

**THE ADVERTISER  
HISTORICAL SERIES  
NO. 1. REMINISCENCES OF  
OLD HAWAII**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649019526

The Advertiser Historical Series No. 1. Reminiscences of Old Hawaii by Sereno Edwards  
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Cover @ 2017

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**SERENO EDWARDS BISHOP & LORRIN A. THURSTON THURSTON**

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UNIV OF  
TOLEDO



REV. SERENO EDWARDS BISHOP  
(Taken in 1902)

The Advertiser Historical Series  
No. 1

# Reminiscences of Old Hawaii

by

Sereno Edwards Bishop

UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA

With a Brief Biography

By Lorrin A. Thurston

Hawaiian Gazette Co., Ltd.  
Honolulu, Hawaii, 1916

## Preface and a Brief Biography of Sereno Edwards Bishop

— G. A. P. O. R. N. A —

THESE has recently been a growing demand, both on the part of permanent residents of and visitors to Hawaii, for specific information concerning the history of Hawaii, more particularly of the period of transition from the ancient feudal system when the King and Chiefs had supreme and absolute power of life and death and the common people had no rights of person or property, to the era when constitutional guaranty of protection and the laws of civilization became established.

A comprehensive history of Hawaii has yet to be written. Its compilation will involve a vast amount of investigation and study, as the material is scattered through governmental and court records, private correspondence and journals, newspapers and magazine articles; while many matters, especially regarding the events leading up to annexation, rest in the personal and unwritten knowledge of leading participants.

Alexander's History, written for public school purposes, the best Hawaiian history now available, is necessarily condensed.

Other books bearing upon various phases of Hawaiian life, were issued in limited editions, and moreover, are mostly out of print.

Under these circumstances, it has been suggested to the writer that the best method of meeting the present public desire for information is to collect and publish the personal memoirs, reminiscences and writings of some of the older residents of Hawaii, who, through observation, were able to give first hand evidence of what they saw; or through contact with those living, were able to record the traditions and evidence of what had previously transpired.

Among the most lucid and almost photographic representations of the daily life and conditions existing in Hawaii during the interval between the arrival of the missionaries, in 1820, and the "Great Revival," in 1839, are the reminiscences of Rev. Sereno Edwards Bishop, written in 1901-2 and published in the Honolulu Friend, while he was editor of that journal, and in the Advertiser. These have been recently republished in the Sunday Advertiser.

A number of persons have urged that these papers be preserved in book form, in order to give greater future accessibility thereto.

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The publication of books in Hawaii has not heretofore proved profitable from a commercial standpoint, as a rule, owing to the limited editions for which there is a demand; but the increased book-reading constituency in Hawaii appears to justify the venture; while the dissemination of knowledge of what actual conditions were, during "the good old days when the natives led the simple life, free from the ills of civilization and the greed of land grabbing missionaries" would seem to be a duty to the memory of those who devoted their lives to the Hawaiian people, and have now passed on. The suggestion of publication of Mr. Bishop's Reminiscences in book form has therefore been adopted.

#### A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF SERENO E. BISHOP.

In order that a knowledge of the man, his personality and environment, as well as of his writings may also be preserved, the following brief biography of Mr. Bishop has been compiled to accompany these Reminiscences.

The pioneer band of American missionaries to Hawaii, numbered seven men, who, with their wives, left Boston October 23, 1819, and arrived at Kailua, Hawaii, April 4, 1820, after a voyage around Cape Horn of 164 days.

The second company consisted of six married couples and two single persons. They sailed from New Haven, Conn., Nov. 19, 1822, and arrived at Honolulu, April 27, 1823, in 158 days.

Among the second company was Rev. Artemas Bishop, a native of Pompey, N. Y., where he was born Oct. 30, 1795. He graduated from Union College in 1819 and Princeton Theological Seminary in 1822. He was married in November, 1822, to Elizabeth Edwards, who was born at Marlborough, Mass., June 17, 1796. Mrs. Bishop had been a girlhood friend of Mrs. Lucy G. Thurston, who had preceded her to Hawaii as a missionary, some four years earlier.

The Bishops were first permanently stationed at Kailua, Hawaii, in 1824, being transferred to Ewa, Oahu, in 1836, and to Honolulu in 1855, where Mr. Bishop died, Dec. 18, 1872. Mrs. Bishop died at Kailua, Feb. 28, 1828, the first death in the mission band. She left two infant children, one being the subject of this sketch, Sereno Edwards Bishop, who was born at Kaawaloa, Hawaii, Feb. 7, 1827.

Mr. Bishop, Sr., subsequently married Delia Stone, who was a mem-



ber of the third company of missionaries, Dec. 1, 1828. She survived her husband, dying at Honolulu, April 13, 1875.

The life of a "Sandwich Island" Mission boy in the twenties and thirties was an abnormal one.

The mission house was usually in a thickly inhabited village, so that the missionary and his wife could be close to their work among the people; but such were the open indecencies of the surrounding heathen life that the mission children were kept cooped up where they could see and hear but little of what was going on outside.

While the life work of the parents was being conducted in the Hawaiian language, for the reason above given the children were not permitted to learn that language.

With hundreds of children all about them, they had no playmates except the children of other missionaries, most of whom were scattered over the Islands, meeting only a few times a year.

The life of the missionaries, as well as of their wives, was a strenuous one. There was a foreign language to learn; a written language to create; the scriptures and other books to translate; schools to be established and taught; medical attention to be given to a population numbering thousands; churches to be built and services to be conducted therein; visits to be made to outlying villages (there were only three missionaries on the entire west coast of Hawaii); admonition to be given to backsliders; the opposition of hostile foreign beach combers to be counteracted, and the amenities, decencies and industries of civilization to be taught by precept and example to a people virgin to both.

There did not seem to be hours enough in a day to accomplish what had to be done. The day began at four A. M. with no intermission until dark, while the evenings were lighted by kukui-nut torches, single wick whale oil lamps or home-made tallow candles.

In the midst of this strenuous life the mission children were not suffered to fall below the same standard of activity. The same early morning hours found them at their lessons, and, under the tuition of their parents, they made such rapid progress that at the age of nine, the subject of this sketch had finished arithmetic and progressed into algebra; had finished Blake's Natural Physiology; was studying Latin and botany; was an adept speller and was taking lessons in drawing.

Owing to the then lack of advanced schools in Hawaii, the earlier mission children were all "sent home" around Cape Horn, to "be educated."

This was the darkest day in the life history of the mission child. Peculiarly dependent upon the family life, at the age of eight to twelve years, they were suddenly torn from the only intimates they had ever known, and banished, lonely and homesick, to a mythical country on the other side of the world, where they could receive letters but once or twice a year; where they must remain isolated from friends and relatives for years and from which they might never return.

In accordance with this formula, Sereno Bishop was sent away in November, 1839, when only twelve years of age. He graduated from Amherst College in 1846 and from Auburn Theological Seminary in 1851, and was married to Cornelia A. Sessions on May 31, 1852. They celebrated their golden wedding in Honolulu in 1902. An item of "human interest" in this connection is that the young couple became acquainted by meeting at the house of a mutual acquaintance, when Mr. Bishop read aloud the installments of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," then appearing serially in a New York weekly.

Young Bishop early decided to be a missionary, and accordingly when offered the position of seaman's chaplain at Lahaina, Maui, in 1852, he immediately accepted and proceeded to his post, via Cape Horn and San Francisco, arriving January 16, 1853. On the way out a three weeks' stay was made at Rio Janeiro, Brazil, where particular notice was taken of the grand avenue of royal palms, from which upon another occasion, Dr. Judd carried away a couple of seeds which he subsequently planted at the "Bates" place, now Samuel Baldwin's, on Nuuanu street, Honolulu. One grew and still stands. From this one seed have come all the royal palms in the Islands.

To those who know Lahaina but as a sugar plantation town, it may be said that it was then the center of shipping activity of the Pacific, being the port of call of over 300 American whale ships, besides other commercial and national vessels. It also still divided honors with Honolulu as the seat of government, and was the center of a large population, both native and foreign. It was at Lahaina, only a few years before, that the commander of a United States warship forced the repeal of a law against vice, by threats of violence, and that five cannon balls were fired at the house of the resident missionary, the Rev. William Richards, because of his influence with the native government in support of laws against immorality.

The writer's mother, who was born at Lahaina and spent her earlier

years there, once told him that two of these cannon balls, which fell in the Richards' yard, were for years playthings for herself and the other mission children.

The Bishops remained nine years at Lahaina, where five children were born to them, two little boys being left in the Lahaina Mission church yard.

With the rise of Honolulu in importance as a seaport, Lahaina declined, and in 1862 Mr. Bishop transferred his residence to the isolated station at Hana, Maui, where for three and a half years he served as a missionary of the American Board. The journey had to be made overland on horseback, occupying several days, the children being carried in a canvas "manele," on the shoulders of a couple of stout Hawaiians. The only other whites living in Hana were Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Needham and their daughter Hattie.

In 1865, still in the service of the Board, he became principal of the Lahainaluna industrial school, then the only one of high school grade available to Hawaiians, in which position he continued until July, 1877.

The writer well remembers his vigorous and kindly nature at this period. He visited our home at Makawao, about 1872, and wishing to try out a horse which he contemplated buying, invited me, a fourteen-year-old boy, to accompany him home, which I did on a little roan pony with a white face and one white eye. There was neither road nor fence across the plain, now occupied by the Hawaiian Commercial Plantation, at Maalaea Bay, and access to Lahaina was by a steep and rough trail over the mountain, rising to an elevation of over a thousand feet. We made the distance, some thirty odd miles, in four and a quarter hours. Mr. Bishop bought the horse. Incidentally, from Lahaina I went to Honolulu by the schooner Nettie Merril, originally a Boston pilot boat, departing during a heavy Kona. During the course of embarkation boats were twice capsized in the surf, one containing the captain of the schooner, Ezra Crane, father of the present manager of The Hawaiian Gazette Co. The captain could not swim and was rescued from under the boat by the native crew.

I have a most vivid memory of the whale boat coasting down the huge breaker, suddenly shearing off with terrific speed along the front of the wave, into the mounting face of which the steersman and five oarsmen instantly and simultaneously dived, the boat being overwhelmed with its lone occupant.

Mr. Bishop remained at Lahainaluna for twelve years, when he re-