

Resources

*Across All Micronesia:
Records of the US Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands*

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*Across All Micronesia:**Records of the US Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands*

Scholars who search out the history of Micronesia, and particularly those concerned with the US administration of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, will find a gold mine in the Trust Territory Archives. The idea of creating the archives arose after a typhoon hit Saipan in 1979, leaving in its wake considerable water damage to office files. After extensive preparations by Trust Territory official Sam McPhetres and consultation with University of Hawaii Professor Emeritus Norman Meller, as well as other UH faculty, Acting Deputy High Commissioner Daniel J. High issued Executive Order 128 on 12 June 1981, to establish a Trust Territory Archives Committee and Program. The program's goal was to preserve the records of the trusteeship government in Micronesia, to provide the newly formed governments of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Republic of Palau with significant research and documentation concerning their lands and peoples, and to offer primary source material for scholarly study. The project gained impetus from the impending closure of the Trust Territory government.

Librarian Aggie Quigg (currently on the faculty of UH Library) traveled to Saipan to act as consultant to Sam McPhetres. They surveyed and evaluated all existing files in Trust Territory government departments, determining the extent of preservation required and

establishing the framework for creation of a computerized index to the records. An archives survey form provided the data for creation of the index. On it staff recorded the agency responsible for producing the material, a bibliographic citation (author/title/date of publication, if any), subject(s) dealt with in the material, span of years covered by the file, geographic area most concerned, format, physical arrangement, location of materials (at the time), and disposition of originals.

Microfilm provided the best medium of preservation for the enormous number of records involved, and the bulk of the filming was most efficiently and economically handled on 16-mm microfilm, with 35-mm film used for items such as maps and blueprints. From the beginning of the program, the Trust Territory Archives planned to place master copies of all films created in two locations, one being the US National Archives. After consultation a formal agreement was drawn up to place a second master set of microfilm at the University of Hawaii Library, where it would complement the internationally recognized Pacific Collection, which has especially fine holdings on Micronesia. The agreement reached also stipulated that the University of Hawaii would make user copies available for public access and would duplicate microfilm at cost for interested persons and government agencies (Agreement 1982, 2). The latter was crucial to Trust Territory plans for placing duplicate copies of the

entire collection of microfilm with each of the four governments of Micronesia. Following this agreement microfilms were sent to the University of Hawaii Library, where Pacific Collection staff inventoried the film and had negative and positive copies made. In addition to an archival negative, a second set of negatives was created, from which microfilm copies are made on request. A positive set of microfilm is available for public use at the UH Library. When the microfilming neared completion, Department of Interior funds paid for complete sets for each of the four Micronesian governments, which the University of Hawaii created and sent out.

Originally, access to the microfilm of the Trust Territory Archives at the University of Hawaii Library was made through a printed copy of Saipan's computer index. This index, based on the survey data sheets for each file filmed, was arranged by subject. Subject headings were derived from the TTPI Files System Manual, with up to three descriptors for each file to allow cross referencing in the index. The printed set of the index (16 volumes) is arranged by subject, then geographically, with all materials on an area grouped together. Within each geographic area the materials are organized chronologically from the earliest entry to the latest.

When the University of Hawaii Library received the Trust Territory Archives Index on computer tapes it was necessary to fit the data into the existing structure of the library's on-line catalog. Library staff worked to input the information available from Saipan into a form compatible with the

cataloging style used at the university. The result was a computer index accessible from the university's on-line catalog terminals, in which a researcher may access entries by author, title, or subject, using either a browse or a keyword search method. In creating the subject headings UH librarians amended the system devised by Saipan, listing instead by geographic area, subdivided by subject:

- Federated States of Micronesia -- Budget
- Federated States of Micronesia -- Communications
- Federated States of Micronesia -- Communications -- Facilities
- Federated States of Micronesia -- Economic Development

The user may also access subjects by keyword (S = Micronesia Budget) and immediately retrieve both the general material on a heading and all items classified under further subdivisions of the heading (Federated States of Micronesia -- Budget -- Budget Execution).

It is also possible to modify a search by date, which enables the researcher to stipulate that only budget documents prior to 1964, for example, are desired. However, as the data-recording system used often gives a span of years covered by a file, and the UH index locates the first year cited as year of publication, caution is recommended in employing modified searches.

Despite some quirks in the index that resulted from its transfer between computer systems, users thus far have found it a marvelous tool to open the treasure chest of information stored

on more than two thousand reels of microfilm. Indeed, the index may prove to be a Pandora's box, as the huge amount of material may drown the researcher in unimagined numbers of files. There are over four million records in the microfilm archives. Even with judicious searching it quickly becomes apparent that the primary source material in the archives will keep dozens of historians occupied for a lifetime.

The nature of the archives makes them a resource base for any number of disciplines: agriculture, political science, marine biology, anthropology, public health, education, history. Anyone in any discipline who is examining Micronesia will need to use the archives. Lawyers at work on the Bikini court cases have found the archives essential to their work. Agreements on occupancy rights at Bikini, land deeds, and folders of correspondence on the resettlement of Enewetak Atoll illustrate the point.

Because the archives contain the files of the Trust Territory government, those from both the civilian administration under the Department of Interior and any from the prior Navy administration of the islands are included. In many cases Japanese and German documents were placed in departmental files, which are also on microfilm. These files are a particularly useful source of land records, since Trust Territory officials hunted for documentation of land claims and kept files on their searches. The Japanese land records on microfilm have been valuable for both land tenure and war claims decisions.

In recent years the archives have

been used to provide residency documentation for those in the Northern Marianas who claim eligibility for US citizenship. Micronesians have also found in the archives otherwise unavailable records of employment that enable processing of social security claims. (Many of the records now on film were destroyed after filming, although those relating specifically to one of the current governments of Micronesia were sent to the appropriate government.)

Historians examining the American administration of Micronesia will want to use such files as the monthly reports from Island Affairs Officers. The High Commissioners' files of correspondence provide a voluminous record of the issues that confronted the government. The role of the anthropologist in administration surfaces in the file "Meetings, Records, and Related Miscellaneous Information on Trust Territory Re. Anthro. Chron. File, 1950-1976" (TTA 551). Browsing through this file brings to light one of the many cases where a Micronesian requested repatriation for a part-Japanese relative exiled by the US military after World War II. The file includes the petition for repatriation, the staff anthropologist's review of the case, the genealogy involved, and a recommendation for government action.

Scholars whose interests lie in modern Micronesian political development will find files covering the discussions and conferences held over the years. The situation in Palau concerns many, and the complexities of studying Palauan politics are illuminated by such records as "File on Correspondence, Reports and Results of February

10, 1983 on Palau Plebiscite on Compact of Free Association, 1972-1983" (TTA 868-869), which contains 145 pages of documents. Research on the Compact of Free Association yields such files as "Correspondence Relative to the Place of Federal Programs in the Post Trusteeship Period under the Compact of Free Association, 1978-1979" (TTA 1533). The Trust Territory Archives files on political status and development are of immense significance for analysts and scholars.

In addition to the microfilm collection, the University of Hawaii Library received the photograph and map collections from the Trust Territory government. The extensive set of photographs includes some made from illustrations in works on traditional Micronesia and others that document the many meetings, conferences, VIP visitations, and special events in Micronesian history. Although the photograph collection is indexed, not all of the maps were filmed, and thus not all are in the index. Organizational work to facilitate access to the maps is in progress at UH Library. An audiovisual collection consisting of films, slides, videotapes, and sound recordings was also given to the UH Library and is being processed. These items are already present in the index.

Microfilm of the Trust Territory Archives is currently available in Micronesia at the Alele Museum in Majuro, Marshall Islands; the Office of Administrative Services, Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia; and

the Northern Marianas College Library, Saipan. A set of the microfilm is being sent to the Palau Ministry of Administration at the time of this writing (November 1988). All of the Micronesian sites are expecting to receive reader-printers in the very near future. The set of microfilm on Pohnpei is already in use, under the able direction of former Trust Territory Archives staff member Mr Jones George. The index is available on Pohnpei, as it will be shortly at the other sites.

It would be remiss to close this article without a tribute to the outstanding work of Sam McPhetres of the Trust Territory government. Mr McPhetres and his staff accomplished a Herculean task and have created a resource that will give the people of Micronesia access to their history. The difficulties in accomplishing this feat were innumerable; suffice it to say that many of us owe a considerable debt to Mr McPhetres, whose vision and foresight have made the archives available "across all Micronesia." Those words from the song "Patriots of Micronesia," once the Micronesian anthem, were part of verses dedicated to the unity of Micronesia (Pacific Islands Central School Yearbook 1956, 1). It seems appropriate and fitting to use them once again, this time to describe a resource that fosters unity by bringing together in one collection much of the history of the islands of Micronesia.

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