

## ROMANTIC ISLES OF FUTURE U. S. TRANSPACIFIC AIR ROUTE

By JOHN WILLIAMS

Heading west in their prairie schooners, little did the pioneers of America's fertile middle west think about other Americans in schooners upon the wide Pacific.

Yet, the economic demands of these farmers changed the charters of many a clipper, changed the lives of many people in the Hawaiian islands, and caused to be written in personal and official records exciting reports of robbery and mutiny and shipwreck, of men adrift to die thirst-crazed idiots, of the courageous resource of men and women, side by side on barren, waterless isles, moved by the same spirits as the pioneers of the prairies.

Many Pacific islands were rich in guano, just what the middle west farmers wanted. Three of them—Jarvis, Baker and Howland, almost on the equator between Hawaii and Samoa—became as familiar among American sea captains as they will among the pilots of planes in the near future on the proposed U. S.-Australia air route.

The American Guano Co. of New York obtained the bonded rights to work the three islands. An agent of the company, a Mr. Benson, took with him Charles Hastings Judd, of Honolulu, in the Hawaiian schooner Liholho. Capt. John Paty, to procure the first cargo from the islands. This historic experimental voyage, which started from Honolulu December 25, 1856, was regarded locally as "a humbug," but 71 days later when the Liholho returned with 100 tons of the critics changed their tune.

The guano, which was of obvious high quality, was dispatched with all haste to New York in two ships where it was sold, most of it at \$50 a ton, the balance at \$30.

Mercantile Honolulu turned expectant eyes towards the equatorial El Dorado. Mr. Judd, however, who had been appointed superintendent of the three, realized the great dangers of the work on the barren, waterless, ocean-bound islands. His experiences in the Liholho enabled him to plan with foresight.

He chose Hawaiians, willing workers, admirably adapted to taking open boats in and out through the surf, which proved the best way of loading the schooners. Besides, the sturdy Hawaiians were able to stand long hours of work in the tropic environment. Birds' eggs and fish, according to the first report of the islands, were "in such abundance as almost to stagger faith in human testimony." They made ideal fresh foods for the Hawaiians.

Jarvis appears to have been the most important of the three islands. It was center for the schooners to run back to Hawaii in the north-east trade wind than from Baker and Howland, which are 1,000 miles further west. Also, Jarvis (early called Jarvis) was more in line with the important trade route to New York via the Horn. Ships left Honolulu, called in at Jarvis 1,300 miles almost due south, loaded with guano, then scooted round the Horn. It was an interesting break for the passengers.

Charles Hastings Judd (who later became chamberlain to King Kalakaua) settled on Jarvis with 23 men early in 1858. They set permanent moorings to expedite the loading of ships, erected a permanent camp. The strangest building was the largest. It was a combined residence (for the superintendent) and storehouse, designed and built in New York, and shipped to the island ready cut for erection.

Unhappily, the architect took his information, too literally. He was told it did not rain on those equatorial islands, so he built a two-storied house with only a canvas top with the result that the interior became uncomfortable in the occasional squally, monsoonal weather.

Laura Judd (Mrs. Joshua Dickson), who early visited the island and lived in the house, wrote in one of her many vivid letters:

"There is a nice green set of furniture, we have three other sets, so I will send it to you." Artfully he added: "The price on the invoice is \$24.00."

Letters from the young Wilders told other stories: "We take a salt water bath in the \$12.00 tub every day before breakfast. The little chickens are dying. Nellie, the horse, works well, but she drinks a good deal of water."

"Water was a problem. Once, when a supply ship came disabled and had to put back to Honolulu, the supply in the cisterns fell to five inches, 'driving Wilder nearly crazy.' Soon after that, however, 'driving Wilder wrote:

"We have manufactured a water condenser by which I can make 140 gallons in 24 hours. It rained here May 22 from 4 a. m. to 5:30 a. m. I caught 10,067 gallons of good water, making a total of 13,167 gallons upon the island. I could have saved another 10,000 had I had two more cisterns."

(The Kamehameha boys, who are living on the islands today, making weather reports for future airlines to Australia, as told in last Saturday's story, spread canvas over these same cisterns or brick tanks and catch water whenever heavy rain falls.)

Keeping foods fresh in the hot climate was a problem. Preserved milk opened up like old cheese! They found simple foods, like poi in barrels, potatoes, rice, dried apples and salted meats kept best. The Hawaiian workers ate about one pound of poi per day every 10 men, but, as Mr. Judd had foreseen, they

ate very little food outside the fish (including squid) which they caught on the reef and eggs which they collected everywhere on the island. The few white people, like the Hawaiians, craved watermelons. But often the melons would be eaten in transit by the crews of the ships. An order to Honolulu from Mr. Judd reads tersely: "100 watermelons, and speak to Capt. Stone about his crew eating them."

Now and again a few live sheep and a bullock would be

imported, but they needed such care in traveling, and drank so much water on arrival until they were killed for eating that this idea was soon dropped.

Turtles were discovered. They visited the island at night to lay eggs in the sand. By moonlight they were easily stalked and overcome. The Wilder Memoirs describe one turtle's fate: "The cook killed him, as we supposed, cutting the meat into steaks, but great was our astonishment next morning to see the meat move around the frying pan as if alive, and what may seem more incredible, the turtle's head, severed from the body, snapped at a stick! As we had no fresh meat for over two months, the turtle steaks were very much appreciated."

One live animal on the island, however, became famous in the logs of ships. It was a

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Some idea of the tremendous bird life which exists on Jarvis island is given by this Bishop museum photo which shows thousands of them wheeling in the air by the beach. Albert F. Judd, who made collections for the museum, is shown.

the house having "the appearance of a sportsman's seaside cottage." The shade of its wide verandas was inviting and the land would not call out "Land ho!" first but that they could see a flag on the water, then a house, then a man riding on a mule, and, finally, an island under the mule. Harbored lookouts, their minds instantly switching back to their last rum, would rub their eyes with astonishment. A mule in the middle of the Pacific! Shades of landlubbers!

The island was so low-lying



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So the islands became popular with Honolulu residents. Punahou boys, who later became famous in Hawaiian history, like Sanford B. Dole, G. N. Wilcox and others were regular visitors. Among them was Albert Francis Judd, who was to become chief justice of the Hawaiian Islands. He went down as the only passenger in the famed brig John Marshall on June 11, 1858. Young Frank as he was called, left a journal of that adventurous trip.

He told vivid tales of rough seas and his sickness, how the fresh foods such as mangoes, oranges, squash and melons, rotted. It was the first time he had been away from home. He wondered how the world could possibly be so dismal.

His mother, with foresight, had given him two young roosters with instructions for making a pie of them when the fresh foods gave out. But one of them flew overboard at Christmas island, a stop en route, and after much commotion was rescued. But the other bird, just before the John Marshall reached Jarvis, flew overboard and was drowned.

Still, there were pigs aboard. But who likes pork when he's feeling seakick? Because there was no refrigeration, each pig had to be eaten as soon as it was killed, which meant everybody had big meals that day and light ones the next!

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Being a brother of the superintendent didn't mean soft jobs for young Frank. He had to earn his keep by swinging a pick in the diggings and moving the guano in wheelbarrows to the dumps for loading.

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Attired for their work in the tropics, even to "elephant hats," here are some of the men who played an important part in the last era of the Itasca to Jarvis, Baker and Howland islands, where Kamehameha students were left to make meteorological records. From left, they are: Albert P. Judd, Maj. Herbert D. Porterfield, William T. Meyer (department of commerce, aviation bureau), and Lt. Harold A. Meyer. Because each man gave the boys specialized advice, the men were known (behind their backs) as "The Brain Trust."—Photo by Don Mitchell.

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