In order to understand the written resources on genealogy and the family in Hawaii, it is necessary to know something about Hawaii's history and government. Those of you who are familiar with this will have to bear with me as I have found that we cannot take for granted that everyone knows about Hawaii.

The islands were inhabited by Polynesians for about 1,000 years before they were known to the western world. They had no written language, but did have extensive oral literature, much of it related to genealogy. Between Cook's visit in 1778 and the arrival of the American Protestant missionaries in 1820, the islands were visited by several ships of exploration, by fur traders and sandalwood merchants, by adventurers and deserting sailors. The primary source of information on life in Hawaii during this period are the reports on the voyages, many of which have been published. Usually the only Hawaiian names which appear are those of the ruling class or ali'i and some of the high priests. There are only a few journals of residents from this period and information on what life was like in Hawaii before 1820 is scarce.

The American missionaries brought a printing press and a seal for education, along with their Christian fervor. One of their first tasks was to turn the oral language into a written one, and they did this so successfully that by 1840s, Hawaii was one of the most literate countries in the world. In 1839, King Kamehameha III granted a constitution and a Western form of government began to develop. Along with the constitutional government came registrars, licenses and a court system. Private ownership of land began after the Mahele or land distribution in 1848. Another date to remember is June 1900. Although Hawaii was annexed to the United States in 1898, the territory of Hawaii was not organized until 1900, and many functions were taken over by the Federal government, including immigration, naturalization, and census. I stress these dates so that you won't expect to find a record of an 1820 marriage, a 1830 land deed, or an 1905 immigration record.

Another important point to remember is that Hawaii has always had a very centralized government from that first constitution up to the present time. There was no local government before Annexation in 1898, and even today we have only two levels — the state and four counties, which function primarily as municipalities. The four counties correspond to the major islands — Oahu, (the city and county of Honolulu); Hawaii; Maui, including Molokai and Lanai; and Kauai, including Niihau. These basic units are the same as those under the kingdom when island governors were appointed by the central government and were responsible to the central government for local government activities. One important result of this is that the county court houses as most of you know it here in the continental United States does not exist, and the county clerk is not a recorder of vital statistics, but a clerk primarily responsible for council matters.

The courts are all State courts,
the kingdom of Hawaii organized in 1842, and the records are primarily trial cases, probate, civil, criminal. All land recording and other types of recording was and continues to be done by the Bureau of Conveyances, now a division of the State Land Department.

Births, marriages and deaths were registered by various agencies of the central government until 1896 when the Registrar of Vital Statistics, in the Department of Health, was given full responsibility. All public schools and libraries, hospitals, tax offices, are directly operated by the State. In some ways this makes searching for family history in Hawaii rather simple as most of the pre-1900 records are in the State Archives, later ones are with the creating agency. While Hawaii has been a kingdom, a republic, a territory and a state during the past 150 years, the laws were continuous and many of the agencies were also, so that you don't have to know whether a court was a royal one or a territorial one to find the information you need.

Since a search for family history as well as genealogy usually begins with vital statistics, this is a logical place to begin.

Hawaii's earliest laws on registration of births and marriages were passed in 1842. In the case of births, the tax officer was to be informed; for marriages, the governor of the island issued the "written assent." Reporting of deaths was not required until 1859. In later years, the school teachers became registrars and reported to the secretary of the Board of Education. The requirement on reporting marriages performed varied over the years, and for one period only the agent who granted the license had to report names. In 1896, the office of Registrar of Vital Statistics was created under the Board of Health, and that office continues to be the official one for recording all vital statistics.

Most pre-1900 records created in compliance with these laws and which survived, eventually were deposited in the State Archives. However, there are some missionary records in the Archives which predate the laws and are as early as 1826. The Department of Health has some records dating back to 1863, but the bulk are after 1896. The Archives marriage records have been completely indexed, both by the name of groom and bride and the indexes are available for public use. The Health Department records are indexed by groups of years and by island, and therefore it is necessary to have an approximate date and place before requesting information from them.

There are some limiting factors on using the Department of Health records. They are not open for public search, and a $2.00 fee is charged for each search made by a staff member. This includes a copy of any record found, but must be paid whether or not anything is found. Information is made available only to a person having "a direct and tangible interest," usually meaning a descendant. Many of the pre-1900 registrations are by a given name only and identification is difficult unless dates are available.

An 1860 law required that the father's name become the family name, but it was many years before this became the common practice among Hawaiians and Chinese. Furthermore, some of the early records have Hawaiianized form of a foreign name (Kamaka for Smith) or, even less useful, only the nationality of the father (Pake, Chinese; Pukiki, Portuguese). The law states that index information, that is name and place and date of event, is available to the public. It also states that microfilm copies of events that occurred more than seventy-five
years ago may be made available for genealogy researchers. These records have all been filmed by the Genealogical Society, but a use copy has not been obtained by the department. As a consequence, research can be more readily done in Salt Lake than in Honolulu.

You can expect that many births and deaths in the nineteenth and early twentieth century were not reported. Family, friends, midwives were in attendance and although the law required registration, it wasn’t always done. Marriages had to be licensed and performed by a licensed person which meant better recordkeeping, but even then the reports were not always filed. The law did not require immediate notification of marriages; in fact, it anticipated that this would not always be done and required executors of the estate of anyone who had performed marriages to file any records they found. As this was not always done, some of these nineteenth and even early twentieth century records of marriages are in private hands, churches and museums. Unfortunately, many have also been lost.

Pre-1900 marriage records will seldom give more information than the names of the bride and groom and the district they lived in. The Archives does have some license applications for 1900 to 1929, and the Department of Health also has some, which give names of parents and nationality, whether or not the persons have been married before and ages. All of this information, of course, is on the more modern records. A word of caution, however – the parents named on marriage applications are not always natural parents, even if there was no formal adoption.

In addition to the official registration of marriages with the Department of Health, after Hawaii became a territory in 1900, Federal law required that marriages also be registered at the Circuit Court in each county. This was done from 1900 to 1949. These records (certificates) are available at both the Circuit Courts and Archives. They are either arranged alphabetically or an index is available, but by the name of the groom only. While these certificates include only the names, ages and address of the parties, it is sometimes easier to find a marriage date through them, then apply to the Department of Health for the marriage record.

Another important source of genealogical information is the Circuit Court records, especially probate and equity cases. The four circuits correspond to the four counties but are State courts. These records date back to the 1840s, and for the years up to 1900 are in the State Archives, with indexes. Later years with indexes, are in each of the Circuit Courts. The probate records, whether with wills or intestate cases, give the names of spouses, children, and sometimes surviving parents and siblings. A researcher should look at all cases under the family surname as claims made by relatives may include a family genealogy. Disputed claims are frequently the most useful as genealogies were included as evidence. Equity cases are of value as they frequently were filed to clear title or for partition of land, and again relationships might be a part of the evidence. If you want more than the family line, read through all of the records, including the fiscal accounts in a probate case. Inventories will tell you how the house was furnished; accounts may tell you where minors were attending school and who their guardians
were; testimony given may also give hints on personal relationships. Civil cases can be informative on family businesses and land disputes. Unfortunately, if your ancestors were peaceful, law-abiding citizens, you are going to have more trouble finding out about them than if they were contentious people who were constantly in the courts. The pre-1900 probates are on microfilm and available at the Genealogical Society.

A word of warning in using court records in Hawaiian - terms of relationship are not always clear. Makushine can mean mother, aunt or female cousin of the parent's generation; makuakane can be father, uncle or male cousin.

Another State office that has information which may be of help is the Bureau of Conveyances, located in the Kalanimoku Building, Honolulu. The records begin in 1846 and continue to the present time. Land transfers were sometimes made between parents and children or grandparents and grandchildren, and the statement of relationship included in the deed. Wives were required to sign deeds to release rights. In addition, prior to 1915, the law required that adoptions be recorded here. Indexes are available, by island and by date. The name of the person making the adoption is in the grantee index; the person releasing is in the grantor index. After 1903, the Circuit Court judges had jurisdiction over adoptions, and from 1903 to 1945, the record will be found in probate cases in the Circuit Courts. In 1945, a law was passed making all adoption records confidential, and information can be obtained only by order of the court. Although the law between 1859 and 1915 required that adoptions be recorded, few Hawaiians did so.

The hanai system was a very old Hawaiian custom of giving a child at birth to a close relative or friend, particularly if the foster parent had no children, and to this day it is usually an informal rather than a legalized and recorded act. Consequently, few records are available for hanai adoptions. Another hint, children born out of wedlock were sometimes adopted by their natural fathers, particularly if the mother was Hawaiian and the father was Caucasian. Conveyance records can give you much more than genealogy - lands bought and sold, mortgages made and paid off or not paid off, sometimes chattel mortgages as well as those on land are listed. In doing some research on the Marin family, one of the most important records I found there was an agreement to annul a marriage.

There are other sources for vital statistics besides official records. Notice of deaths and marriages began to appear in newspapers as early as 1836 in the first English language paper. Births are not listed until many years later. The only index to such notices before 1929 is in the State Archives. Both English and Hawaiian newspapers were indexed, but not completely even for the notices published, and of course many were never published. Generally obituaries notices before 1900 give little information beyond the name, date of death and sometimes age and place of birth. Later, obituaries listed survivors and, particularly for Hawaiians, sometimes gave ancestors. If you have a death date for an Hawaiian during the years Hawaiian language papers were being published (1834-1927), it may be worthwhile to search for an obituary. The same is true for Japanese and Chinese newspapers if you have a date you can read them. They are not indexed. The Archives stopped indexing
newspapers in 1950; the printed index to the Honolulu Star-Bulletin and Honolulu Advertiser covers the later years, and continues to include obituaries.

Church records of marriages and christenings are a common source of information, but except for the marriage records on file with the Archives, few have been preserved from the nineteenth century. However, if the religion of the person being researched is known and the area where he lived, a request for information can be made to the church in the area. These records are usually chronological, and an approximate date must be available.

City directories are available for Hawaii from 1880 to the present time, and all islands are covered. These can help to establish when a person came to Hawaii and where he lived. The names of children will begin to appear as they became adults and continue to live in the same household. Marriage dates can sometimes be guessed at by the date they set up their own household. Directories sometimes give a date of death, which assists in locating obituaries or death certificates. Equally important for the family story is information on occupations and business.

One common source of information that is not available in Hawaii is the Census Records. Hawaii began taking a census in the 1840s, but in only a few cases have the schedules or lists of names been preserved. The most complete in the Archives are those for 1890 for all islands, and for Honolulu only for 1896. They are arranged by island and by district and are not indexed. However, if you have the time to search, you may be rewarded with information on who lived in the house, their ages, relationships, place of birth and occupation. One of the newest sources of

information is the 1900 census, the first US census in Hawaii as Hawaii was annexed in 1898.

One other group of records in the Archives which may not give much genealogy but may tell something of family interest are the real property tax records. Property taxes in Hawaii began in 1860 and for Oahu, Hawaii, Molokai and Kauai we have most of the records from 1860 to 1935, arranged in the early years by districts and for some records after 1900 by nationality. Maui's unfortunately were destroyed many years ago. If you know where your family lived, these records will show not only how much real property they owned or leased but also personal property, as this type of tax was in force in Hawaii during all these years. It will tell you whether they were raising rice or cattle, how many animals they had (unless they hid them from the tax collector), the number of carts and just about anything else that could be taxed. After 1935, taxes are listed by tax key number and are much less personal. Tax maps are available to show the location by tax key number. If a piece of land has been in the family for many years, the tax maps and tax assessment notices will furnish a clue to the original title and how the property was obtained.

There are some special sources in the State Archives which might be useful for biographical information on family members.

Naturalization records cover the years from 1844 to 1896 and are indexed. These give the name and place of birth. When the application is on file, it will usually give the period of residence. After the Republic of Hawaii was created in 1894, naturalization was replaced by "Special Rights of Citizenship," these granted the right
to vote, but did not require renunciation of other citizenship. Denization was a similar process, carried out between 1846 and 1898. These last two were almost a dual citizenship, but were not recognized by the U.S. government after Annexation. Citizens of Hawaii automatically became citizens of the United States, and many who held the special rights thought they became U.S. citizens but unless they were originally from the U.S., they did not. If your family histories claim some members were citizens, but names do not appear in the naturalization records, it may be for this reason. Many voted in elections after 1900, but found out about their true status when applying for U.S. passports.

In Hawaii, names can be officially changed by a petition to the lieutenant governor, or, between 1900 and 1959, to the Secretary of the Territory, who issued the decree. An index to the new name is available at the Archives through 1953 and the Lieutenant Governor’s Office for later years. As the law requires recording of the decree at the Bureau of Conveyances, this is a public record, and there it is recorded under both the old and the new name. The petition is a restricted record, available only to the persons concerned.

Special sources of information are available for some ethnic groups. For Hawaiians, the records of the Board of Commissioners to Quiet Land Titles are useful. Before 1848 all land belonged to the king; the Mahele or land division was the beginning of fee simple titles. To substantiate a claim to a piece of land, oral testimony and written documentation had to be presented to the Board. These often gave the name of the person from whom the claimant received the land. As this frequently was a parent or grandparent, a person who can identify an ancestor who received land at the time of the Mahele may find information here to add another generation to the family chart.

There is a published Indices to Awards made by the Board, arranged geographically, then by personal name, and also by Award number. If you do not have an Award number, to find an individual’s land holdings you need the island and district. The index to the testimony and register of documents is available only at the State Archives, and is by award number. These original awards of title were made to some foreigners who were in Hawaii before 1848, and information on their first years in Hawaii may be included, or, as many married Hawaiian women, on the wife’s family.

The testimony and registers were kept in both English and Hawaiian, and one of our main projects during the past 10 years has been to translate all of the Hawaiian into English. It is valuable for information other than land grants because it gives an insight into the land that was made available to the ordinary Hawaiian—a house lot, usually small, a taro patch or two, some kula plots, as opposed to the very large grants made to the chiefs, who controlled most of the land, or the konohiki or land agents. For the foreigners who did get land at this time, the documents usually tell when they came to Hawaii, who gave them the right to use the land, and what service they performed that entitled them to the land. Incidentally, in searching land records as a source of information, a knowledge of how original titles were received is essential. Land Commission Award or LCA number and a Royal Patent or RP number indicates an award at the time of the Mahele; a Gr. or Grant number indicates a
purchase of government land. The first two were recognition of land that had been used by the claimant before the Mahele. On the other hand, grants were outright purchases of government land and you will seldom find family information in the records.

Two institutions have collections of traditional Hawaiian genealogies – the Bishop Museum and the State Archives. There are no indexes to individual names, but usually some identification of family, island, or progenitor. Some of these list descendants into the twentieth century; most, however, are traditional and end in the nineteenth century. Therefore, it is necessary to establish two or three generations in order to "tie in" to the books. Some families have such books in their own possession. Care must be taken in using the traditional genealogies which preceded the migration to Hawaii. Some of these have been printed, such as the Kūmīlīpo and Forbender's Hawaiian Antiquities and Folklore. Names of progenitors have been shown to be related to cosmogony rather than to family lines. Another fact to be remembered in looking for pre-contact genealogies is that only the ali'i or chiefs had a genealogy, at that time, of course, preserved orally. A commoner was not allowed a genealogy and one cannot be supported beyond about 1820.

Records in Hawaii for non-Hawaiians do not go beyond the person who came to Hawaii, except for an occasional probate which will mention surviving parents who are not living in Hawaii. The first records available for most foreigners are the passenger manifests, 1842 to June 1900, in the State Archives. These have been microfilmed by the Genealogical Society. Most of these are indexed. Information given on the manifest is usually name of the person arriving, place of origin, age and persons who accompanied him, such as wife and children. Special indexes are available for the Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese and other groups of contract laborers. A few Italians came in 1899. However, groups who came in after June 1900, such as Korean, Spanish, Puerto Rican and Filipino, in addition to the later groups of Portuguese, Japanese, and Chinese, are not included in the State Archives records, as by this date immigration was the responsibility of the U.S. government. In order to obtain information on those who came as immigrants after 1900, it is necessary to a form with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. It is necessary to know the exact date of arrival, ship and port of entry. The fee is $5.50 for the search and report, and the information will be made available only to the person concerned or someone with the right to the information, such as a descendant. The entry may give names of family members who came as a group. It may also give complete Spanish or Portuguese names.

The information, if they entered at Honolulu, is now on microfilm at the San Francisco office of the Immigration Service. An application for the information can be filed at the Honolulu office or direct with San Francisco. However, reports that I have received indicate that there are long delays before answers are received, if they ever are. I asked one of the local representatives of a Senator what he considered a reasonable time to wait for a reply before you started putting pressure on the office. His answer was "60 days, then contact us with full information and we will follow up."

Two of the groups I mentioned are a special problem – the Puerto Ricans and the early Filipinos. The Puerto Ricans entered
through New Orleans as nationals and attempts that I know of to get information have been useless. The Filipinos came largely on contracts with the plantations and Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association has maintained records on many of them—arrival, family members, returns and plantation assignments. If you are looking for information on Filipinos who came on contract, the Filipino Bureau at the BSPA office, Aiea, Hawaii, can be helpful. These records deal primarily with those arriving before 1941.

Cemeteries, of course, are another source of information, with gravestones revealing birth and death dates. There are many small ones scattered throughout Oahu and the other islands. For most of these, no records are available and a search of the grave markers is necessary. One notable exception is the Oahu Cemetery on Nuuanu Avenue. There is an index there to burials back to 1842. While the index prior to 1952 gives only the name and location of burial plot, markers both for the person being researched and others buried in the same plot may reveal or confirm relationships. For example, a relationship between an early Honolulu merchant and a woman thought to be his granddaughter was confirmed when their tombstones were found side by side, along with one for her son.

A source of information for persons of Japanese descent is the records of the Consulate General of Japan, in Honolulu, which are now at the Hawaii Immigration Heritage Center at the Bishop Museum. These are the records of Japanese who came to Hawaii between 1883 and 1910 and include the names of the immigrant, family members, birth and death dates, and sometimes prefecture and village of origin. This last is of special interest as registers maintained in the village contain ancestral information. The Consulate has retained the index to these records and it is recommended that it be contacted before the Museum is called. If the Consulate cannot find a record, you can write the Museum, but they do need information on approximate time of arrival, and if possible, the ken of origin.

There are several sources of special information on the Chinese, but again up to 1900 when the Federal government took over immigration. Besides the Immigration/passenger lists, in the 1890s there were special laws concerning Chinese—Hawaiian born children who had gone to China and wanted to return had to have special permits; merchants applied for permits; women were given special permits. Again, these have a special problem because Chinese frequently changed their names and transliteration into the Roman alphabet can give many variations. This, of course, is also true of the Japanese so look for variations in spelling. If you are interested in searching for Chinese ancestors, Jean Ohai has compiled a list of sources and an explanation of how to use them.

These are the main sources of official records in Hawaii on family history. There are, of course, other resources.

There are two major photograph collections in Hawaii and several small ones. These are important because they include negatives from commercial photographers, and many individual portraits and family groups taken by them are here. One is at the State Archives; the other at the Bishop Museum. Both of these are indexed by names. There are smaller more specialized collections at the Hawaiian Mission Children's Society for protestant
missionaries and their descendants; Lyman Museum in Hilo for the island of Hawaii; Kauai Museum, Lihue, for the island of Kauai. In addition to portraits, there are photos of Honolulu and other areas which will show you what the areas looked like in 1930, 1900, 1880. There are very few photographs before that time, although some daguerreotype and tintypes are in the collections mentioned.

There is some oral history available. Of course, the best oral history of your family is that which you would do your self. Since this isn't always possible, there are some transcripts available made by the University of Hawaii Ethnic Studies Oral History Program. They focus on what it was like to be a Hawaiian or Chinese or Portuguese living on a plantation in the 1920s, 1930s and later, and the experience would have been similar for anyone's ancestor in the same situation. Similar compilations have been made for some districts in Honolulu, and rural areas on other islands. Another source of similar information is a University of Hawaii Sociology Club publication called "Social Process in Hawaii," compiled from student interviews of their parents, grandparents and others and the accounts published. An early and unsophisticated type of oral history perhaps, but one of the few sources on what it was like to be a picture bride, or the conditions in China that made emigration to the unknown country seem like a good idea or family relationships in a crowded plantation home. It may not deal with your ancestor, but you can get an idea of what their life was probably like.

There are few letters or journals existing for nineteenth and twentieth century Hawaii. If you have some in your family you are fortunate. Lacking this, you may want to look at some of the sources of your family. If you have some in your family you are fortunate. Lacking this, you may want to look at some of the

published memoirs which seem to correspond in time and position.

There are a few large collections of private papers which may or may not reveal information on your family. Again the Bishop Museum and the State Archives have the largest collections, primarily covering the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The Hawaiian Mission Children's Society has letters and journals of many of the missionaries and their wives. Letters written between missionaries on different islands give numerous details of family life, and what living in Hawaii was like. Lyman House, Hilo, has letters of the missionaries on the island of Hawaii. Unfortunately, almost none of this material has been published.

Newspapers, as already mentioned, were published in Honolulu as early as 1836 in both English and Hawaiian, and good sets of these have survived; most are now on microfilm. Portuguese language papers appeared in the 1890s and early 1900s, but few copies have survived. Japanese and Chinese papers also began in the 1890s and some continue until the present time. English language papers were established on the island of Hawaii in 1895; on Maui in 1900; and on Kauai in 1911. All of these continue to be published and have been microfilmed. I mention these papers as they are a source of information on family members. The Honolulu papers have been selectively indexed by the Archives prior to 1950; a printed index is available for the two major papers from 1929 to today. A limited amount of indexing has been done on outer island papers; I know of none for the Japanese and Chinese papers.
There are other published sources of information which may give you details not available elsewhere. Telephones came to Hawaii in 1880s, and directories are available from 1894, published on microfiche by the telephone company. Up to 1940, they were issued twice a year, and are a better indication of where people lived than the city directories which are likely to contain year-old information. Of course, this is a source only if your ancestors had a telephone, but even the date the family shows up will give information on improvement in financial status.

Detailed maps of Honolulu, called "Fire maps" because they were issued for the use of fire insurance companies, date back to 1879; and for urban areas on other islands to 1912. These maps plot every building in the center of the city for the early years, expanding as the city spread. They give information on type of construction, number of floors, and placement of buildings on lots. There is no better way to visualize what living was like in Honolulu's Chinatown in 1896 before it was destroyed by fire, or in 1910 when supposedly conditions were improved, than to see the density of the building on the lots and the size of the lots. Not only is the type of building identified, but its use is also given.

There are some special indexes in the State Archives that may be useful. There is a list of government office holders from 1850 to 1959, including legislators, giving offices held and dates. There is also a list of Civil War and Spanish American War veterans who died in Honolulu, and of residents who served during World War I. This last index gives enlistment and discharge dates, unit served in, and usually serial number.