“God Hates a Quitter”

Elder Ford Clark: Diary of Labors in the Hawaiian Mission 1917-1920 and 1925-1929

by Dean Clark Ellis and Win Rosa

Aloha. My name is Dean Clark Ellis. I grew up on the mainland. I have lived in Hauula for the last 3 years. I'm here with my uncle, Win Rosa. He grew up here in the islands with my mother and her sister and ended up marrying my mother's sister. (Both my mother and her sister have passed away.) After raising his family on the mainland, he has moved back to the islands and has been living in Kailua for the past 2 years.

We have been invited to speak about the missionary travels of my Grandfather, N. Ford Clark. This is Grandpa as I knew him.

The title for our presentation is taken from the title page of the first volume of his journal, “God Hates A Quitter.”

First, let me give you a quick overview of his missions and then we'll get into some of the details of his adventures.
Elder Clark served his first mission to the islands from 1917-1920. Returning to Utah he graduated from the University of Utah, got married and was called on a second mission to Hawaii from 1925-1929. Of the second mission, the Hawaiian Mission Record simply states,

**Elder N. Ford Clark 1917**

“Saturday March 21, 1925...Elder Nathan Ford Clark and wife Monty B. Clark of Farmington, Utah arrived at Honolulu per S.S. ‘Calawai’ as missionaries to Hawaii. This [was] the second mission of Elder Clark to Hawaii, he having previously filled one from 1917 to 1920.”

A couple of months after arriving in the islands for his second mission, my mother was born in Honolulu.

**Monty Clark 1923**

My grandfather stayed here in the islands the rest of his life. My mother and Uncle Win grew up in Kaimuki, attended Punahou together, and both left the islands shortly after World War II. Mother did not return until 1975. She met me here, as I was returning from a LDS mission in Japan. Grandpa met us and we had a great week revisiting my mother's childhood memories. I was also here in Laie at the beginning of my mission. I was assigned to the Language Training Mission (LTM) at The Church College of Hawaii, now BYU Hawaii. I spent a lot of sleepless nights in Hale 2, dreaming in Japanese. So, in a way, Win and I are returning to our roots.

**Monty Clark, baby June Clark and Sister Missionaries in Laie 1925**
While Grandpa was on his first mission he wrote extensively about his mission. We have his original journals which make up 4 volumes. He also had a camera and took many pictures. During his second mission, he did not keep a journal. Most of the information from his second mission has been found in the official mission record and a recently found journal written by Elder Clark’s wife, Monty.

Elder Clark was not an exceptional missionary. He didn't have a lot of converts. Upon leaving his first mission, the mission clerk simply wrote, “Elder Clark...good language, average missionary.” From reading his journals and knowing him in his later life, I suspect he was an average missionary. The one thing he wasn't average about was his love for the islands, the people who lived here and their language. In 1978, I was with him when he made his last trip to Laie. We stopped by the house of his old friend Bill (Pops) Sproat. They sat down on the floor and immediately started speaking in Hawaiian. They were both in their 70’s. Pops’ 17 or 18 year old grandson came walking through the room. Pops looked up at his grandson and said, “you'll never be able to speak Hawaiian like this haole.” Grandpa died a couple of months later and was laid to rest at Punchbowl Memorial Cemetery. Pops Sproat passed away just last year; he was over a hundred.

N. Ford Clark was born on May 31, 1899, in Centerville, Utah to Nathan and Esther Clark. He grew up in Farmington, Utah and was the oldest of 14 children. He was called to serve his first mission when he was 17 years old. About a year into his mission, he writes the following about his initial call;

“I had not thought of going on a mission when I went...to Clarkson to spend Christmas, but after arriving home, Sam [Cowley, brother of Matthew Cowley] and myself began seriously thinking of one, so consequently we both

Elder N. Ford Clark – Hawaiian Mission Journal

Elder Clark 1917

Ester Clark and Family 1923
being green kids were started off to Hawaii on a mission. I left rather
suddenly as I was called to leave Salt Lake on the 25th of January 1917...On
the 24th we received our instructions and were sent into the Presidents office,
I being set apart by Rudger Clawson. I well remember how Sam and I stuck
pretty close together during all of these things although we little dreamed of
what we were going to experience.”

He continues,
and Clark 1917

“I left Grandma's on the morning of the 25th and we all rode together on the street car as
far as Aunt Mary's. It's a good thing I had to say good-bye to Mother on the street car or
she might of made a fuss. I was 17 years old, but I guess I looked just a little bit like a
kid and to Mother, I was her first baby.”

He traveled by train from Salt Lake City to San Francisco. There he boarded a ship
bound for Honolulu. The Hawaiian Mission Record records the following:

“Monday Feb. 5, 1917. Elders Samuel P. Cowley and Nathan Ford Clark of Logan,
Utah, arrived at Honolulu per S.S. 'Sonoma' as missionaries to Hawaii. Elder Cowley
was assigned to labor in the East Maui Conference, and Elder Clark in the
Honolulu Conference.”

Elder Clark wasn't in Honolulu long, when he was called to go to the Big Island.
He had a short stint in Hilo before heading up the Hamakua coast where he was to
spend most of his mission. While in Hilo, Joseph F. Smith came for a visit. Elder
Clark's Journal records:

Elder Clark - 1919

“Friday May 11, 1917-Pres. Jos. F. Smith came this morning and we were all busy
visiting the saints and telling them to come to the meeting on Saturday. We went down to
Sister Wright's for dinner and I shook hands with Pres. Smith. I was very glad to see him
and the rest of the party. After dinner they went up to the volcano.”

“Saturday May 12 1917-I worked in the yard in the meeting house, decorating things for
the meeting for Pres. Smith. The people started coming at nine o'clock and the house was
full for meeting at ten o'clock. It lasted two hours and Bro. Smith gave a fine talk on
baptism and temple work.”

Within a few months, Elder Clark was transferred to the
Hamakua Coast and in particular, Waipio Valley. He
spent the next two years in Waipio Valley.

His first description of Waipio Valley is as follows:
“Monday Sept. 24, 1917-I shall never forget my first descent into the Waipio Valley from Kukuihaele. It is about a 2000 foot descent, about 1918

“on a narrow trail which is steep for a horse, into a valley that is spotted with green rice fields and taro patches and streaked with small brooks.

The valley is about one mile wide and about four miles long, with steep mountains on all sides except on looking toward the ocean, which occupies one side.” 1918

“From the valley can be seen the numerous and large falls, that come over the pali and drop into the valley to run out at the ocean.”
“The land is quite level and not over four feet above sea level. It took us about half hour to descend and we went to an Hawaiian's house by the name of Solomon Poliahu, who is the President of the Branch.”

“His work is of mostly raising taro. He treated us fine and gave us a house to ourselves which is surrounded by taro patches. It seemed good to be in such a beautiful place and have plenty of water, as water has been scarce everywhere for six months. Also good feed for the horses which we staked out.”

He would have many experiences with Bro. Poliahu. On September 6, 1918, almost a year after arriving in the valley, this picture was taken of Solomon Poliahu, flanked by Elder Clark on the left and Elder Byron Jones on the right. On the occasion, Elder Clark wrote:

“Also, I took pictures today...when Poliahu returned from Kukuihaele we also had one taken of ourselves with him. He dressed up for the occasion and looked like a Prince.” (September 6, 1918)

After a 20 mile ride back to Kukuihaele and a walk down to Waipio, Elder Clark writes:

“It seemed good to me to get back but old Poliahu ma took it like an every day occurrence. I don't believe he and his family ever laugh once in 6 months and I'm going to make them if I can to see what it looks like.” (October 18, 1917)
Well, it was hard work living down in the valley. Sometimes they would use a cow to work the land and other times it was all by hand. On July 17, 1919 Elder Clark records:

“Poliahu was cleaning one of his taro patches so Leland and I got some knives and helped him a little while and then we went fishing oopu...We put our nets out 6 times which filled our bucket and sack.”

Elder Clark finally concludes:

“I certainly like the old man Poliahu and he is about the straightest old Saint I have ever seen. He is probably the only worthy one in the conference of going to the temple.”

(August 4, 1918)

Well, 3 days after the temple is dedicated, Elder Clark records:

“Sunday morning we all went to the meeting house, after which I took Poliahu thru the temple...It was so nice to be under the wing of the temple, one feels a peaceful something that can hardly be described.”

(November 30, 1919)

Who would have thought then, that Solomon Poliahu's great-great grandson would serve as the stake president of the Kona Stake today, President Aley Auna. Brother Vanley Auna, who works here at BYU Hawaii and lives in Hauula, is also a great-great grandson of this early leader of the church.

[Reference LDS Family History PAF]

Elder Clark would spend the next 2 years living in Waipio Valley and visiting all the saints in the Hamakua District, from Waipio and Kukuihaele to Kalopa, Honokaa and Waimea, with side trips to Puako and Hilo.

In 1917, Waipio Valley was a thriving community of about 700 people. There were 4 villages in the valley. There was no electricity, but there was a phone. People began to leave the valley in the 1920ties. As the people left the valley buildings fell into disrepair. The crowning blow was the destruction caused by the 1946 tsunami which destroyed homes, kalo and rice fields near the shore. In 1996, the estimated population in the valley was 35.
Well, it was here in old Waipio, that Elder Clark and other missionaries learned the ways of the Hawaiians and the ways of a haole missionary serving in Hawaii.

The missionaries would learn the language from the people and from the Hawaiian Book of Mormon and Doctrine & Covenants which they carried with them. The language wasn't easy but after about a year in the islands, Elder Clark records:

“Bro. Jones and I were the only speakers, but the saints certainly enjoyed it and the words were certainly given to us to by the Lord and the Hawaiian (language) just rolled out of my mouth as fluently as if I were talking English.” (December 23, 1918)

The Hawaiians cooked on wood and kerosene stoves and the imu. The missionaries were largely dependent on Church members for housing and meals. On one occasion he records:

“After meeting we went over to Sister Auna’s in hopes of dinner.” (December 12, 1917)

“Being a little hungry for a piece of kalo (taro) we went up to the poi shops and visited a few saints and got what we went after.” (June 6, 1918)

They ate what the members ate, such as taro, poi, taro leaves, fish, pork, chicken, jerked beef, crackers and sardines. Elder Clark mentions once of eating poi ulu, the paste pounded from the fruit of the breadfruit tree. Elder Clark describes one meal in Puako at the Kaono’s as follows:

“The folks at Puako were glad to see us...Stayed at Kaono's...They treated us great and gave us the best they had...flour poi [sea salt] and onion for supper...there being a great number of gnats that got into our food we could hardly eat.” (May 14, 1918, June 18, 1919)

Mosquitoes were also a problem.

July 19, 1918- “The mosquitoes at Alapai’s are worse than ever and I find it hard to stay there without a paku [net] over me all the time...”

From Waipio the missionaries would service branches in Waipio, Kukuihaele, Honokaa, Kalopa and Waimea. Along the way they would find their lunch; coconuts, papayas, mangoes, oranges, bananas, mountain apples, lilikoi, guava, alligator pears (avocados), wild raspberries. On one occasion Elder Clark records:
“We had a pretty good ride and gathered some wild raspberries on the way.” (May 24, 1918)

“About noon, being a little hungry, we stopped on the road and got a few papayas and ate them.” (September 26, 1917)

“We...gathered some papayas from the gulch taking turns in climbing the trees. One of my trees fell with me and I rolled in the ditch, but I got my papaya so the fall was not much noticed.” (June 14, 1918)

Most of the time they would stay at the members’ homes. Besides the mosquitoes, other things would keep them up at night:

“Bro. Jones and I did not sleep very good on account of a little gray cat which mewed under the window and on the house all night. In spite of the efforts of Bro. Jones who got up 2 or 3 times and chased it away with my trousers, we could not get rid of it.” (May 20, 1918)

Sometimes they wouldn't be able to find a place to stay, so they would stay at the meeting house. On one such occasion in Waimea, Elder Clark records:

“Our bed in the Meeting was certainly a cold one along toward morning and Bro. Jones and myself seemed to know about it, as we rolled around in our raincoats quite a bit. When we got up, frost was on the windows and we went down to the store to warm up.” (June 8, 1918)
The missionaries would learn to travel long distances by horse or foot along Mud Lane from Waipio to Waimea or up the road from Honokaa to Waimea as shown here. There were steep grades in hot weather and 4 times he would hike the 12 palis from Waipio to the remote valley of Waimanu.

“To get out of Waipio Valley we had to climb a zig zag trail, 2000 feet high which took us about ¾ of an hour...There were 12 palis...to cross over...we were continually [going] over steep inclines, which looked dangerous to us, but the Waimanu people think it is nothing...It's a regular cow trail.” (January 21, 1918)
In 1918, the trail looked like this as Elder Clark continues:

...It took us 3 1/2 hours and we came into view of Waimanu. (January 21, 1918)

“...It was certainly a grand sight to look straight down 2000 feet over a high precipice, at a flat little valley, surrounded by perpendicular mountains on all sides except toward the sea, where the large waves came rolling in...” (January 21, 1918)

Water is the essence of Waimanu. Much of the valley floor is a fresh water marsh. In heavy rains locals report that Waimanu thunders to the sound of falling water as flowing white ribbons pour over every notch of its cliffs. It was here in Waimanu that Elder Clark learned of another Hawaiian mode of transportation. He writes:

“There is a large stream which comes down from the mountains called the Waimanu River and as it was close to the house and there were some little Waas (canoe) there I got in and had a nice little ride. A waa is a small hand
made row boat with an out-rigger fastened to it to balance it. They were carved out of tree trunks by hand.”

I with one of the children started up the river...We were going fine when...she turned over. The water was about 4 feet deep, but we both went clear in...The Hawaiians certainly had a fine laugh over it, but it was alright with me, so long as they furnished me with dry clothes, which they did...
(January 21, 1918)

Along with long walks to Waimanu, Waimea and Honokaa there were also long rides by horseback.
He would ride a horse named Laka, Ol' Billie, Lock or Lady, up to Waimea or over to Honokaa to get the mail. Other times the missionaries would catch the plantation train in Paauilo, bound for Hilo to attend meetings and conferences.

The missionaries would hitch rides in what few cars would pass by. They would hitch rides with Bro. John Kealoha, the President of the Kukuihaele Branch, who owned an old car, as he was the jailer in town. (September 24-28, 1917)
Sometimes the missionaries would hitch a ride on a ranch truck from Parker Ranch down to Kawaihae.

Elder Clark writes,

“Brother Jones and I had planned to go to Puako on the Ranch Truck going to Kawaihae...we caught the truck early and were soon in Kawaihae. (May 14, 1918)

Once they were in Kawaihae they would then Sampan or walk down to Puako. Elder Clark records,

“At Kawaihae we fell in with an old portagee who had hired a sampan to take him over to Puako to buy pigs, so we went along with him.” (June 18, 1918)

On another occasion the missionaries walked to Puako and Elder Clark continues,

“Our trail being along the beach toward Kona...Arriving at our little sandy beach ‘Hapuna’ we had a long swim and took a few pictures.” (November 6, 1918)

During much of their travels they would perform ordinations, baptisms, administrations to the sick in addition to conducting and teaching at Sunday meetings or teaching cottage meetings at the members homes where their neighbors were invited to attend. At these gatherings they discussed gospel principles and encouraged people to accept baptism.

One of the favorite topics was the Temple under construction in Laie and how the members might
attend the Temple dedication and take part in activities there.

After a year out in the country Elder Clark records:

Hawaiian Temple about 1917

“I feel good today and think I could stand it out here one more year at least, but present we are all waiting for the Temple Dedication and when the time comes we will flock in to Laie...” (July 19, 1918)

They would also organize fund raisers for the Temple Fund, organizing dances and luau’s, going house to house selling tickets to further the cause. They recruited musicians for entertainment, often the evenings before Branch Conferences. At one event Elder Clark records:

“...gave a dance the night of the third for the benefit of the Temple. We made daily walking trips all over town selling tickets for the grand event. Our dance was a success and everybody had a good time and we also feel pretty good over it as we cleared about $30.” (July 4, 1918)

“We visited most all of the saints that afternoon and got a little Temple money.”

Most of their evenings were spent talking story, singing songs and playing guitar or ukulele and Pule Ohana or Family Prayer.

“Spent the evening in talking on the porch and listening to music played by the people” (May 14, 1918)

“spent the evening chatting with Poliahu” (June 3, 1918)

“we all sang songs until late in the evening” (February 16, 1919)

“went home and talked the day over with Poliahu” (July 19, 1919)

“I sat and talked so long on the porch with Poliahu” (April 11, 1919)
“We had a good talk with Poliahu and played the graphaphone in the evening.” (June 27, 1919)

Elders Byron Jones and N. Ford Clark

1918

“We all had a bath and went back to the house...spending a fine evening together. We always have Pule Ohana, and the old man[Poliahu] always takes charge and it almost seems like a little Bible class” (June 28, 1919)

Such was the missionary life in Waipio and the Hamakua District of the Big Island. The church no longer has an official presence in Waipio (no more missionaries), but the legacy of past missionary work is evident in the strong membership in the general area and throughout the the Big Island. The Temple in Kona is part of that legacy.

Elders N. Ford Clark and Byron Jones

1918

As I read Grandpa's journal I was struck by the lack of money and food that the Elders encountered among the members. That said, sometimes with great sacrifice from the members they would get by.

Upon leaving Puako November 7, 1918, Elder Clark writes:

“The old lady Kaono slipped us a dollar and I had a little talk with her before leaving which made her feel good.”

Old Lady Kaono's granddaughter is Sister Irene Cordiero-Vierra who lives here in Hauula. In an interview with her and her sister, several weeks ago, how well they remember their grandma slipping them a dollar bill to take to church on Sunday. Other occasions demonstrated the member's kindness and generosity to the Elders:

“We asked Bro. Robert Kanihu if we could stay with him and he at last consented and after supper he and his wife with Annie played and sang for us. They parted their one room with a curtain and gave us their bed to sleep, while they slept on the floor.” (December 13, 1917)
“We made our way up to Judge Makekau’s who was out in the yard working. He was glad to see us however, and insisted that we stay all night with him...the Judge made us feel at home and then went to kill the ‘chicken’ which he and his son prepared for us with a right good supper.”

And finally, Elder Clark writes:

“June 26, 1919—Leland [Heywood] and I stayed at Kukuhaele and slept in Meheula’s house. He was in Laupahoehoe and his wife and children were going down to Kahakai to sleep, so we had the house to ourselves. The poor lady gave us every cent she had--$.40-- to eat before she left us and it nearly made tears come into my eyes to see her faith and generosity, but that is an Hawaiian over and over and I see it everyday.”

One of the most touching events recorded in Elder Clark’s Journal is the dedication of the Laie Temple.

He came by boat with some of the members from the Big Island, stopping in Lahaina, picking up more missionaries and members. They arrived in Honolulu on November 25, 1919.

“We pulled into Honolulu in the morning—city at last after 2 years and 2 months in the country...motored out to Laie—it’s a little new city to me...”

Wednesday, November 26, 1919—“In evening was the first meeting of Conference and we heard from the visitors, Pres. Grant, Lund, apostles Clawson and Richards and Bishop Nibley...”

Thursday, November 27, 1919—“Thanksgiving! We all assembled in the Temple at 10:00 for the first Dedication service and what feast!--4 ½ hours. Also held another meeting in the Hale Pule in the evening. The meetings in the Temple are over 300 people while over 600 attend at the meeting house.
Friday, November 28, 1919- “During the day were two services in the Temple. I had the privilege of attending them both...Was nearly frightened to death when I talked in the Temple this afternoon. Ano e koio noonoo i ka noho ano i kuu hoohanau we. Maina ma.” [I was thinking I was born here]

Saturday, November 29, 1919- “...I did get to attend the afternoon session at the temple”

Sunday, November 30, 1919- “...It is so nice to be under the wing of the Temple, one feels a peaceful something that can hardly be described.”

Monday, November 31, 1919- “...In the evening a testimony meeting was held in the Temple assembly room for the Elders.”

Elder Clark's Journal continues:

Wednesday, December 3, 1919- “Bro. Waddoups had spoken to me about working in the Temple, so that is where I was all day—it being the first day of endowments, 36 in all. We got out about dark, tired and hungry, but it is a great work.”
Thursday, December 4, 1919- “Again I went to the Temple and took my part...”

Elder N. Ford Clark and Elders at Lanihuli House 1919

Friday, December 5, 1919- “Worked in the Temple again. Old Sis Ma [Manuhii] was one of them. Newman and I had to carry her thru. When she came out she said she had seen Joseph F. Smith's face and he said 'aloha' to her. Also in one of the rooms a dove flew in thru the window and sat on the end of her bench.”

Sister Ma Manuhii took care of Joseph F. Smith during his first mission to the islands. This is a first person account of Sister Ma Manuhii's experience during her own endowment session. She was in her 90 ties, was blind and couldn't walk. She died shortly after.
Following these days in Laie, Elder Clark was sent back to the Big Island and then on to Maui. Elder Clark left Lahaina for a Mission Conference in Laie on July 7, 1920. Once he reached Laie, he records the following:

*Monday, July 12, 1920-I helped Barlow decorate the hall for the cantata in the evening. All Elders repaired to the Temple in the afternoon, received our appointments and bore testimonies. I am released...*

That's the way they did it in those days. There was not a set time limit for the mission, so you never knew when your release would come. You could be honorably released at almost anytime for almost any reason.

Without mentioning the names, look at this release of a missionary couple I came across in the Hawaiian Mission Record from 1901:

*Wednesday, Apr. 24, 1901-Elder P was released early because he was ruled by his wife, and his wife was released because she was adverse to doing anything.*

Well, that's the way they did it in those days. Elder Clark's last days in the mission are spent as follows:

*Tuesday, July 13, 1920-I wrote the folks, went to the Temple...all day.*

*Wednesday, July 14, 1920-I went thru the Temple again twice...*

*Thursday, July 15, 1920-To the Temple again—twice.*

*Friday, July 16, 1920-To the Temple again. These are happy days...*

On July 19th, 1920, he left on the morning train from Kahuku, bound for Honolulu. On July 20th from Honolulu he writes;
“Yesterday, we were all out to Bro. Eli’s to a luau in honor of we returning elders, and again this afternoon we were served to another big repeat in honor of our worthy selves in the Hale Pule. **Goodness it's lonesome.**”

The next day “covered with leis”, he left the islands after 3 ½ years. He left with the words, “I am coming back to Hawaii.” Little did he know it would be less than five years when he would return with his pregnant wife, for his second mission.

He caught the boat to San Francisco and then by train to Salt Lake City. After living in a tropical paradise for 3 ½ years, it is no wonder that he describes the train ride home as “a more dusty ride I never had. The desert is awful.”

Upon arriving home, not unlike the missionaries of today, he records:

“One day he returned to the mission house after some time of absence, to find everyone very much at home. The fact that he was a missionary was not mentioned, but everyone knew it, and the world went on, and he had only to make himself at home. And he did...”

“...and a few happy days at home...aloha nui”

\[e\ noho i loko o ke aloha a kou makuahine.\]

(dwell with the love of your mother)

Sources:

- Nathan Ford Clark Mission Journal, 4 Volumes, Originals in possession of Dean Clark Ellis and Win Rosa
- All photos in the possession of Dean Clark Ellis and Win Rosa, except as noted.

**Dean Clark Ellis** is the grandson of N. Ford Clark. He graduated from the College of Engineering at Utah State University. He is a retired Vice President of Callaway Golf Company. He has traveled extensively and authored several technical papers in the field of materials and welding. He currently resides in Hauula, HI. ([deancellis@juno.com](mailto:deancellis@juno.com))

**Win Rosa** is the son-in-law of N. Ford Clark. He graduated in Civil Engineering from Stanford University. He retired from California Department of Transportation. He is an avid hiker and has traveled extensively. He is the author of a hiking and trails book, “Hawaii Wild”. He currently resides in Kailua, HI. ([winrosa@comcast.net](mailto:winrosa@comcast.net))

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