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Uses of Textiles in Hawaii: 1820–1850

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The dates chosen to delineate this study are based in great part on the significant number of records kept by missionaries to the Hawaiian Islands and now collected in the Hawaiian Mission Children's Society library in Honolulu. 1820 marks the arrival of the first missionaries, and 1850 marks a time when the islands became so much a part of general Pacific commerce that the missionary presence began to decline in importance.

Prior to 1820 ships of a number of nations put in to the islands to trade or "explore." There are very few island groups in the Pacific north of the equator and, after their discovery in 1778 by Captain James Cook's Royal Expedition, the Hawaiian group ultimately became a special stopping place for obtaining fresh water and fresh food between Mexico and the Northwest Coast, and then between the Northwest Coast and China. Cook named this ocean oasis the Sandwich Islands, a name they carried until late in the nineteenth century.

The records and "Relations" of the Cook expeditions tell in detail what was traded at all the island groups visited during the three great Pacific explorations of Captain Cook in the late eighteenth century. Cook traded a fair amount of English woollens and linens for food and supplies for his ships and for 'curiosities' to take back to England. On a number of islands, cloth made of bark was being produced, and Cook collected and recorded many samples. Notes kept about Easter Island record "the women's clothing is a piece or two of quilted [bark] cloth, about six feet by four . . . One piece wrapped around their loins, another over their shoulders, make a complete dress."¹

In the following forty year period, available records of Pacific shipping do not indicate significant textile trade in Hawaii, although

there are allusions to silk from China being given or traded to Hawaiian royalty. The commercial records of William French in 1818-1819 show sales of palempores, yards of cotton, linen and duck, and men's clothing items mostly to other seamen and a few Hawaiians.² But these were in small quantities, and the records are not informative about how the fabrics were used.

The missionary story begins in New England, and traditions of the northeastern United States are deeply involved in it. The first voyage of American missionaries to the "heathen" nation in need of "Christian enlightenment" was quite hastily planned. The original idea had been to send back to Hawaii as teachers two young Hawaiians who had been educated at a New England Missionary School. When the most advanced and devout of the two suddenly died, two theology students, in youthful enthusiasm, offered themselves as missionaries. The students, Hiram Bingham and Asa Thurston, completed their studies in September 1819, and in little over a month had been ordained, found brides, and were sailing out of Boston harbor with five other hastily recruited couples to become the first Americans resident in Hawaii.³ The six missionary brides and Mrs. Chamberlain, wife of the agricultural director, were the first white women to appear in the Islands.

After a voyage of five months, the missionary ship *Thaddeus* arrived at the island of Hawaii on March 30, 1820. In initial negotiations for permission to land and remain in the islands, the men went ashore. The seven women, four of whom were pregnant, remained aboard ship. Their first formal contact with the islanders was provided by a visit to them by Queen Kalakua and her entourage. After observing the young wives' dresses, the queen asked them to make a dress like their own for her. This they did, while sailing along the coast toward the king's residence.⁴

Lucy Thurston also reported on this event. In her memoir she wrote:

Kalakua brought a web of white cambric to have a dress made for herself in the fashion of our ladies, and was very particular in her wish to have it finished while sailing along the western side of the island before reaching the king.

Monday morning, April 3d, the first sewing circle was formed that the sun ever looked down upon in this Hawaiian realm. Kalakua, queen dowager, was directress. She

requested all the seven white ladies to take seats with them on mats, . . . Mrs. Holman and Mrs. Ruggles were executive officers, to ply scissors and prepare the work . . . The four native women of distinction were furnished with calico patchwork to sew, — a new employment to them.

The dress was made in the fashion of 1819.⁵

Selections of this passage have been quoted many times to suggest that Hawaiian quiltmaking began on the deck of the *Thaddeus*. That idea, however, does not take into account that queens of Hawaii, as highborn ladies, did not do any practical work. They did not ever sew or make tapa cloth, for example. In fact, they later sent repeatedly to the missionary wives for new dresses. The missionary wives, at the point of their first contact with Hawaiians, felt that the queens were actually heathen 'children' and treated them much as children were treated in New England—that is, they introduced them to 'useful work' by needle and thread in giving them small pieces of fabric to sew together.

In this paper I will consider the trade in (mostly) European textiles and their uses in the Hawaiian islands. What is of special interest in Lucy Thurston's account, is that Queen Kalakua had already in her possession a length of white cambric, and the missionary wives had a supply of calico to draw upon. From the first meeting between missionaries and Hawaiians, fabric was an important mutual consideration.

Hawaiians had many textiles of their own, and sophisticated textile skills. They made beautiful woven mats, which served as coverings for floors and sleeping platforms, as sidings for buildings, and even as sails for ocean canoes. They had a long tradition of basketry adapted for many domestic uses. Their exquisite feather capes, helmets and ceremonial kahilis were constructed on a base of beautifully knotted and netted fibers. Fish lines, nets and many decorative and religious items were constructed of intricate fiber techniques. Their clothing and bed coverings were made painstakingly of a pounded bark cloth called tapa or kapa. Similar to those of Easter Island, they were made in large oblongs of a size which could cover a bed or wrap many times around a person. These kapa are very interesting from the point of view of printed or pounded-in designs, and were highly appreciated and valued by the missionaries.

In the northern Pacific islands there were no truly spinnable fibers such as cotton, wool, linen or silk which, when woven, provide very stable fabric. The pounded bark cloth fabrics were not very stable; they tended to disintegrate in water. They could not be washed or worn in the water—and Hawaiians spent a lot of time in water activities. By 1820, enough examples of European textiles had been given to Hawaiian nobility to provide a significant acquaintance with their advantages.

When the missionaries arrived and were accepted as residents in the islands, the prospect of obtaining European textiles increased dramatically. The missionaries were not long in realizing that this particular product—fairly readily available to them—was of special value to Hawaiians, and could be used as a medium of exchange for both wages and the purchase of food and other useful and necessary items.

Early extant notations of the use of textiles as currency occur in the Depository account books kept by Levi Chamberlain. The Depository, located at Honolulu, was the general 'store' for the missionaries on all the islands. In it were kept and accounted for all supplies sent by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, headquartered in Boston. The missionaries themselves were "paid" by drawing on these supplies against a specified yearly allowance. Thus, careful accounts were kept of the distribution of these supplies and their "prices." Other supplies, such as the contents of missionary barrels sent by individual congregations in the States, and some local purchases from ships of (later) established merchants were also accounted for in the Depository accounts. Levi Chamberlain was the storekeeper and general business manager for the Hawaiian mission for more than twenty years. His account books, though now incomplete, are quite extensive.

In August of 1823, a few months after Chamberlain's arrival, the Oahu account books show a number of payments of cloth to workmen. These payments continue throughout the time when the Honolulu mission buildings were being constructed. In September, 1824, Chamberlain's records show "1 shirt, \$2.00—paid in part for making a medicine chest." and "1 shirt to a native for washing—\$2.00" and "2 nankin maros, 1 pr. dungarees" charged to the Depository.⁶ (Maro, now spelled malo, is the name for the breech cloth traditionally worn by Hawaiian men; nankin is a cotton fabric from

China, at that time woven in narrow widths of less than 18 inches.)

By 1825 Chamberlain's accounts were more explicit: "3- $\frac{1}{4}$ yds cotton cloth @ .08- $\frac{1}{2}$ —paid a kanaka for one day's work," "Paid for 30 large stones, 40 smaller and others—\$5.50 cash, 3 yds Duffel, 1 ps. nankin & a jackknife," "1 yd calico (damaged)—paid a kanaka for finding the key to the gate." In 1827 Chamberlain paid out "1 Japanese malo for work," "2- $\frac{2}{3}$ ps Japanese malo for salt," "12 yds calico/wages," "3 shirts as wages," "10 yds calico $\frac{2}{3}$ —paid in part for 2 solid fathoms of coral bot. of Pohina."⁷ (Kanaka is the Hawaiian word for man.)

Individual missionaries stationed at some distance from Honolulu sent often for cloth to use in trade with Hawaiians. Abner Wilcox, stationed at Hilo, wrote to the Depository in September 1837 requesting "\$100 worth of unbleached cotton—to be appropriated as part of my salary."⁸ A year later he requested an additional \$75 worth of cloth, again to be deducted from his annual allowance of \$400. He intended to trade the cloth for lumber to build a house, and mentioned that the amount sent the previous year was not enough as "we have been obliged to pay out of it for joiners work . . . and besides we hire our natives and one teacher, paying them chiefly in cloth."⁹ In 1839 Wilcox wrote to Chamberlain:

"I shall need a considerable quantity of brown cotton this year as I shall have 2 teachers under constant employ to pay, some fence to make, probably a schoolhouse to cover, other native buildings to repair . . . We shall have most of our food for natives to buy, as the goats destroy nearly all we plant . . ."¹⁰

In 1841, Brother Wilcox wrote to the Depository for 15 dollars worth of cloth including "1 piece of the calico bid off at auction . . . (such as natives will like) . . . Also we want 3 or 4 pieces of blue nankeen (narrow) such as natives use for malos."¹¹ Through the years he requested other smaller amounts of trading cloth, and in 1842 he wrote:

"I had not designed to ask you so soon for more cloth, but I have just made a purchase of a saddle and bridle, which I have promised to pay for in cloth and Kapas. I have not enough of either—therefore permit me to ask you to send again as follows: 2 pieces of bleached cotton; 2 ditto of wide brown ditto; 2 pieces of plain blue; 2 pieces of the blue malo

cloth; ½ a piece of brown twilled cotton; ½ a piece of bed ticking.”¹²

In 1844 Wilcox wrote: “I have been buying some driftwood to send down to the Depos.... I paid about 95 yds of narrow brown cotton...”¹³

The use of textiles in direct trading was not a one way affair. Kapas, which were much admired by the missionaries, also entered the trade. In 1829 and 1830, Chamberlain recorded “kapa obt’d for books” at various mission stations.¹⁴ Previously he had noted “I have retained one bundle of the (colored) kapa for my own use.”¹⁵ Some of the kapa he traded back to Hawaiians—as shown in his own accounts of May 1830: “5 kapa from Hilo for use of the natives,” and “2 sets pa’u for do.”¹⁶ It is clear that textiles as currency was valued equally by all those party to the exchange.

Missionary wives also had reason to need cloth for trading. In a letter of December 10, 1844, Mrs. Mary Parker stationed with her husband at Kaneohe wrote to the Depository:

“Can you send me a piece of bleached cotton at 12-½ cts per yard of a somewhat finer texture than that you send to Mr. Parker. I’d like to buy a turkey now and then but the wahines [Hawaiian word for women] despise the coarse cloth and so they carry home their turkies.”¹⁷

This use of textiles was expressed also in letters home to the U.S. Mrs. Chamberlain, in 1833, wrote to her sister Isabella:

“I want to say one thing more that is I should feel very grateful to any body who would send me some unbleached tow cloth for my natives. If made into shirts & pantaloons (made large) it would be a still greater favor. Our natives work for their food & clothes.”¹⁸

Clothing the population of the Sandwich Islands was another far-reaching use of textiles. Maria T. Loomis, in a letter written only six weeks after the first landing of the missionaries, described the situation to a friend at home.

“We have in one sense commenced our labors. We have been engaged ever since we came on shore in making coats, pantaloons, gowns, &c. for the Chief; even the Governor sent us his pantaloons to be made and though we have scarce had time to breathe yet we think it a duty to leave all and sit down and do all work of this kind which is before

us. We think it favorable that they should have a taste for dress."¹⁹

Maria Patton, shortly before she married Levi Chamberlain in September 1828, also wrote home: "Two handsome silk dresses were brought in for Mrs. R. and me to make. We hardly know how to get thro. with so much sewing."²⁰ Hiram Bingham also commented on the problems arising from the free sewing services the women were expected to offer: "Soon After Mrs. Bingham had got her school in operation, the king sent Hopu to Honolulu with a fine piece of shirting to have Mrs. B. make for his Hawaiian majesty five ruffled shirts with plaited bosoms, to be sent back to him at Kailua by the vessel returning in a few days." Bingham continues in his memoir:

Some three or four years after the mission was commenced, a woman of rank, calling on the wife of a missionary, requested her to make a dress for her. The request was readily granted. She soon called for a second . . . She then called for another . . . The fourth was ere long asked for . . . The lady . . . said kindly 'Would it not be well for your own girls (whom I have taught to sew) to make this?' . . . The chief woman replied, ' . . . you can do it so quickly; my girls are all lazy and would be long about it.' The lady . . . said, 'I am alone in feeble health. I sew clothes for myself and family. I have not a company of servants about me to go and come at my bidding. Much of my cooking and other work I must do my self. I have a number of scholars to teach each day. I have made for you three dresses, and taught your girls how to sew. I appeal to you to say whether I ought now to do the fourth.'²¹

As it was soon clear that the noble ladies who wanted dresses would not do any sewing, and that the missionary women by themselves could not hope to clothe all their students, lessons in sewing became a significant part of the women's responsibilities. Nearly all of the missionary women were actively engaged in teaching children—and sometimes women. The curriculum always included some domestic skills.

Sarah Joiner Lyman, stationed with her husband at Hilo, wrote: "I do not recollect to have ever felt a greater reluctance to engage in any undertaking than I did to commence the childrens' school. It seemed a hopeless task . . . I find it far pleasanter to teach children

than adults. Six of them have been in school before and are now learning arithmetic. Seven of the little girls are learning to sew on pieces sent out in the box last fall."²² And later, in 1836:

Selected a class of 20 [women] who have daughters, to meet them once a week, to instruct them in sewing and fitting work. The pieces they baste, they are to take home and see that their daughters sew them during the week. . . . I am now cutting and basting shirts for the boys, who are to belong to the boarding school.²³

And four days later:

At the ringing of the bell at 2 this P.M. I took my rag bag, a quantity of needles, thread and thimbles and went to Mrs. Coan's house, where I met about 20 mothers, to assist Mrs. C. in teaching them to sew, cut and fit work. As most were new beginners, we selected wasted pieces for those who know how to use the needle a little, to baste, and soon all were a sewing.²⁴

In 1841, Sarah Lyman wrote to her sister Melissa Joiner in Vermont:

Perhaps you would like to know how I manage in regard to the boy's clothes. I arrange them in classes, according to the sizes, and number them. I then take the measure of one boy in Class No. 1 and this serves for all in that class and so for No. 2, etc. A native woman takes the shirt which I have cut for a pattern and if I keep her under my eye and have the work spread out on the floor, she will cut the other shirts. When she has fitted the smallest ones, they are distributed among the boys to make.²⁵

A US naval officer who visited the islands in the 1840s wrote in his "Narrative"

This [Lyman's] and Mrs. Coan's school for girls are decidedly the best conducted establishments I saw in the Pacific. I cannot pass by the latter without adding a few words. . . . It gave me great pleasure to see what the industry, talent and zeal of my countrywoman had accomplished; for by her untiring assiduity this school had been established, and is kept up. The whole care devolves upon her of maintaining, clothing and educating these children; and the only aid she receives is through the donations of parents and strangers,

and what little the girls can earn by sewing for the store-keeper.²⁶

In Fidelia Coan's letters are descriptions of the sewing school: (May, 1837) A sewing school has been connected with our maternal association during the past year. The children have taken a deep interest in the effort, and consider it a great privation if work is not prepared for them each week... [Mrs. Lyman and I] are as much troubled to get materials to sew as we are to get time to prepare them. It would by no means be unworthy the efforts of the various Benevolent Societies of our native land, to send patchwork, basted, to be sewed by Sandwich Island children. A patchwork shawl is considered an article of great value by a native.²⁷

In 1843 she wrote a friend in Illinois:

I have found it a very pleasant reward to be able to give the girls a bit of fitted patchwork, each as large as the sheet upon wh. I am writing. of these pieces they will each eventually make a small quilt. something like a Spanish poncho to wear in cool or rainy weather... I have cut very many of these pieces in order to make the most of my cloth. Their clothing is made of the common cloths blue and brown cotton and calico.²⁸

In the autumn of '43 she wrote to Fanny T. Gulick on Molokai:

We have a sort of meeting in school on Wednesday afternoon wh. we dignify by the name of a 'Society for assisting the poor.' The girls sew patchwork to make some poor woman a shawl... I wrote Miss Brown a great while ago— have not heard from her. I want some cotton for filling 10 or 12 small quilts very much... Be so good as to drop me a line on the subject by the first opportunity as I must permit the girls to wear their kapa apanaapana [cloth of many pieces] without quilting if I cannot procure the cotton.²⁹

The Miss Lydia Brown referred to was an expert spinner and weaver, skills she taught to young students. She also introduced the growing of cotton on both Maui and Molokai, and would have been the closest source of cotton batting. At the school at Wailuku on Maui, girls were also taught pieced quiltmaking as a domestic art. In a letter of 1841 after a visit there, Maria P. Chamberlain wrote:

(Miss Ogden) "teaches them to make their own clothes,—make straw bonnets, piece bed quilts and quilt them, to make samplers and knit stockings."³⁰

The missionary women did not neglect teaching some of the same skills to their own children. Maria P. Chamberlain asked her sister Ann to send her some flower seeds "every kind you can get, even the Johnny jump up—I want flowers to give my little girls something to employ a part of their time. They can both read in the Testament & they sew patchwork."³¹ In her 1851 diary, Emma Smith, aged six and $\frac{3}{4}$, wrote: "I am making a crib quilt for Buddy Whitney's birthday present. He will be a year old in six day's mour. I must be diligent to finish the quilt. I don't like to sew patchwork very well."³²

There are no records of patchwork made by adults. Some New England quilts arrived in the missionary barrels, and were "sold" to several missionaries through the Depository. One such purchaser in 1823 was Miss Betsey Stockton, the only black Missionary to go to the islands. Other quilts were sent directly to individuals by their families or congregations at home. Maria Chamberlain wrote that "Mr. Bingham & Mr. Shepard received a box . . . containing several heavy bed quilts, whole pieces of woolen cloth some dress & some undressed, with several prs. of woolen stockings."³³ This was surely intended as a comment on the unsuitability of heavy quilts and woolen garments in Hawaii's climate, as elsewhere she commented that linen such as she used at home was too hot, and that she used only cotton.

Other household furnishing textiles were welcome, and there are a number of letters to the Depository asking for table covers, light blankets, fabric for curtains and upholstery.

From the evidence found in letters home, letters to the Depository and the Depository accounts, it would appear that one of the larger uses of textiles was for the clothing of the missionaries—and their many children. From stations on all the islands, letters came to the Depository requesting specific fabrics. The length of cloth needed to make a woman's dress at that time was eight yards—spoken of as a "dress pattern" or occasionally as a "dress," although not made up. Cloth was also asked for by the piece, which was somewhere between 20 and 24 yards. Clothing for men more often arrived ready-made, and might or might not fit the man who needed it. The

Figure 1. Swatches of two calicoes attached to a letter from Miss Lydia Brown dated June 21, 1840.

women were sewing constantly, it would seem. Maria Chamberlain wrote her sister Ann, "...I have not time to write a thought but at night and even that time is required to sew for my little flock."³⁴

Garments and yardage for garments were sent from home, and Maria Chamberlain's letters carefully and in detail thanked the senders. Many times such garments were pre-used or made from cutting up a used garment. Maria wrote "I almost fancied I saw you while looking at the dress which you had worn,"³⁵ and "the little bags, patern of your wedding dresses were most acceptable presents to Maria Jane & Martha Ann."³⁶ "Aunt Tabither's dress was easily made to fit me, and is very acceptable."³⁷ "Aunt Mary Park's fine linen sheets and pillow cases I knew by the initials of her name."³⁸ "Hannah's cape I admire, tho' too gay for me to wear; perhaps I may make a cap of it."³⁹ "...my Mother's little baby things, Aunt Tabitha's night gown, Sister Isabella's gown which she often put on when we walked out together and some ribbons which my sisters used to wear."⁴⁰

As the years passed, Mrs. Chamberlain noted changes in clothing considerations: "My old stock of clothes are pretty much worn out. My best gown is a calico one sent me two years ago. . . . I did not feel the need of a better one while the ladies of the mission were the only ladies at Honolulu. But now this has become quite a fashionable place. [The merchants' wives] make many remarks, and say what old black bonnets we wear, and she wears nothing better than a calico gown. . . . I would . . . wear a better gown if it were given me: but my conscience would not let me buy a dress at . . . eight or ten dollars at the expense of the American Board."⁴¹

Mrs. Chamberlain, who lived adjacent to the Depository, had no need to write for supplies. But all the women who lived away from Honolulu had to make their needs and wants known to the Superintendent of Secular Affairs and his later assistants, Edwin O. Hall, Samuel N. Castle and Amos S. Cooke, in writing. From stations on Oahu messages were carried by horse or foot messengers. From other islands they went only when a ship was going to Honolulu, and those lists tended to be rather lengthy.

A great number of letters, notes and lists sent to the Depository remain in the HMCS library. A few of them still contain small swatches of fabric for the guidance of Levi Chamberlain and, in a few instances, for information to other women. There are other letters which speak of containing "samples" where the sample itself is missing. Those that remain are fastened to the letter paper by a pin, by a few stitches, or by glue. These remaining samples are all from letters dated after 1840. Whether this is due to earlier similar letters not having been saved, or whether it only indicates that missionaries had a greater choice of things after 1840, it is not possible to know. Certainly by that time the number of seafaring merchants and whaling ships had increased greatly. Whalers, which would be two or three years away from home, carried merchandise to trade for food along the way. By 1845 newspapers in Hawaii were regularly advertising large stocks of men's clothing, shoes, and a large variety of fabrics for sale.

Two of the earliest remaining swatches are sewn to a letter from Miss Lydia Brown. (Figure 1) Miss Brown was described by another letter-writer as a very tall lady, which would have been the reason for her letter. She wrote:



Figure 2. Swatch of Mousdelaine attached to a letter from Miss Lydia Brown dated October 5, 1847.

But as to calico I have not a single dress pattern. There were two pieces but not enough in either to make me a dress 7 yds in one, 5½ in the other. Whether it was a mistake or whether they were remnants or how to understand it I do not know. Anyone must know they were not patterns for me. . . . I am more disappointed about clothing than I have been for some time, for I liked the figure and quality of goods very much. I have not had a dress for so long a time, I should like a whole one.⁴²

Later Miss Brown sent “a shred of the pattern of my Mousdelaine dress with the wish that you would send or receive a yd. for me . . .”⁴³ (Figure 2)

Cochran Forbes, stationed on Hawaii, sent for “9½ yds of linen according to the enclosed pattern. Such as Bro. Baldwin got when there. Send also needles as follows: 2 papers no. 5 between; 2” no. 6 sharps.”⁴⁴ At a later time he sent for some red and white check with a note saying: “I forgot to put in the enclosed pattern yesterday & send it now.”⁴⁵

Figure 3. Swatch of French calico attached to a letter from Mrs. Mary Ann Ives dated July 1847.

Mary Ann Ives, on Maui, wrote for:

4½ yds brown twilled linen (good quality)

6 do gamboon for pants. I send a sample above which I like very well if you have like it; any other will answer.

6 yds of something rather cheaper for more common pants.—If nothing better send some of the blue above. Several yds that I may have some for the children.⁴⁶

During a visit to Honolulu, Mrs. Ives wrote to her friend Lucy Wilcox on Kauai, “do you wish me to get you a pretty French calico dress—? 40 cts per yd. Sister Dole says it is worth it. . . . I got one for myself like it. . . . They have purple and blue—same style but different figures.”⁴⁷ (Figure 3) Probably fabric of this sort came from Honolulu merchants.

Also written from Maui is a letter from William Alexander saying, “I enclose a piece of pink calico—will you please send me 10 yds like it.”⁴⁸

Requests from stations on Oahu tend to be shorter—and more frequent. Edward Bailey, Wailuku, sent this short note: “Please send 7/8 of a yard like the enclosed & charge to me. I oblige in a hurry.”⁴⁹

Mary Parker, at Kaneohe, sent for things with great frequency. For a time in 1846 she seems to have been making bonnets, as she sent for bonnet wire and an assortment of ribbons: “6 yds ribbon




Figure 4. Swatch of calico attached to a letter from Mrs. Mary Parker dated November 28, 1843.

color of this sample;”⁵⁰ “Ribbons of these three colors and widths;”⁵¹ and “a yard of ribbon more or less to send of this pattern.”⁵² She also sent for decorative tapes, and of course for dress goods. “If you please 12 yds of this pattern. Can’t you find me 1 paper no 6 needles.”⁵³

Mrs. Parker’s notes to the Depository were often little more than memos signed with her initials. Usually, however, they began “Dear Br. Hall” and ended with “Love to Sister Hall and the children.” Some of them included small slices of her life such as the desire for an occasional turkey, and a hasty note on December 23, 1848 saying “That hieroglyphic was a dolly for Caroline, or some such thing. If you have any send two, with order to fetch carefully—Christmas is at hand the children say—send a good jack knife for Henry.”⁵⁴

Mostly hers were requests for fabric for clothing: “When will you receive dark calicoes—The piece you sent...is scarce worth making. It washes white very soon.”⁵⁵ “some other dark color than

the purple—blue or brown,”⁵⁶ pretty dark calicoes—please select,”⁵⁷ “blue and white drill—red stripe,”⁵⁸ “this sample,”⁵⁹ “6 yds green bombazett,”⁶⁰ “another yd & a half of gingham,”⁶¹ “dark calicoes, sm. figures for children,”⁶² “12 yds of this pattern,”⁶³ “if remnant remains,”⁶⁴ “calico like this remaining?”⁶⁵ “blue calico narrower stripe”⁶⁶ “give bearer 6 yds bleached cotton,”⁶⁷ “9 yds good blue calico,”⁶⁸ “I should like the blue calico,”⁶⁹ “not any more blue!”⁷⁰ “thimble for my daughter,”⁷¹ and many, many other similar requests.

From this preliminary exploration of the missionary records, it may be deduced that textiles and their different uses were highly important in the Hawaii of early missionary times, to both the native inhabitants and the immigrants from America. Although western textiles may have been viewed from different perspectives by the two very different cultures, they were mutually held in high regard. Textiles were a source of common understanding whether used as currency, clothing, or as a part of education. As such, they played a subtle and little remarked part in intercultural exchange.

Although Hawaiian royalty had encountered woven silk, woolen and cotton textiles previously, not until the arrival and establishment of American missionaries did all Hawaiians have access to a regular supply of American and European fabrics. Indigenous Hawaiian textiles—both woven as in mats and felted as in bark cloth *tapa*—had been quite satisfactory to a Hawaiian way of life. The introduction of textiles from the United States and Europe had a profound effect on the lifestyle of the Hawaiian people. Missionaries encouraged them to become clothed in a somewhat American style, and gave them the means to do so by teaching sewing and providing cloth. When Hawaiians came to value these textiles over their own for their practicality, American and English merchants found the Hawaiian islands to be a lucrative outlet for textile trade. Textiles thus became a significant factor in the change in Hawaii from a Pacific island way of life to a “Western” way of life.

All of the early textile uses took part in this profound change. Cloth as exchange/payment made European textiles available to laborers; American clothing of the missionaries on all the islands provided models of a new style; sewing classes demonstrated how cloth could be worked, and also encouraged its use; and quilt-

making instruction changed the mode of personal wrapping for warmth.

While a single paper cannot encompass the total numerous references to textiles in the Hawaiian Missionary documents, it is hoped that some flavor of their uses can be recognized. Yet to be addressed are the extent and variety of fabrics brought to Hawaii by traders from all parts of the globe.

Notes and References:

All manuscripts referred to are from the collections of the Hawaiian Mission Children's Society, Honolulu, Hawaii. Except where otherwise noted, letters are from the Missionary Letters Collection. The letters of Maria P. Chamberlain are typewritten copies of the originals.

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5. Lucy Thurston, *Life and Times of Mrs. Lucy G. Thurston*. (Ann Arbor: S.C. Andrews, 1882) p. 32.
6. Account book #8, Levy Chamberlain, 1824. Entries September 1, 4, 17.
7. Account books #12, #16, Levi Chamberlain, 1823-1826. Entries January 18, 20, February 3, 1825; May 4, June 2, July 3, August 13, 1827.
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12. Wilcox to Chamberlain & Hall, November 29, 1842.
13. Wilcox to Edwin O. Hall, May 22, 1844.
14. Account book #17, Chamberlain, 1826-1833. Entries May 22, July 10, August 30, 1829; February 2, 1830.
15. Account book #25, Chamberlain, 1828. Entry March 6.
16. Account book #58, Chamberlain, 1828-1830. Entry May 1830.

17. Mary Parker to Hall, December 10, 1844, Missionary Letters Collection.
18. Maria Patton Chamberlain to Isabella Patton, December 25, 1833.
19. Documents, "Hawaii's first 'Ship's Mail' from the Missionaries," Hawaiian Historical Society Sixtieth Annual Report (1952): 21. Letter dated May 14, 1820.
20. Maria Patton to Isabella Patton, September 7, 1828.
21. Bingham, *op. cit.*, p. 109.
22. Margaret Greer Martin, ed, *The Lymans of Hilo*. (Hilo: Lyman House Memorial Museum, 1970) pp. 71-72. Journal entry September 4, 1834.
23. *Ibid*, p. 90. Journal entry August 22, 1836.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 90. Journal entry August 26, 1836.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 113. Letter dated October 29, 1841.
26. Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition, 1838-1842*, Vol. IV (Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1845) pp. 211-212.
27. Fidelia Coan (Hilo) to Miss Bates (Honolulu) May 27, 1837.
28. Coan to Philena Fobes, May 15, 1843.
29. Coan to Fanny T. Gulick, September 6, 1843.
30. Maria P. Chamberlain to Isabella Patton, November 1841.
31. MPC to Ann Patton, April 25, 1837.
32. Mary Dillingham Frear, *Lowell and Abigail* (New Haven: privately printed, 1934), p. 202.
33. MPC to Ann Patton, April 18, 1831.
34. MPC to Ann Patton, October 30, 1835.
35. MPC to Jane Patton, December 27, 1835.
36. *Ibid*.
37. MPC to Isabella and Ann Patton, May 3, 1836.
38. MPC to Jane Patton, September 8, 1831.
39. MPC to Ann Patton, April 18, 1831.
40. *Ibid*.
41. MPC to Mr. Patton, November 30, 1834.
42. Lydia Brown to Chamberlain, June 21, 1840.
43. Brown to Chamberlain, October 5, 1847.
44. Cochran Forbes to Messrs. CC & Hall, December 9, 1845.
45. Forbes to Castle & Hall, October 22, 1846.
46. Mary Ann Ives to Castle & Hall, January 22, 1847.
47. Ives to Lucy Wilcox, July 1847.
48. William P. Alexander to C.C. & Hall, October 16, 1848.
49. Edward Bailey to Castle & Hall, January 30, 1847.
50. Mary Parker to Castle, March 14, 1846.

51. Parker to Castle, January 11, 1847.
52. Parker to Hall, August 21, 1847.
53. Parker to Hall, November 28, 1843.
54. Parker to Hall, December 23, 1848.
55. Parker to Hall, December 26, 1848.
56. Parker to Hall, December 10, 1838.
57. Parker to Hall, November 1, 1841.
58. Parker to Hall, November 19, 1842.
59. Parker to Hall, December 6, 1842.
60. Parker to Hall, March 7, 1843.
61. Parker to Hall, August 15, 1843.
62. Parker to Hall, November 25, 1843.
63. Parker to Hall, November 28, 1843.
64. Parker to Hall, December 1, 1843.
65. Parker to Hall, April 2, 1844.
66. Parker to Hall, May 5, 1844.
67. Parker to Hall, December 5, 1845.
68. Parker to Hall, April 17, 1847.
69. Parker to Hall, April 23, 1847.
70. Parker to Hall, April 27, 1847.
71. Parker to Hall, September 18, 1848.

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