

The United States Leprosy Investigation Station at Kalawao

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Although Annexation brought many benefits to residents of the new Territory of Hawaii, too many of these rewards, it would seem, were less tangible than some of Hawaii's taxpayers had been led to expect from Uncle Sam. Very definitely, Uncle Sam was not being at all fair either to his exotic new ward, Miss Hawaii, or to her stewards, who labored so assiduously over her plantations and fields. In fact, he was behaving very much as did the classical guardian of the typical innocent, trusting, wealthy (and orphaned) young lady in novels and plays of the time, who spent much of his ward's fortune on his own giddy pleasuring, the while he kept her as little more than a servile handmaiden in his many-chambered mansion. Uncle Sam's style of living, that curious ménage he had set up with forty-odd other stately ladies of assorted ages, demands, and degrees of virtue on that notorious hill in Washington,¹ should have warned Miss Hawaii's stewards about his propensities. But, *auwe!* When he came a-courting they were too dazzled by his glamor, too fuddled by his sweet talk, to be anything more than delighted.

In 1903, after four years of saddening experience, the resident stewards of Miss Hawaii's estate took counsel among themselves, about having a word with Sam. Finding an argument with which to impress the hardened spendthrift was not easy. Conveying the message to him—in those days when they could speak with nothing more than a Delegate's falsetto in Washington, and could only weep and wring each other's hands at home—was even more difficult.

Nonetheless, they were shrewd men, and by 1904 they had thought of a way. Playing the long chance, they appealed not to his generosity but to the tattered remnants of his Calvinist conscience. They prodded this with the one instrument they could use against him. And what more fearsome thing could they show him than a leper?

Dragging forth the living skeleton from its lazar-house—in which it had been well hidden during the betrothal festivities of Annexation—they lifted the *mu'umu'u*² hand of the leper toward Washington.

Perhaps because Dr. Charles Bryant Cooper, President of the Board of Health in 1904, had been one of the Republic's most ardent annexationists, perhaps because physicians are considered to be more trustworthy in these

matters of sore affliction, Dr. Cooper himself was chosen to put the question to Uncle Sam. In 1904 an unattractive little ten-page pamphlet—repellent in appearance, format, typography, style, and logic, if not entirely in purpose—bearing Dr. Cooper’s name as author was published by the Board of Health in Honolulu³

This was its title:

LEPROSY IN THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS
—ITS HUMANITARIAN AND FINANCIAL BURDEN—AN UNPARALLELED
INSTANCE OF PUBLIC PHILANTHROPY

And this was its argument:

Hawaii’s Request

The citizens and officials of the Territory of Hawaii believe the financial burden of leprosy, and the fact that the United States Treasury is unduly profiting from these islands, justify them in asking—

First. Aid in the scientific study and treatment of leprosy, now beyond our means.

Second. Some direct or indirect adjustment of the financial arrangements of the Territory of Hawaii with the Federal Treasury, so that our humanitarian obligations may be properly carried on without the present undue strain.⁴

After describing briefly the Leper Settlement at Kalaupapa on Molokai and the Christian care Hawaii had long been accorded lepers who were sequestered there (in 1904, 856 to be exact, out of a territorial population of 154,001), Cooper presented figures showing “the financial burden of leprosy in the Hawaiian Islands” disclosed by reports of the Board of Health as they were reflected by “Expenditures of the Board of Health, for the period of six years, ending December 31, 1903”:

Care of leprosy	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$876,888.86
Support and segregation, etc.	-	-	\$840,688.86				
Transportation, administration, etc.	-		36,200.00				
Ordinary expenditures	-	-	-	-	-		\$830,064.65
Administration	-	-	-	\$108,750.08			
Sanitation	-	-	-	182,961.99			
Quarantine Service	-	-	-	35,042.29			
Gov’t Physicians & medicines	-			144,907.44			
Car of Insane	-	-	-	187,507.55			
Hospitals	-	-	-	170,895.30			
Extraordinary expenditures	-	-	-	-			\$625,000.00
bubonic plague, years 1899-1900							
Total	-	-					\$2,231,953.51

No doubt Uncle Sam was stupider in those days than he is now. Even so, one wonders how he could have been impressed by the devious reasoning that prompted Dr. Cooper and his advisers to throw *all* of the Board of Health's expenses for the last *six* years into a plea for help in sustaining the burden of giving humanitarian care to the lepers.

Or why he didn't burst out laughing at the patent dishonesty of this nudge to his conscience:

An Equal Burden on the United States Proper Would Mean:

Supporting through life indigent afflicted persons,					
in number	-	-	-	-	532,513
Expending annually for above	-	-	-	-	\$72,278,458.00
Expending in six years	-	-	-	-	\$432,670,753.00

Having thus aroused his sympathy, if not his suspicions, the pamphlet now provided Uncle with facts and figures that were bound to make him writhe with guilt and shame:

*Financial Relations of the Treasury of the United States
with the Territory of Hawaii*

Period from Annexation, June 14, 1900 to June 20, 1904.

(April, May, and June, 1904, are semi-officially estimated)

Income of Federal Treasury	-	-	-	\$5,253,021.04
Expenditures by Federal Treasury	-	-	-	993,474.00
Net Profit to Federal Treasury	-	-	-	4,259,546.84

PLEASE NOTE

The United States Government

Collects annually per capita from Hawaii	-	-	\$8.53
Returns directly per capita annually to Hawaii	-	-	\$1.62
Expends annually per capita for its mainland population			\$7.97

This ingenuous polemic, complete with its phony statistical treatment of facts fiduciary as well as epidemiological—which even then its authors must have recognized as being as false as the bustle—was sent to a number of important people throughout the country, with gratifying success.

The particular effort of the year, [Governor Carter wrote in his Annual Report for 1904] has been that of Dr. C. B. Cooper, as representative of the Board of Health, to bring the subject of the scientific study and treatment of leprosy for the benefit of the lepers of Hawaii forcibly to the attention of the United States Public Health and Marine Hospital Service at the annual conference at Washington, June 3, 1904. Dr. Cooper was chairman of the committee on leprosy. This effort was supplemented by the presentation of the subject to the American Medical Association at its annual meeting at Atlantic City . . .

That the United States Government owes certain financial relief in equity toward our leper charges is believed by many, and the Board of Health issued a booklet in support of the contention . . .⁵

Uncle Sam was touched, in his incorporate heart. His knotted purse-strings were unbound. One of his appointed almoners in that Byzantine court, the one most concerned with piteous petitions for the relief of sore afflictions of the kind Dr. Cooper exhibited so publicly, was Dr. Walter Wyman, Surgeon-General of the USPH & MHS. On 9 October 1904, "being impressed with the wishes of the Territory of Hawaii Board of Health," he wrote to Governor Carter:

. . . as to what is desired and what may be properly recommended to the general government in the matter of scientific examination into the subject of leprosy. . . . In my annual report to the Secretary of the Treasury . . . I have recommended that authority be obtained from Congress for investigations along these lines by the Service in conjunction with the Territorial authorities.⁶

To do justice to Dr. Wyman, and to the Service he represented, he and his staff did have a legitimate interest in Hawaii's health problems and were certainly the people to whom Dr. Cooper's memorial should have been referred. Dr. L. E. Cofer, head of the USPHS & MHS branch office in Honolulu at the time, stated this concern, and the role his agency was required to perform, in his report for 1904:

Congress has imposed upon our USPH & MHS Corps in Hawaii maritime quarantine, epidemic work, medical relief to the merchant marine, the examination of all aliens entering the United States, general medical and bacteriological research, the collection, tabulation, exchange, publication, and general distribution of sanitary news and statistics, other miscellaneous duties almost too numerous to mention, and finally the investigation of leprosy. Although this service applies in a greater or less degree all of its functions to the public benefit of Hawaii, the importance of the latter place from a quarantine standpoint has awakened a special interest on the part of Surgeon-General Wyman, so that in the interest of the whole country much liberality has been extended in the making of a quarantine service at this port commensurate with the probable requirements. . . .

The more important Hawaii becomes as a military mobilization point, naval strategic base, and commercial port of call, the more important will it become in the eyes of the medical world as a possible disease center. Therefore to the PH & MHS falls the task of protecting not only Hawaii, but the mainland and insular possessions as well, from the infection possible under present and future conditions . . .⁷

Governor Carter's reply to Wyman is dated 2 November 1904:

The question of a Federal appropriation for the study of leprosy has taken deep hold on this community, and I anticipate our Delegate to Congress will introduce a Bill to that effect, accompanied by an immense petition signed by almost every voter . . . I do not believe that our great Government could put \$50,000 to better use; nor can it take any step which will bring home to the Hawaiians more strongly the benevolent interest the Federal Government takes in these people: that the "white man's burden" of the American people is no idle jest.⁸

But, Governor Carter concluded his letter with a hint of troubles at home, "the time is not ripe for the Federal Government to take control of our Settlement."

Even though mail was slower in those days, bureaucracy managed to move faster. By 23 December Wyman was able to inform Carter that Congressman W. P. Hepburn of Iowa had introduced in the House of Representatives a bill to appropriate a sum for the study of leprosy.⁹ It is not known how Congress-

man Hepburn got involved with this unlikely bill for an Iowan; presumably he was one of the voting members of the House who was friendly to Hawaii and with Hawaii's Delegate, Prince Kuhio Kalaniana'ole, who had to rely on the kindness of his friends to introduce and support legislation concerning the Territory. In any event, somewhere along the line from Kuhio to Wyman to Hepburn, the request for \$50,000 was increased to \$150,000 "for the scientific and medical relief of the lepers on Molokai."¹⁰

At home in Honolulu Dr. Cooper and his colleagues must have been quietly pleased at the wonders they had wrought. None of them realized the enormity of their error in invoking Congress's generosity for Kalaupapa.

Congress—touched to the Calvinist quick though it may have been—was Yankee enough not to give something away for nothing: it decreed that the Federal Government must own the land on Molokai upon which the gifts of its philanthropy would be erected. This insistence, and other peculiarly Hawaiian factors, caused considerable anguish in Honolulu. The troubles were only implied in a cablegram Governor Carter sent to Surgeon-General Wyman on 3 March 1905:

PERSONAL EFFORTS BEHALF LEPROSY BILL APPRECIATED.
CAN YOU NOT INDIVIDUALLY SELECT SITE MAKE INITIAL
ARRANGEMENTS BECAUSE PEOPLE SENSITIVE. TO START
RIGHT ESSENTIAL.¹¹

On that same day "the noble-hearted members of the 58th Congress,"¹² sailing grandly ahead, passed An Act to Provide for the Investigation of Leprosy, with special reference to the care and treatment of lepers in Hawaii. Section 1 of the Act required the Territory "to cede title to one square mile of land, more or less." Section 2 authorized the Secretary of the Treasury to erect "suitable buildings" on that ceded parcel of land.

Section 3 stated that, "for the purposes of this Act the Surgeon-General, through his accredited agent, is authorized to receive at such station such patients afflicted with leprosy as may be committed to his care under legal authorization of the Territory of Hawaii, not to exceed 40 in number to be under treatment at any one time, said patients to remain under the jurisdiction of the said Surgeon-General, or his agent, until returned to the proper authorities of Hawaii."

Section 4 specified that "the Surgeon-General . . . is authorized to detail or appoint, for the purposes of these investigations and treatment, such medical officers, acting assistant surgeons, pharmacists, and employees as may be necessary for said purpose."

Section 5 appropriated \$100,000 for buildings, and \$50,000 for fiscal year 1906, "for maintenance and pay of all officers and employees."

Section 6 authorized the Surgeon-General to make and adopt rules and regulations for the hospital.

Section 7, recognizing the hazard of working at Kalawao, provided that any USPH & MHS officer and employee detailed for duty at the leprosarium

would receive "in addition to the pay and allowances of his grade, one-half the pay of said grade and such allowances as may be provided for by the Surgeon-General . . . with the approval of the Secretary of the Treasury."¹³

Now the folk in Honolulu who had started all this had to fulfill their end of the bargain. Here they made their second mistake. Instead of taking a good look at the awesome difficulties of building and running a huge medical establishment at Kalaupapa, one of the most inaccessible places on earth; and instead of sensibly requesting that the establishment be built on Oahu, not only more accessible but also more congenial to the social needs of its personnel, they went blandly along with the master plan. To them Kalaupapa and leprosy were synonymous. Therefore, without question, the United States Leprosy Investigation Station, as the Federal establishment was named, would have to be built on the land of Kalaupapa.

Since the 1890s, primarily because of the difficulty of landing supplies and people at Kalawao, most of the patients and the facilities in the Leper Settlement had been moved from Kalawao, the eastern portion of the promontory, to Kalaupapa, the western side of the little leaf of land which juts into the sea from the long body of Molokai. Some patients still lived in their cottages at Kalawao, however, and the Baldwin Home for Boys was still there, along with St. Philomena's, Father Damien's church, and Siloama, the Congregationalists' church.

So the search for land was directed upon Kalawao.

The area of the leaf of land which is Kalaupapa is about six square miles. Quite predictably, the surveyors had a hard time finding enough unoccupied and contiguous land at Kalawao to put together in a package of one square mile.

The Governor's File in the Archives for the spring and summer of 1906 holds all kinds of correspondence from and to patients at Kalawao concerning their homes on the government-owned lands which were being marked for confiscation. Naturally, the patients wanted to be paid for their homes and for the costs of moving to new locations; and, naturally, the Territory had no money either to buy or to move those homes from the coveted areas. Needless to say, the lepers were very unhappy about having to move at all.

Lucius E. Pinkham, Cooper's successor as President of the Board of Health, was able to write in his Annual Report for 1904-1905:

It is with great satisfaction we record the success of the efforts made to interest the Government of the United States in the subject of leprosy. Now that, as a beginning, the Federal Congress has appropriated One Hundred Thousand Dollars per annum for maintenance and prosecution of the work it would seem if science can find a cure or preventative of the disease, leprosy, it should now be discovered. . . . We have the encouragement of [Surgeon-General Wyman's] intense personal interest and his assurance the work will be prosecuted with the utmost diligence. . . .

We hope much from this generous attempt of the Federal Government to discover the character, and possibly a cure for this dread disease. Certainly the operations of the government will tend to relieve the monotony of the Settlement . . .¹⁴

Governor Carter's Annual Report for 1905 carried the story a little further:

During the year an act was passed by Congress to provide for the investigation of leprosy, with special reference to the care and treatment of lepers in Hawaii. . . . It is

provided by the terms of this act, when the Territorial government of Hawaii shall cede to the United States in perpetuity a suitable tract of land one mile square, more or less, in the leper reservation at Molokai, . . . there shall be established thereon a hospital station . . . for the study of the methods of transmission, cause, and treatment of leprosy.

In accordance with the foregoing, at the earnest solicitation of the governor and others, Surgeon-General Walter Wyman . . . was induced to visit the island for the purpose of making a selection of the site for the erection of the buildings provided for in the Act. He arrived in Honolulu the early part of June, and in company with the Hon. W. P. Hepburn, member of Congress from Iowa, Dr. E. C. Cofer, of the Federal Quarantine Service, and certain Territorial officials, visited the settlement at Molokai as the guests of the Inter-Island Steam & Navigation Co., which had put a steamer at the disposal of the party. After a thorough inspection of the entire area, it was concluded, from the physical and local conditions, that the purpose of the act could best be fulfilled by the selection of various areas of land in different localities for separate purposes. First the natural slope of high land at the eastern extremity of the settlement adapted itself in every way to a hospital service. Beyond this, protected by a promontory, was a site suitable for a landing. Between the two, and up a ravine, was an unfailing spring of pure water, which it was thought was sufficiently elevated to furnish water to the buildings by gravity.¹⁵

This imposing delegation, transported at great expense and amid such a flurry of guides, escorts, and minions, was intended to soothe the "sensitive" natives of Hawaii. The sensitive natives were not soothed. To them, whether or not they were lepers, this was just one more case of land-grabbing by the government, in a series they thought was already too long.

The site-inspection team, as such an assemblage of experts is called today, professed to be satisfied with the package of lands the surveyors finally managed to assemble: 114 acres on the beautiful grassy slope high above the bay of Kalawao, for the hospital complex itself; 8.9 acres farther out on the sea-cliff coast of the promontory, wind-swept and wave-scoured, for a landing-site; 4.5 acres around the spring, to protect the water supply; and 502.6 additional acres of pasture-lands between Kalawao and Kauhako crater, for the Station's livestock to graze upon.

With fine American valor, none of the visitors was dismayed by the obstacles to their visitation presented by Nature or by natives.

On June 28, 1905, Governor Carter's Proclamation officially conveyed one sixth of Kalaupapa's area into the keeping of the Federal Government—in perpetuity.¹⁶

Upon returning to Washington, Surgeon-General Wyman gave the signal to architects to start plans for the hospital and laboratory buildings. He and his staff also chose Dr. Walter R. Brinckerhoff of Boston, "assistant pathologist at Harvard Medical School,"¹⁷ to be director of the USLIS. No one could foresee that in choosing him they made the worst mistake of all.

Dr. Brinckerhoff reached Honolulu late in April, 1906—after having been delayed a bit by the San Francisco earthquake earlier that month. In June he was joined by Mr. and Mrs. Frank Leighton Gibson and their young son. Mr. Gibson's remembrances, entitled "Under the Cliffs of Molokai," which appeared in 1957, is the only published source of information about the building of the Station and the impact it had upon the lepers of Kalaupapa. In this

account of her life and experiences at Kalawao, this very feminine, very unscientific woman preserved for history the details which busy male officials did not bother to record.

"My husband," she wrote, "was to have charge of the building and equipment, the finances, and, in fact, all the executive part of the enterprise."¹⁹ In effect, Pharmacist Gibson is the man who achieved the impossible: in his unflinching devotion to the job—and, most certainly, to Brinckerhoff—he was the one who got the Station built.

Dr. Brinckerhoff, as she describes him at the beginning of his Hawaiian ordeal, was "a tall, humorous man, full of ideals and a grim determination to succeed if possible in this mission."²⁰ He and Gibson established a temporary office at the Customs House, in space loaned to them by the Collector of Customs.

Humorous and idealistic he may have been, but Brinckerhoff seems to have been afflicted with at least three serious faults, which made him the wrong choice for the difficult job he was appointed to perform. He was a typical laboratory man, happier with pathologist's specimens than with the living people from whom those specimens were taken; and he was a typical unbending Yankee *haole* who simply could not understand either native Hawaiians or those *haoles* who were members of the Territory's bureaucracy. In the jargon of today, he could not "relate" to patients or colleagues, he had no "empathy." Humor gave way to sourness, grim determination to impatience.

And, perhaps worst of all, he was so "germ-conscious," so full of respect (if not of subconscious fear) for the horrors of leprosy and for the germ which causes the disease, that he imposed extremely rigorous precautions upon himself and his colleagues in order to protect them from infection. He was not necessarily terrified by leprosy, but certainly he allowed his good sense to be overwhelmed to the point where his precautions became offensive, as well as ridiculous.

More than likely his habit of respect for germs was exacerbated by the company he kept. Being an eminent and eligible bachelor, he was drawn immediately into Honolulu's social life. At one of its elegant occasions he met Miss Nellie White, sister of Mrs. James Castle, one of the dominant personages in local society. On August 21, 1906 Dr. Brinckerhoff and Miss White were married.²¹

Upon the announcement of her engagement, Miss White, a forthright if not very adaptable young lady, is reputed to have said that she would "never, never set foot upon that island" where her fiancé's duties were supposed to take him—and indeed where the Federal Government was planning to build him (as well as the Gibsons) a large and comfortable residence. Unfortunately, this bit of gossip got into Honolulu's newspapers, along with a tactless cartoon depicting Miss White, dainty foot firmly implanted upon bags full of dollars, proclaiming her resolve.²² The patients at Kalaupapa could read, and now they added to the tally another reason to be mad at misfortuned Dr. Brinckerhoff.

In this important respect, it should be noted, Mrs. Brinckerhoff was very different from Mrs. Gibson, who loved Kalawao and every moment of her stay there.

Mrs. Gibson, with much more delicacy than the newspapers displayed, says that Dr. Brinckerhoff and his bride “decided *never* to live at Kalawao. Dr. Brinckerhoff would just go there from time to time and do his laboratory work at the Kalihi Station not far from Honolulu.”²³ One is left with the suspicion that, whenever he returned from Kalihi or Kalawao, the germ-conscious man was impelled to bathe in carbolic acid before he dared to approach his microbophobic wife.

This decision imposed upon Brinckerhoff by his strong-willed helpmate was going to have a decisive effect upon the history of the USLIS at Kalawao.

Meanwhile, in response to Leighton Gibson’s unremitting labors at Honolulu and at Kalawao, the USLIS was being built, slowly and with almost unbelievable effort.

The architects in Washington, stinting nothing, had produced plans for a great institution—by far the biggest complex yet erected in Hawaii. The buildings themselves, designed in the prevailing bureaucratic-baroque style of the day, were huge, airy, high-ceilinged edifices, encircled by wide verandahs held in place by numerous slender pillars—a mainlander’s idea of a southern planter’s mansion transplanted to the sunny, languid tropics. Identical structures were built by the American government in Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Canal Zone, the Philippines—and in Honolulu, at Fort Shafter, where some of them (now much modified) still survive. The old Tripler General Hospital at Fort Shafter, destroyed about 1955, was a splendid example of this rather grand, very romantic, and yet indubitably family-style architecture of that imperial age.

“It is proposed to commence shipping building material on January 7, 1908,” Brinckerhoff informed Lucius E. Pinkham, at the start of the new year. Fretted by endless little problems, such as deciding upon sites for pipelines at Kalawao, obtaining passes and permits for USLIS personnel to go into and out of territorial lands, being responsible for not only the progress of the work at Kalawao but also with running the temporary laboratory he and his staff had set up at Kalihi (where three months before he was complaining about “the present excited state of the Hawaiians” concerning “the matter of the testing of a treatment” he had proposed), Brinckerhoff was losing his composure.²⁴ He and Pinkham quibbled endlessly, both in correspondence and in conversation. Pinkham, big, bluff, and very sensitive to political pressures, was forever trying to soothe the harried scientist. “You must be aware,” he wrote 28 October 1907, “that the conditions now obtaining in the leprosy situation render the success of any move on the part of scientific or rational men doubtful. . . . Be patient—and we’ll get this thing built without a scandal. . . .”²⁴

The reasons for the delicate political situation and the intransigence of native lepers were many, and often so personal as to be obscure or trivial. But

all of them were baffling to Brinckerhoff and his colleagues. In general, they can be summed up under these headings:

1. The invincible and irrational ignorance of most Hawaiian lepers. Superstitious, resentful, hostile to *haoles*, and especially to Brinckerhoff, they simply could not be reached by reason or persuasion.
2. The native Hawaiian's old resistance to segregation of lepers at Kalawao, expressed in numerous ways since the Settlement was first established in 1867, which was reinforced by their utter lack of fear of the disease.
3. The bitterness against the United States which many Hawaiians still nourished against the people who had overthrown their Queen and the country which had annexed their islands. Local "annexation" of homes and lands at Kalawao merely compounded the injury.
4. A contradictory and irrational certainty expressed by some patients that they were being "rounded up" by USLIS scientists not for treatment but for use as "experimental animals." This opinion was maintained in spite of the fact that only volunteers were accepted by the Federal physicians.

Other reasons were to be invented later, while the USLIS was being built at Kalawao, but these are enough to indicate that, as successive Governors, Pinkham, and most other territorial officials could never forget, the political situation was indeed delicately poised.

Gradually the construction materials and the workers to use them were brought ashore at Kalawao. Slowly the Station took its intended shape.

The grounds had to be cleared by burning rows of houses formerly used by lepers [Mrs. Gibson wrote]. While waiting for the Station to be built, Leighton made many trips from Honolulu to Kalawao, attending to the numerous details of construction and planning. . . . It was divided into three compounds: Residence, Executive and Hospital. And then of course the housing for the Chinese workmen had to be provided. The Executive or Administration compound included storehouses, quarters for the 32 Chinese, ice houses, laboratories, also accommodations for the animals used in experiments, monkeys, rabbits, etc., and the barns. Every stick of lumber and bit of equipment had to be either floated ashore or loaded into small boats from the deck of the *Mikahala* or *Ewilani*²⁵ and inter-island steamers. It was *some* enterprise to buy and check every piece of equipment, from heavy block and tackle to handling the heavy pieces of machinery for the ice machine and electric dynamo, down through lists of linen, dishes, mules, garden seeds and all the delicate laboratory equipment. The USLIS at Kalawao had one of the most complete laboratory outfits in the world. No expense was spared. An architect from Washington had charge of the building plans, and an Island Contractor, the Scotchman, William Mutch, did the work. . . .

Dr. Brinckerhoff had seen to that there would be no double walls in the building, breeding places of germs, mice and rats. He stipulated all single face walls. The entire station was surrounded by a double fence. These two fences were 10 feet apart to ensure protection from any contact whatsoever, patients or otherwise. It was dogproof and kept birdproof also, no birds being allowed to even build nests. Dr. Brinckerhoff was even so germ conscious that he wouldn't have any rugs or draperies in his house. . . .

The 20-foot runway in the Hospital Compound paralleled the rooms of the patients and, although it was covered by a roof, was open on three sides to the beneficial and antiseptic salt air. For the convenience of the doctors, wash basins were put on the runway.

All during this building process, the Hansen Disease sufferers would make daily treks to watch and their attendants and supervisors would come also to see and hear about the latest in medical equipment. . . .

The United States Government work was to be done entirely separate for research [from Territorial facilities already in use at Kalaupapa], and it was ready for only those islanders who would *volunteer* for treatment.

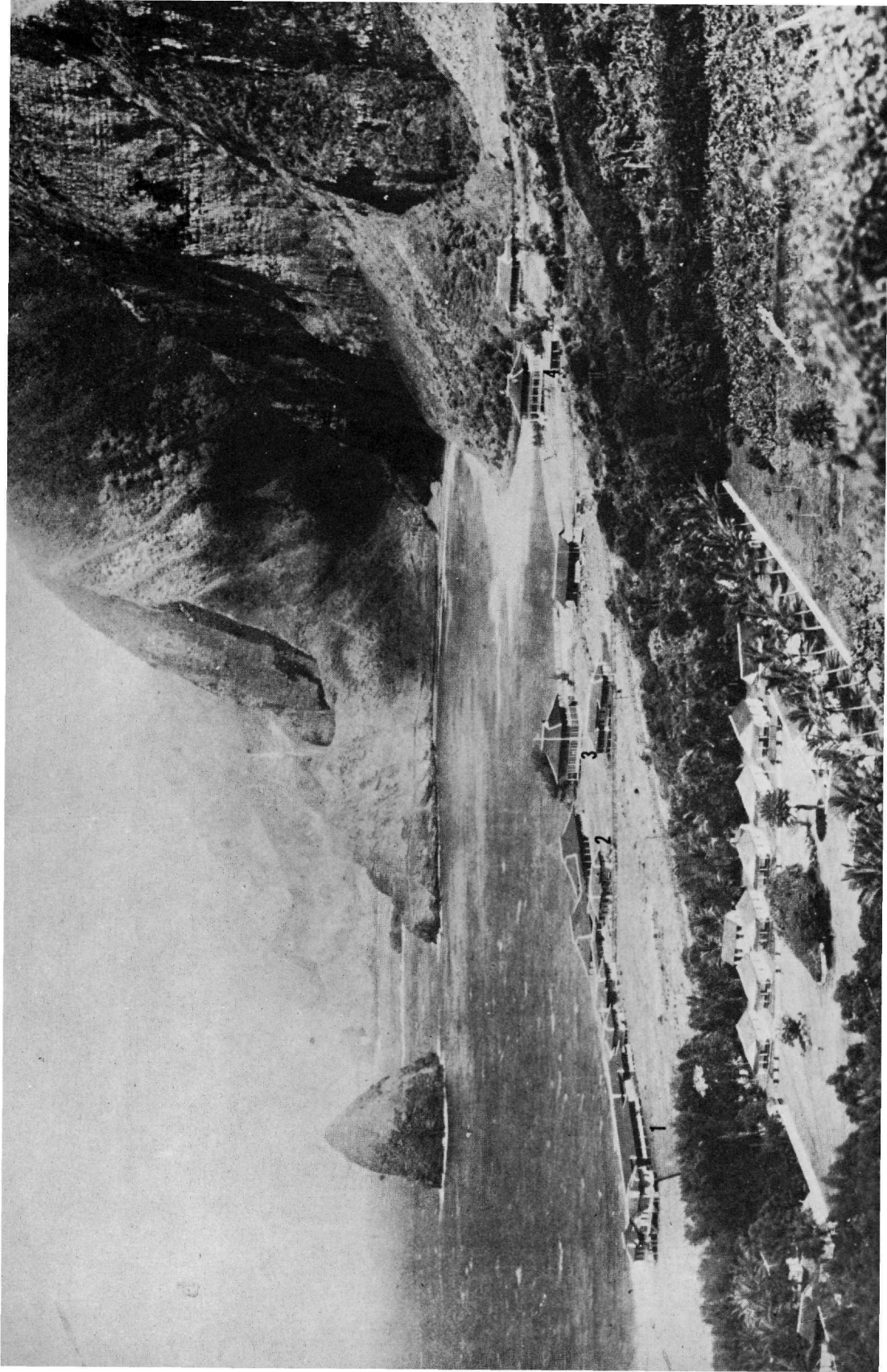
[During a windstorm in 1909], the wide lanais, surrounding our house both upstairs and down, acted like great wings as our two story house rose and fell with each battering gust and strained against its foundations like a soaring kite. . . . The unfinished buildings were blown off their foundations. Even the long hospital unit was blown slanting, and block and tackle had to be used to pull it back to its foundation . . .²⁶

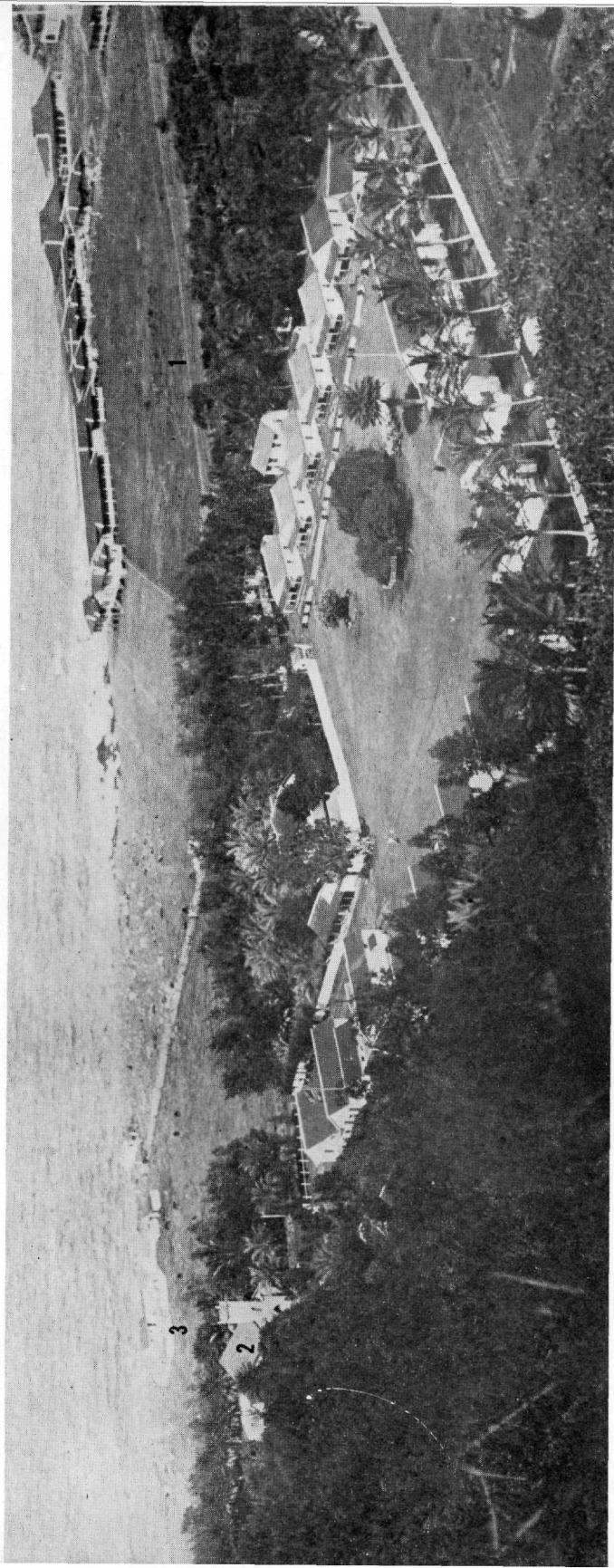
The patients who rode over from Kalaupapa to watch the unwanted wonders go up might have accepted in time the hospital and the laboratory, even perhaps the nervous attentions of jittery Dr. Brinckerhoff. But the wide swath of open space which they were forbidden to trespass, the great double fences with their locked gates, most obviously intended to shut them out from that citadel not of mercy but of Science at its cold worst: all these, and more—the wash basins, the sterile masks, gowns, and gloves, the very wealth of all that gleaming glittering alien installation—outraged the lepers of Kalaupapa. They were accustomed to the company of devoted healthy people, like Brother Joseph Dutton and other Catholic brothers, priests, and nuns, like the Protestant pastors, and the physicians and other *kokuas* employed by the Board of Health. And they remembered the legend of Father Damien, who by living among them had become one of them. Inevitably their outrage grew into scorn for the Station and hatred for the very people who professed to have come to help them.

In Honolulu, Dr. Brinckerhoff, Lucius Pinkham, and many a friend of the lepers were not left in ignorance of the general opinion at Kalawao. Letters, newspaper articles, and legislators kept them thoroughly informed.

Ill-fated Dr. Brinckerhoff was never given a chance to prove how his “grim determination” might have enabled him to redeem himself. Early in 1909, just before the Station was completed, his beloved wife died “when their son Nelson was born. After this sad occurrence and personal tragedy Dr. Brinckerhoff lost all interest in his work at the USLIS. April 3, 1909, he signed his resignation as Director, to take effect at the earliest possible convenience. . . . So barely three years after his earnest work and plans for the Station, Dr. Brinckerhoff left, a broken-hearted man, to die a few years later in New York of pneumonia.”²⁷ A stained glass window in the apse of

Kalawao sometime between 1909 and 1911, when the flag flew bravely above the USLIS. No information is available about the uses to which the different structures were put. Presumably, judging by the diagonal fence, the long low structure at 1 was the hospital, where volunteer patients from Kalaupapa were received (and where leprosy friends, standing outside, could come to visit them). The low twin structures at 2 might have been the research laboratories and administrative offices. The two-story edifice at 3 could have housed bachelor personnel. Far to the right, at 4, are the residences. Pharmacist Gibson, the hard-working major-domo, would have lived with his family and Chinese servants in the nearer house. The farther one was intended for Dr. Brinckerhoff. In the foreground is the C. R. Bishop Home for Boys, where Brother Joseph Dutton lived and served.





One of the unfriendly double fences which guarded the USLIS from Kalaupapa's lepers is visible at 1. Father Damien's Church of Saint Philomena appears at 2. The very un-American structures near the sea cliffs (3) probably were bath houses for Kalawao's patients.

Saint Andrew's Cathedral, dedicated to him in 1916, is his sole memorial in Hawaii.

Upon Brinckerhoff's resignation Leighton Gibson was "put in complete charge at Kalawao until a new director could be appointed. Many months later Dr. Currie and his wife arrived. . . ." ²⁸

I have the honor to inform you [Dr. Currie wrote to the President of the Board of Health on 10 December 1909] that it is my intention to open the Kalawao Station the latter part of this month and will then be ready to receive 15 patients from the Board of Health for the purpose of treatment and care.

Dr. Hollmann is now at Kalawao and inasmuch as he knows many of the patients there personally, I asked him to inform any of them that he may think suitable for our purpose, that this station will soon be open, in order that they might make up their minds whether it is their desire to be treated or not . . . we do not wish the nerve cases; only tubercular cases being suitable for the purpose intended. ²⁹

No one knows how large a scientific staff Dr. Currie took with him to Kalawao. His report to the Governor for the fiscal year ending 30 June 1910 indicates that "the laboratory and hospital force of the station" at Kalawao and Kalihi consisted of "three medical officers, one pharmacist, one translator, two technical assistants, and three other laboratory assistants." ³⁰ In view of the relative sizes of the facilities at the two places, and the great expectations held for the big new installation, it is probable that most of these people were at Kalawao when it opened for business.

On Christmas Eve in 1909, the USLIS was officially opened with a flag-raising ceremony ³¹ attended by the "clean" company of the staff and their families, watched from beyond the double fences by the Settlement's patients and their *kokuas*. In a letter of congratulation written to Mrs. Gibson on the occasion, ³¹ Brother Joseph Dutton, Father Damien's remarkable successor as servant to the lepers (who himself was forbidden entrance into the antiseptic compounds), wondered "what Father Damien would say of the mighty work . . . so many times greater than anything he ever dreamed of . . ." In this same letter Brother Joseph, always a man with an eye to history, noted that the splendid new Station was built on the site of "a very crude plan for a bathing establishment" which Father Damien and he had made in 1886.

Brother Joseph's own opinion of the USLIS, probably expressed in a letter written about the time it opened, was quoted in the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* for 9 December 1916: "The U.S. Leprosarium is the greatest institution on the islands, or in the world, probably of its sort. The appropriation by Congress was generous. The buildings are extensive, the outfit very elaborate, of best quality and of latest invention; everything present day science can provide." ³²

While the official opening of the Station undoubtedly brought a sigh of satisfaction from its staff, the captive residents of the Settlement must have received their greatest thrill a few weeks before, when the electricity for the establishment was turned on for the first time. This was also the first time that electricity was generated on Molokai.

Many of the populace came to watch, [Mrs. Gibson recalled]. There before their very eyes, the science of civilized man had demonstrated the actual harnessing and use of

the forces of nature. . . . Maybe to a few, this event would also bring enlightenment, bring a ray of hope for their plight, where no hope had been, a ray of hope that there would come a day when science could proudly bring forth its answer to obliterate Hansen's disease.³³

After putting up with the lepers' unrelenting opposition for two years, the scientists knew they were licked. In 1911, on orders from Washington, Dr. Currie closed the station at Kalawao. All of the USLIS folk, except for the Gibsons and a few Chinese servants went back to Honolulu.

Mrs. Gibson is the only one who relates in any detail the short and melancholy fate of the USLIS at Kalawao.

The patients . . . were volunteers from the Settlement [at Kalaupapa], who of their own free will came to live at the Station for investigation into and treatment of their sufferings. . . . The new Station provided room for many patients, each patient to have his own room. Nine had volunteered to come from Kalaupapa, but unused as they were to the restrictions of hospital life, they had little liking for it and proved uncooperative. They rebelled against the rigor of the treatment and the confinement of living within the grounds after the unlimited freedom offered at the Settlement.

Life at the Settlement was ideal from every point of view for the Hawaiians. They could have their houses, besides their freedom of fishing, swimming and participating in social gatherings any time they wished to do so. . . .

One by one the volunteer patients left, not caring to take the treatments and preferring a freer life in Kalaupapa. When the last one departed, Washington decided to close the Station as far as the scientific work was concerned, that work being transplanted to the Receiving Station at Kalihi. Appropriations were cut down, the engineer and most of the personnel were dismissed. Some of the technical instruments and essential equipment were sent to . . . Kalihi to be used there. After all the expense and trouble of building and equipping these buildings it was a sad blow that human nature, as shown in the happy-go-lucky Hawaiians, could make or break a humane project.

It was sad blow to all our ambitious plans, too, for the success of the Station, for Mr. Gibson had begun on some special scientific studies and all had to be abandoned. However, we were to remain there for awhile. All the clerical work for Honolulu was done by Leighton at Kalawao. . . .

The loss of our engineer meant no electric lights, so before he left he and Leighton had fixed a Pelton wheel which ran the electric lights with water power, also running the ice plant and the cold storage room. Thus the Station was closed, Leighton being left in complete charge, as many valuable pieces of equipment were still there. . . . A few of the Chinese were also on duty, taking care of the livestock³⁴ and driving over for supplies. There was much work to still be done, including all the correspondence between Honolulu and Washington.

So there we sat! We wondered what the Government would do next, how long we were to be kept on and what our orders were to be . . .³⁵

Dr. Donald H. Currie was more phlegmatic in his dismissal of the whole thing.

The experience of this year [he wrote in his Annual Report for 1911] has taught us that the opinion held by the former Director of this Station, Dr. Brinckerhoff, that the Kalihi Branch Laboratory was much better suited in every way for the carrying out of our investigations than the Federal Station at Molokai, and we have therefore no cause to regret that the reduction in our appropriation, together with the assistance of the Territorial authorities, supplying us with buildings and patients, brought about a change in the location of our laboratory force from Molokai to Honolulu.³⁶

Governor Frear was even more succinct:

During the year the elaborate station of this service at the leper settlement on Molokai was abandoned and the patients that had been transferred to it by the Territory were transferred back, and the investigation has since been conducted exclusively at Honolulu in laboratories and with patients furnished by the Territorial authorities . . .³⁷

Mrs. Gibson and her son sailed from Kalawao about 1 July 1913, to await Mr. Gibson in Berkeley, California. He, the last man at the Station, closed it up and, on 7 August 1913, "Sailed away from Molokai—the most beautiful spot that I've ever seen in all my life."³⁸

The story of this useless USLIS does not end here. The tragedy of errors dragged on for many more years.

Because the expensive fiasco belonged to the Federal Government, disposition of it became an embarrassing problem to officials both in Honolulu and in Washington. No one quite knew how to resolve it. Silent watchful waiting seems to have been the order of the day.

Occasionally, when the busy—and useful—staff at Kalihi needed some of the laboratory or hospital equipment which Leighton Gibson had stored away so lovingly, a little expedition would sail quietly to Kalawao, the many padlocks would be opened, the musty rooms entered, and the treasures sought would be transferred to Kalihi, on paper as in deed.³⁹ Ultimately, nothing but the empty buildings and the larger immovable fixtures and machines remained.

Once in a rare while this ritual of cannibalism—and the conspiracy of silence—were interrupted rather noisily by people who were unkind enough to remember why the USLIS had been built in the first place.

The very vocal Jack London sounded off either in 1915 (said Mrs. Gibson) or in 1916 (said Mrs. London), and was quoted in a Honolulu newspaper in these terms:

MOLOKAI IDEAL FOR MAINLAND LEPERS

This is the Proposition of Jack London. Appeals to Congress to Give Molokai Benefit of Magnificent Leprosarium Standing Idle. . . . What is the matter with the federal powers that be? What is the matter with the Leprosarium built in the Settlement at a cost of 300,000 dollars, and which lies idle with not a patient nor a doctor in it year after year? Never was there such a leprosarium in all the world. It is dry-rotting for lack of use. It is fully equipped to the last word in Twentieth Century hospital equipment.⁴⁰

Bureaucrats and scientists alike who had retreated from the beachhead at Kalawao to the garrison at Honolulu weathered this storm in tight-lipped silence. Jack London's wave-making was as the assault of a morning's surf upon the enduring cliffs of Molokai: spray was thrown high, the air was loud with noise, but the land remained unchanged.

Another man who deplored the waste of USLIS was literally like a wanderer in a desert who stumbles upon an oasis—only to find himself shut out by a gate guarded by invisible djinns. He was Mr. J. D. McVeigh, Superintendent of the Leper Settlement at Kalaupapa. In 1918, tantalized by that hoard of wood and glass and metal lying like the wealth of Ophir behind its double fences, so near to his needs and so far beyond reach, McVeigh (knowing the virtues of quietness) "suggested" to his bosses in the Board of Health that

the Territory ask Congress for permission to use the USLIS materials and equipment.⁴¹ His timing was bad. Obviously, what with a war going on and all, the Board of Health could not bother Congress with such a minor request. Besides, the Board of Health knew full well that not everyone in Honolulu had given up all hope for reviving the USLIS to serve its original purpose.

Late that year, a group of "prominent women" in Honolulu became very upset by certain scandalous goings-on committed by a few civil employees, not by USLIS scientists, at the Kalihi Receiving Station. Two hundred of these women, "of all races," met on Saturday afternoon, 5 October 1918, at the home of Mrs. Walter Macfarlane, "as head of a Hawaiian society . . . to consider certain matters relative to the leprosy situation in the Territory." Their immediate concern was "to prevent any repetition of such almost criminal carelessness as has marked the supervision of the Kalihi receiving station for the past few years. . . . It has been more or less of a berth for political hacks . . . appointed for what they could do or had done during election periods, not for any knowledge they might possess of hospital management or of the proper treatment for the unfortunate diseased."⁴²

While they were at it, the ladies also turned the glare of their scrutiny upon Kalaupapa. "Some of the conditions . . . at the Settlement," they declaimed, very much acquainted with the language of propaganda, "are as horrible in their way as anything perpetrated by the Huns in France and Belgium."⁴³

"As a result of this meeting . . . a largely signed petition⁴⁴ was presented to the Chamber of Commerce, asking for an investigation . . ."⁴⁵

Only too happy to oblige, hovering husbands rushed to their aid. With laudable speed a "Special Committee on Leprosy Investigations" was formed. Its members were Herman von Holt, Chairman; E. Floyd Perkins, Secretary; Territorial Attorney-General Harry Irwin; President of the Board of Health Dr. F. E. Trotter; Mr. H. M. von Holt; Mrs. Thomas McGrath; and (surprise! surprise!) that founding father of USLIS, Dr. C. B. Cooper.

With admirable efficiency the Committee met, pondered, and pronounced. Secretary Perkins labored, and brought forth a long Report,⁴⁵ full of observations, recommendations, and prolixity.

Here is the section referring to the USLIS:

Your Committee regret the apparent uselessness of the Federal Leprosarium at Kalawao, which, after the expenditure of large sums of money, is not used by anyone and seems to be gradually going to decay, to which its exposed position on a high bluff on the seashore, directly in the path of the trade winds and sea spray, is only a further help. It is recommended that necessary steps be taken to have these buildings and property transferred to the Territory, by whom the buildings could be advantageously used, even if it became necessary to remove them from their present situation to the Settlement at Kalaupapa.

The question as to the advisability of the continuance of two settlements, one at Kalawao, as well as at Kalaupapa, is quite a disturbing one, and better results from administrative and financial standpoints could be attained by having everything centered in one place, even to the removal of all buildings, including the Federal ones, to Kalaupapa, where there is ample room for expansion and the advantage of harbor facilities as well as communication with the outside world across the island by Pali. If it should

be decided to have segregation of the sexes, then the two settlements could be utilized for that purpose. . . .

Once again "the time was not right," as far as USLIS at Kalawao was concerned. Kalihi's Receiving Station, ruled only by the Board of Health (and being more subject to inspection by those formidably prominent women) was cleaned up—for a while. Not until 1921 did Prince Kuhio, still Delegate to Congress, receive the signal from home to prepare a bill requesting the return to the Territory of what was left of the Federal Leprosarium at Kalawao. But Prince Kuhio died on 7 January 1922 before he could properly attend to this bit of housekeeping.

The minutes of the meeting of the Board of Health for 15 March 1922 indicate that everybody was getting confused:

The Attorney General stated that sometime ago he wrote to Mr. C. J. McCarthy [the previous Governor] and asked him what had happened to the Bill regarding the turning over of the Federal Leprosarium to the Board. He replied that after searching everywhere nothing could be found. The late Prince Kuhio had reported that this bill failed consideration at all and would be taken up again, but it was discovered that it wasn't introduced. It was turned down because the land was not described by metes and bounds, and another bill was prepared and given to Mr. Currie, but this was also lost. Mr. McCarthy is going to have this bill introduced again.⁴⁶

Meanwhile, ironically, the passage of time and changes in personnel, and therefore in personalities among both lepers and Territorial physicians, were diminishing the old prejudices of lepers against segregation and treatment by Federal scientists. Or so thought Dr. J. T. McDonald, one of the physicians at Kalihi:

. . . the old fear of the 'Federal doctors' when the work of the leprosy investigation station began, gradually gave way to the kind and tactful administrations of the successive medical officers of the Public Health Service in the past, until today the medical attendant flatters himself that he enjoys the most implicit confidence and heartiest cooperation of his patients . . .⁴⁷

Perhaps even then the Station at Kalawao might have been reopened and put to proper use, by the Board of Health if not by the USPHS men. But by that time no one in either group thought to suggest such a course of action. The process of writing it off the books, of counting it a good idea which had failed, had gone too far. And no doubt the stewards who governed the Territory and its economy, even if they had not been worried about the post-war depression, would have rejected the relatively heavy costs of maintaining such an expensive establishment.

On 21 September 1922 the 67th Congress passed An Act to Provide for the Transfer of the Lands and Buildings of the Federal Leprosy Investigation Station at Kalawao, . . . whereby "the Secretary of the Treasury was authorized to convey by quit claim deed to the Territory of Hawaii the lands and buildings thereon of the Federal Leprosy Investigation Station at Kalawao . . ."⁴⁸

In the spring of 1923 the Territorial Legislature appropriated \$12,000 for "taking down the USLIS and moving it to Kalaupapa".⁴⁹ This statement is misleading: no one intended that the Station as such should be moved to

Kalaupapa. The valuable materials of which it was built were wanted, for the construction of new buildings for the Territory's facilities at Kalaupapa. But the Board of Health was unable to hire enough laborers to do the job before 30 June 1924, and the appropriation lapsed.

Finally, in 1929, 20 years after it was opened, 18 years after it was closed, "part of the old Federal Leprosarium [was] torn down."⁵⁰

Now at last the USLIS was of some use to the lepers. Each day lumber salvaged from the old weather-seasoned buildings was carefully stacked by the workmen recruited for the task. And each night the lepers came from Kalaupapa, to take whatever they wanted from the unguarded hoard.⁵¹

EPILOGUE

Today, an observant visitor to Kalawao can see, haunting as gravestones, the tall concrete piers upon which the USLIS hospital rested, and some of the concrete bases which supported the hated fences. They are memorials to the high hopes of the intellect, foredoomed to failure because it gave no thought to the needs of the spirit.

And short, short indeed, are the memories of men.

In 1932, at the request of the Board of Health, a site-inspection team from the United States Public Health Service came from Washington to visit Kalihi and Kalaupapa, to study ways and means by which the Federal Government could assist the Territory of Hawaii in caring for its lepers. The visitors' report, a book of 35 pages entitled "Care and Treatment of Leprous Persons in Hawaii,"⁵² is full of references to the fine work done by the USLIS staff at Kalihi and of recommendations about what should be done in the future. But it says not a single word about the USLIS at Kalawao.

NOTES

¹ This ribald conceit is not my invention. Cartoonists of the time were very impudent.

² *mu'umu'u* = maimed, mutilated.

³ It was sufficiently esteemed to be reprinted *in toto* in Governor George R. Carter's Annual Report for 1904 and in Dr. Cooper's Annual Report of the Board of Health for the same year.

⁴ Only pertinent portions of the pamphlet are given here.

⁵ *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁶ Governor's File, AH.

⁷ *op. cit.*, in Governor's Report, 1905, pp. 78-79.

⁸ Governor's File. AH.

⁹ *Idem.*

¹⁰ Ann. Rpt. Board of Health, 31 Dec. 1904, p. 13.

- ¹¹ Governor's File, AH.
- ¹² From the dedication in Dr. Arthur Mouritz's book, *The Path of the Destroyer* (Published by the author, Honolulu, 1916), ix + 424 pp.
- ¹³ Paraphrased and quoted from the Act, which is printed in full in the Governor's Annual Report for 1905, p. 23.
- ¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.
- ¹⁵ *Op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.
- ¹⁶ Governor's Report, 1905, pp. 12-13.
- ¹⁷ HAA, 1907, p. 164.
- ¹⁸ Emma Warren Gibson, *Under the Cliffs of Molokai* (Academy Library Guild, Fresno, California, 1957), 176 pp. All quotations attributed to Mrs. Gibson are taken from this source.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- ²¹ F, Sept., 1906.
- ²² Personal communication.
- ²³ Gibson, p. 22.
- ²⁴ BHL, 1908.
- ²⁵ A misspelling for *Iwalani*. The USLIS People usually called her "the Evil Annie."
- ²⁶ Gibson, pp. 14, 16, 17, 20, 21.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 26.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- ²⁹ BHL, 1909.
- ³⁰ Governor's File, AH.
- ³¹ Gibson, p. 122.
- ³² *Ibid.*, p. 124.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, p. 71.
- ³⁴ Thirty-two cows, according to Mrs. Gibson, p. 105.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 104-105.
- ³⁶ Currie's report to Gov. Frear, 12 July 1911, in Governor's File, AH.
- ³⁷ Governor's Report for 1911, p. 81.
- ³⁸ Gibson, p. 106.
- ³⁹ Ann. Rpt. Board of Health, 1916, p. 58.
- ⁴⁰ Reproduced in Gibson, p. 151. She names the PCA for 13 July 1915, but I have been unable to find the article there or in the HSB either for 1915 or 1916.
- ⁴¹ Ann. Rpt. Board of Health, 1918, p. 35.
- ⁴² PCA, Oct. 7, 1918.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁴ *sic*, and *auwe!*
- ⁴⁵ Appendix B, in Ann. Rpt. Board of Health, 1919, p. 51.
- ⁴⁶ BHM, Mar. 15, 1922.
- ⁴⁷ Letter of Dr. J. T. McDonald to Dr. F. E. Trotter, President of the Board of Health; in Governor's Report, 1920, p. 81.

⁴⁸ Governor's Report, 1922, p. 144.

⁴⁹ Ann. Rpt. Board of Health, 1924, p. 155.

⁵⁰ Ann. Rpt. Board of Health, 1929, p. 78.

⁵¹ Personal communication from residents of Kalaupapa. Some of the salvaged lumber was used for construction of Territorial buildings.

⁵² *Care and Treatment of Leprous Persons in Hawaii* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1933), 35 pp. + photographs and maps.

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