces

Bishop, John Sessions

Physical Description: 18 pieces

Bishop, Sereno Edwards

Physical Description: 161 pieces

Bishop, William R.

Physical Description: 6 pieces

Carpenter, Helen E.

Physical Description: 12 pieces

Forbes, Anderson O.

Physical Description: 20 pieces

Gulick, Luther Halsey

Physical Description: 10 pieces

Hillebrand, Jane Elizabeth (Bishop)

Physical Description: 18 pieces

Judd, A. Francis

Physical Description: 6 pieces

Sessions, Edward C.

Physical Description: 31 pieces

Sessions, John

Physical Description: 10 pieces

Shaw, Elizabeth Delia (Bishop)

Physical Description: 8 pieces