

The tale of Max Schlemmer is powerful, compelling non-fiction. Max is a "renaissance" man who survives the danger of whaling in the frigid North Pacific, works on various Hawaiian sugar plantations, captains sailing vessels, pioneers the guano business on Laysan Island, takes on the duties of mid-wife, is a Honolulu Police captain, and a motorman with Honolulu Rapid Transit Co., and always a man devoted to family and country.

Max is also an entrepreneur. In his early years in Hawaii, he gained "squatter's rights" to Laysan Island. Later he established his home on this tiny, distant, and isolated island. Though many business ventures failed, he dreamed of a "kingdom" on Laysan Island. Perhaps he dreamed and schemed also about the vast riches to be gained in the bird plumage trade.

Max Schlemmer, Hawaii's King of Laysan Island takes place during an interesting period of Hawaiian history. Max is involved in rioting which leads to the overthrow of the monarchy and to Hawaii becoming the Territory of Hawaii. Max is a constant gadfly to the local authorities; his actions often lead them into uncharted waters and reverberates finally in Washington D.C.

Max Schlemmer, Hawaii's King of Laysan Island is also the story of the life and death of an island.



Tom, a native of Hawaii, saw action during the Pearl Harbor attack as a civilian rescue worker. He received a Purple Heart and a Combat Commission during three Italian campaigns. Today, Tom volunteers at the Arizona Memorial. As a Pearl Harbor Survivor, he gives the lecture before the film about the attack and acts as a guide at the Visitor Center.


ISBN 0-595-27988-1



9 780595 279881

Credit for graphic:
Donald J Johnson

\$14.95 U.S.
\$20.95 Canada
£12.99 U.K.

 iUniverse™

www.iuniverse.com

MAX SCHLEMMER, HAWAII'S KING OF LAYSAN ISLAND



Tom E. Unger

MAX SCHLEMMER, HAWAII'S KING OF LAYSAN ISLAND

Tom E. Unger

10

THE SAGA OF THE LUKA

Meantime, in early summer 1907, when Max arrived back on Laysan aboard the *Luka*, he made haste to collect the bird skin samples and the lease documents. He loaded the guano cargo, so that the *Luka* could set sail for Honolulu as soon as possible.

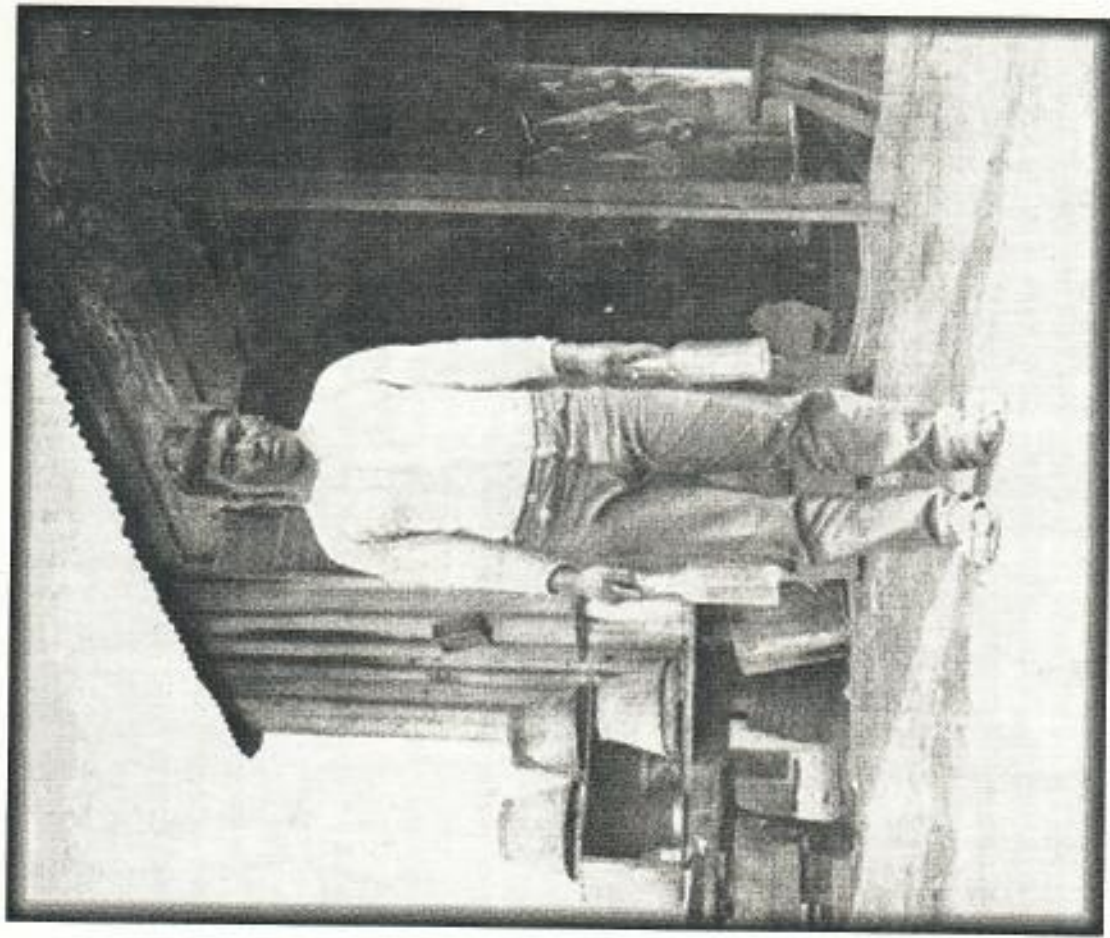
Max also included a letter to be hand delivered to Arthur Brown. In this letter he asked Brown to discharge the skipper he had hired to take the *Luka* to Honolulu. Max didn't trust him. Max suggested to Brown that he hire Captain Harris or as a last resort, Captain William Weisbarth.

At Laysan, Max waited anxiously for the return of the *Luka*. A month went by. Max was certain the trip should have taken much less time. On July 1st, they spotted a schooner. They were sure it was the *Luka*. But as it came closer, they could see that it was much larger and also flying a Japanese flag.

Once the schooner dropped anchor, Max armed himself with a .38 caliber Smith and Wesson pistol and prepared to board the ship. With him were Paul Bomke, Therese's brother, who had recently come to work on the island, and two Japanese workers. The workers stayed in the boat alongside the Japanese ship. If there was trouble they were to go ashore. Therese would have rifles for them to stop the intruders.

The Captain proved to be friendly. He told Max he was short on provisions and water. Max told him he could have all the water he wanted, but no provisions. The Captain asked Max to keep four of his men and take them to Honolulu. Max agreed. If they would work, Max would pay them. The four Japanese brought their belongings ashore on July 2nd. The Japanese ship departed the next day bound for Johnson Island. Max took the four men ashore with him.

Max soon learned the men left behind by the "nice" Japanese skipper were nothing but a bunch of scoundrels. They wouldn't work and constantly caused trouble. All four of them were often drunk and disorderly. The trouble got serious when Therese suddenly became ill.



The Schlemmer's cook with vodka bottles confiscated from the workers' quarters of the four Japanese left on Laysan by the Japanese schooner

While she was sick, Paul Bomke found, by accident, a recently buried jar containing a deadly poison. She recovered but Max was sure his wife had been poisoned. He called the men together and questioned them. Two of the more surly individuals said the Captain had given them the poison. The other two were

young kids who knew little of what was going on. Max began to wonder about the possibility of a deadly plot to kill the family and take control of the island. The Captain of the Japanese ship just might have been on a bird pirating expedition.

Max told the four Japanese castaways that he no longer had work for them and that he would not pay them. Furthermore, when they got to Honolulu he would have them arrested. Later, the Schlemmer's Japanese cook came to Max and said he agreed that the men were troublemakers and should not be paid. But he pleaded with Max not to have them arrested. Max agreed, but he couldn't help but be suspicious of the men and continued to believe they were involved in a plot to poison the Schlemmer family.

After the Japanese ship left Laysan, everyone continued to keep a sharp lookout for the *Luka*. She was several weeks overdue.

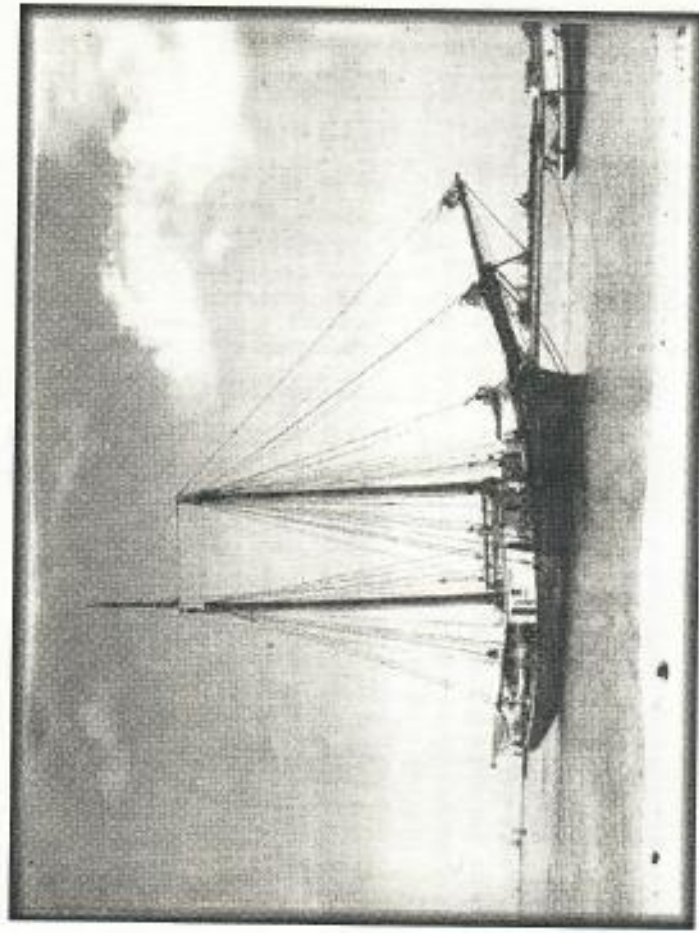
Finally, it was the *Iroquois* that arrived. Captain Carter asked Max when the *Luka* had left Laysan for Honolulu. Max told him the ship had never arrived at Laysan. The Captain could not believe this. The *Luka* had been out for 41 days.

Max also learned that neither Captain Harris nor Weisbarth had command of the *Luka*. It was Captain Olsen. In the meantime the *Luka* returned to Honolulu. It had been out 45 days and had been unable to find Laysan Island. Captain Olsen became the laughing stock of Honolulu when he declared that Laysan had been destroyed by a seismic disturbance.

After the *Luka* fiasco, Arthur Brown realized that the *Luka* must return to Laysan but this time it would have to be skippered by one of the men that Max had recommended. And so it was Captain William Weisbarth who boarded the *Luka* and set sail for Laysan. The *Luka* arrived without incident, in 10 days.

Now Max set out to prove to the world that his Kingdom on Laysan had not sunk below the waves. A news article dated September 19, 1907, reported that "the *Luka*, under the command of Captain Max Schlemmer, had arrived in Honolulu early the previous morning after a run of 18 days from Laysan Island. She had light winds and calm waters all the way. About 85 tons of guano were brought back in the hold and on deck."

There were several other news articles regarding the *Luka*'s "freight of canary birds, shark fins, sucker fish, pilot fish, dolphins and red paint." A coat of red paint gave her a festive air. The little vessel presented a gala appearance as she entered the harbor. Her flag was flying high as if to say, "We found Laysan Island this time. She's still in the same place she always was."



The Schooner *Luka*. Photo from collection of J. J. Williams, Bishop Museum

Although Max proved that Laysan Island did not sink, the *Luka* turned out to be an economic disaster. On November 14th, 1907, the Japanese crew filed suit against the *Luka* for lost wages.

Four days later, Arthur Brown filed suit against the ship's owner, Therese Schlemmer. Brown claimed he had spent \$507.64 and pledged another \$834.87 for stores, provisions and labor to outfit the *Luka*. Brown had spent this money at the time the ship was first purchased for a business partnership that never materialized. Brown further claimed that he had done all this in good faith as the ship's agent. Brown asked for another \$250.00 for his services.

The schooner was sold at auction to Arthur Brown for \$1,000.00. When Brown was unable to pay the balance, the *Luka* was again auctioned. This time it went for \$400.00 to C. Mincke, a Kauai rancher.

11

THE DEPARTURE OF CAPTAIN WEISBARTH

The year 1907 had not been a good year for Max Schlemmer. He was sad and depressed when he watched the *Luka's* sails disappear over the horizon as she made her way to her new home on the island of Hawaii. Nevertheless his spirits were somewhat raised when he heard the news that his old nemesis, Captain William Weisbarth was about to leave Hawaii for good.



Captain William Weisbarth and family at Laysan Island.

The old sea dog's luck had run out. His schooner had been wrecked in a storm and he had barely escaped with his life. The following newspaper article tells about his departure:

Bound for the Gilbert Islands, almost 2500 miles away, in the little twenty eight foot ketch *Koeki*, Capt. William Weisbarth, will depart today on an ocean voyage that has attracted much attention in shipping circles here.

Mrs. Weisbarth, the captain's wife, will accompany her husband on this long and adventurous voyage, and is looking forward with pleasure to the hour of sailing. In addition to these two venturesome spirits, the vessel will carry a crew of three. The *Koeki* is well stocked with water, provisions and household effects. The latter will be used by the Weisbarth's in establishing their new home in the South Seas. They plan to stop at Palmyra Island for a fresh supply of water.

Captain Weisbarth expressed no fear yesterday as to the outcome of the trip. He said at this time of the year the wind and weather conditions were most favorable for a quick and smooth passage to the Gilberts. It is estimated that the trip will take at least sixty days. Mrs. Weisbarth was born in the Gilbert Islands and is said to hold extensive landholdings there. Captain Weisbarth is no stranger in those waters, having spent many years as a trader there before coming to Hawaii.

Captain Weisbarth and his wife intend to spend the remainder of their lives in the Gilberts. Many of the couple's friends will be at pier No. 10 today to see them off and wish them bon voyage on their long and venturesome trip.

This newspaper article was accompanied by "A Toast to Captain Weisbarth" a poem written by an "old shipmate," Max Schlemmer.

Weisbarth, you old sea dog,

Spawn of the salt sea foam,

Here's wishing a smile

For each watery mile,

When your craft bears you home.

Weisbarth, you old German,

Son of a Saxon bold.

May the southern seas,

With their balmy breeze,

Abundance of wealth unfold.

Weisbarth, my old shipmate,
Of all the very best,
Here's hoping that you
And your valiant crew,
Will find a haven of rest.

Once Weisbarth was gone, Max's euphoria somewhat subsided. However, in May 1907, Max received a Police Constable's commission, something he had sought for many months. The official document stated that his authority was "within the county of Oahu and more particularly for and within Honolulu and the Western Group."

When the commission was granted, Governor Carter made it very clear that the authority herein was primarily for the protection of the birds and to prevent poaching. Although it was a position without pay, the fact that he had police authority over Laysan and Lisianski Islands was all that Max wanted for now.

Ever the entrepreneur, the dauntless Max soon unveiled his next venture. An article in the *Evening Bulletin*, April 23, 1908 in Honolulu announced that "the well-known King of Laysan was about to establish a tannery on Laysan Island."

The name of the company was to be Heine and Co. Mr. Heine was one of the most expert tanners in the business, having learned the trade years ago in Stockton, California. Details of the business were sketchy.

The tanning business may seem somewhat incongruous with Max's other ventures. But it should be noted that sometime between the years 1902 and 1903, Max brought "a slew of rabbits" to Laysan Island. His intention was that the rabbits would supply fresh meat for the family and pets for the children. Now with the proposed tannery, the question may have been asked, Was the tannery for the purpose of processing rabbit hides or bird skins? We'll never know. Nothing more was ever heard about this project. Much more however, is heard about the rabbits. As is typical, they multiplied rapidly, and were soon munching their way into what was to become one of Hawaii's greatest ecological disasters.

12

A DEAL WITH THE DEVIL

By mid 1908, Max was feeling frustrated, and perhaps somewhat desperate. He was also in poor financial straits. While the guano mining business was dwindling, nothing else seemed to be working out. His hopes for making the great sums of money promised by getting into the bird plumage business, had been dashed. He had been abandoned by his friends in "high places".

Now he set out, as he put it, to make a "deal with the devil." He decided to go to Japan on a business trip. His departure was delayed however, when Therese gave birth to their seventh child. Eva Schlemmer was born in Honolulu on November 5, 1908.

On December 22, 1908, Max negotiated a contract in Tokyo with Genkichi Yamanouchi. Max was to receive \$150.00 a month in gold in Honolulu. For this monthly stipend, the Japanese were given rights inherent in his agent's commission to remove and sell "phosphate, guano, and products of whatever nature in and from the islands of Laysan and Lisianski."

The contract was to run for 15 years. Schlemmer promised to prevent others from infringing on the Japanese privileges by use of his police authority.

About six weeks after this contract was concluded, on February 8, 1909, Schlemmer finally received a lease from the Territorial Government for Laysan and Lisianski. It stipulated that the government might reclaim the lands at any time for public purposes. Max was directed to plant 500 coconut trees per year. He was not to use explosives to capture fish, nor allow the destruction or capture of birds. He was to pay fifty cents per ton of guano removed. This lease was for fifteen years at an annual rental of \$25.31.

Meanwhile, President Theodore Roosevelt issued executive order 1019 on February 3, 1909, declaring the Hawaiian archipelago to be the Hawaiian Islands Bird Reservation. It placed the following under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture: Cure Island, Pearl and Hermes Reef, Lisianski or Pell Island, Maro Reef, Laysan Island, Dowsett Reef, Gardiner Island, Two Brothers Reef,

French Frigate Shoal, Necker Island, Frost Shoal, and Big Bird Island. (All names and spellings from original documents.)

On June, 1909, the Commandant of the naval station in Hawaii was authorized by the Secretary of Navy to put the Executive Order into effect. Naval forces at his command, together with other forces he could requisition, were to be used, if necessary, for maintenance of laws governing the preservation of birds and their breeding grounds on the Hawaiian Islands Bird Reservation.

Late in 1909, rumors surfaced in Honolulu that bird pirates were once again raiding the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. The U.S. Revenue Cutter *Thetis* under the command of W.V.E. Jacobs was sent to investigate. The *Thetis* arrived at Laysan in the late afternoon on January 16, 1910. An armed crew was sent ashore where they found fifteen Japanese workmen using thirteen deserted buildings which had been erected, by the Pacific Guano and Fertilizer Co.

Captain Jacobs made the following report:

One building was full of the breast feathers of birds in bulk, another was two-thirds full of loose bird wings and two other buildings were partly filled with bales of feathers and wings, and a number of stuffed birds. On the sand adjacent to the buildings were about two hundred mats held down with rocks, under which were laid out masses of birds' wings in various stages of curing. Stretched along the beach and over the island were bodies of dead birds in large numbers from which emanated obnoxious odors.

The following day, a crew was again sent ashore. They arrested the Japanese, seized the plumage and loaded it aboard the *Thetis*. Operations were completed by the 18th. All told, sixty-five bales of bird wings, twenty-eight large and three small bags of feathers, thirteen bales of feathers and two boxes of stuffed birds were confiscated. This amounted to about a ton of feathers and an estimated 119,000 bird wings.

Further investigation by Jacobs revealed that a raid led by Masayeshi Houme on April 17, prior to the arrival of the *Thetis*, netted a ton of feathers and 128,000 wings. About August 10th, a portion of feathers and wings were taken aboard the *Tempou Maru* and shipped to Japan.

From April 13, 1909 through January 16, 1910 the Japanese had two work parties: one on Laysan and one on Lisianski. During that period, two and a quarter tons of feathers and 310,000 bird wings were gathered. The lowest price these materials brought was \$.33 per wing and \$6.00 a pound for feathers. The materials gathered at Laysan would have been worth about \$131,000.

The Japanese overseer claimed they had a right to be on the island. As evidence he presented his documents to Commander Jacobs. These documents were seized by Jacobs. They included the agent's commission to Max Schlemmer from the Pacific Guano and Fertilizer Co., and the contract agreement between Schlemmer and Genkichi Yamanouchi concerning Yamanouchi's rights on the islands of Laysan and Lisianski. Another contract seized was between Schlemmer and Yamanouchi by which Max recognized the capture of birds by Yamanouchi. The documents taken also included Schlemmer's Police Constable's Commission.

13

THE KING DEPOSED

On November 30, 1909, Max received the following letter from E. A. Mott Smith, Acting Governor, Territory of Hawaii:

Dear Sir:

I have to inform you that we have received advices from the Secretary of the Interior that the Commissioner of Public Lands of the Territory was on February 8, 1909, without jurisdiction or authority to execute the lease to you of the islands of Laysan and Lisianski, an executive order having been made by the President of the United States on February 3, 1909, which appropriated these islands to the use and purposes of the federal government. It has been held by the Secretary of Interior that such appropriation terminated territorial control; at least to the extent that the Territory was without authority to execute said lease to you.

You are therefore requested to return your copy of the lease, in order that cancellation thereof may be duly entered upon our records.

Very respectfully,

E. A. Mott Smith
Acting Governor

Max had become aware of the President's declaring that the islands of Laysan and Lisianski were included in the Hawaiian Islands Reservation. His executive order, dated February 3, 1909, "hereby reserved and set apart, (these islands) subject to valid existing rights, for the use of the Department of Agriculture as a preserve and breeding ground for native birds." As early as July, Max began writing to the Governor for a clarification of his lease. There was no response. Finally in a letter dated October 6, 1909, to Governor Walter F. Frear, Max wrote:

I'd be willing to cancel my lease of Laysan and Lisianski Islands for the sum of Two Thousand Dollars (\$2000), including everything as it stands and four thousand coconut trees, which are newly planted.

In an immediate response to this letter, Governor Frear wrote to Max October 7, 1909:

The Territory of course cannot pay you for a cancellation of the lease; indeed, it is immaterial to the Territory whether the lease is cancelled or not. What view the authorities in Washington take as to the validity of the lease they have not yet indicated.

The letter of November 30, 1909 to Max from Acting Governor Mott Smith would seem to state the "view the authorities in Washington take." Max received a letter from Governor Frear dated December 4, 1911:

I have your letter of the 3rd instant; am sorry to learn that you have had so much trouble and so many difficulties. We, of course, could not avoid your losing the lease of Lisianski Island. I hope things will go better for you in the future.

By early November, 1909, news about Max's loss of his lease of the islands, had reached Honolulu. On November 11, 1909, headlines from the *Honolulu Advertiser* proclaimed: "King Max of Laysan is Deposed." The article went on to say:

Max Schlemmer is no longer the King of Laysan. He has been deposed; his Kingdom has been taken away from him. He is now a King without a throne, a monarch exiled from his land.

There has been no revolt among the subjects of King Max. His rule has been mild and beneficent and his people have always been well satisfied. It is only a case of a stronger power stepping in and taking away his land. The U.S. government is the power that has deposed the King of Laysan and annexed his country.

On November 10th, the *Advertiser* had received the following cablegram from its special correspondent in Washington:

Ballinger has cancelled Max Schlemmer's guano lease, holding that the Territory had no authority to lease the Island of Laysan.

A follow up article sounded a nostalgic note:

King Max has lost his throne and his kingdom, the little sand spit lying lonely in the midst of the Pacific which has been his home and the home of his family, the windswept isle where he has brought up his children. The place where he made so many long voyages to and from, is no more. One more of the Kings of the Pacific has been deposed.

While U.S. District Attorney Breckens waited for advice from Washington, Max and his attorney, Arthur Milder, hatched a plot they thought would help Max avoid prosecution. They offered to pay rent to the Territorial Government for Laysan and Lisianski. The rationale was that if they were paying rent, how could they be prosecuted for using resources on these islands? Their offer was refused. A federal grand jury was formed. Schlemmer was charged with violation of the contract labor law. If he was found guilty he could be fined \$1,000.00 for each laborer brought into the territory.

On March 22, 1910, Max Schlemmer, the former "King of Laysan" was indicted by the federal grand jury for importing contract laborers and for allowing poaching on a bird reservation. He was released on a \$1,000.00 bond. The 23 Japanese who spent 24 hours in jail were being held as witnesses for the prosecution.

At the trial, Schlemmer's attorney contended that President Roosevelt had no authority to create the Hawaiian Islands Bird Reservation. Such authority lay with the U.S. Congress, he contended, which in this case was lacking. Prosecutor Breckens charged that the 23 Japanese arrested by the *Thetis* were illegally in the country and that they were brought in by Max Schlemmer.

Judge Robertson allowed the defense five days in which to file a memorandum of the cases cited in support of its contentions. He gave the prosecution five days in which to answer. Along with the suit against Max, one was filed against one of the Japanese. It was a test case, which, if successful, would have been the basis for action against other Japanese.

The case was unsuccessful. The Japanese got free passage home and Max Schlemmer was found not guilty. However, District Attorney Breckens appealed the judge's decision but dropped the charge of poaching. He reworded the charges slightly, and in June, Max was again indicted on two counts of bringing aliens into the country illegally.

The Judge ruled that, "It is no offense and it is not unlawful to bring aliens by vessel and land them within the United States of America through and by means of others." Max was again found not guilty.

At this time, Max sorely needed an income. He had a large family to support and his legal fees were mounting. In July, 1910, he became custodian of the Odd Fellows Hall in Honolulu.

On October 2, 1911 the Schlemmer's eighth child, a girl named Adele was born in Honolulu. (Seven years later Adele died of diphtheria.)

By 1912, the rabbits, which Max had brought to Laysan Island in the early 1900s, had become a serious problem there. On the recommendation of William A. Bryan of the Bishop Museum in Honolulu, the U.S. Bureau of Biological Survey sent a party to exterminate the rabbits. They were also there to determine the condition of bird colonies, introduce coconuts, and transfer Laysan Rails from Laysan to Lisianski.

The party consisted of Commodore G.R. Salisbury (USN) William Wallace from Stanford University, George Willett from the Bureau of Biological Survey, and Alfred M. Bailey from the Denver Museum of Natural History. D.T. Fullaway of Honolulu accompanied the party to collect insects. They arrived at Laysan on December 21st. The Biological Survey party remained on Laysan until March 11, 1913. They killed 5,024 rabbits, but were not able to exterminate them all.

A SAD RETURN TO LAYSAN

By the winter of 1908, the Max Schlemmer family appeared to be permanently settled in Honolulu. They lived on Gulick Ave. in Kalihi Valley. However, Max continued to dream and scheme about returning to Laysan Island to make his home there.

Once again, the first order of business was to purchase a schooner. Through friends, Max heard about "the sloop yacht *Helene* lying at Pearl Harbor," owned by George Tait. The purchase price was \$400.00 and the assumption by the buyer of the debts against the *Helene* not to exceed \$275.00 as per the creditors bills filed against the sloop.

Somehow, Max scraped together the \$400.00. The sale was notarized in the City and County of Honolulu, Territory of Hawaii, on August 4, 1914. Shortly thereafter, a newspaper article announced that Max would sail shortly to his former home on Laysan Island where he would establish a pearl fishery. Financial backing was in the works, but failed to materialize. Max evidently then dropped altogether his plans for the fishery.

By 1915, the bird pirates had struck again in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Beginning as early as 1910, the Coast Guard ship, the *U.S.S. Thetis*, had visited the Hawaiian Bird Reservation on scientific and surveying missions. They were also to observe and report conditions as to the evidence of poaching and bird plundering. This latter mission was assigned by the Commandant of the navy forces in Hawaii. The Executive Order which had established the Hawaiian Islands Bird Reservation, gave the navy in Hawaii the task of protecting these bird islands from poachers and bird plunderers.

The *Thetis* had stopped on Laysan as often as twice a year. Now on April 3, 1915, the *Thetis* arrived on Laysan Island on a surveying mission. The Executive Officer, Lt. William H. Munter, led a shore party, which spent five hours surveying the island.

He reported that the island had been visited by the bird pirates. He estimated that between one hundred fifty and two hundred thousand birds were found lying in heaps. They lay on their backs with only their breast feathers removed. Most of the birds slaughtered were Laysan Albatross. The others were Black-footed Albatross (Gooney), Frigate birds, and blue-faced Booby. Also, a fair amount of decaying turtle meat and a few rabbits were strewn about. Lt. Munter was sickened by the sight of such depredation.

In May 1915, shortly after the *Thetis* arrived back in Honolulu, Lt. Munter went to see Max at Odd Fellows Hall. Munter had learned that Max wanted the job as Federal Warden for the islands of Laysan and Lisianski and had applied at one time, without success, for this job.

Munter introduced himself and told Max about his recent trip to Laysan on the *Thetis* and what he had found there. He went on to tell Max that he was impressed with what he had heard from people regarding Max personally. And certainly Munter was impressed as well, with Max's having lived on Laysan Island, and his knowledge of the birds there. Munter was most enthusiastic that Max was eminently qualified to be Federal Warden in this Northwestern Bird Reservation. Both he and Captain Brown, Skipper of the *Thetis*, were very unhappy with the conditions they found on Laysan Island. They were sincere in their desire to help secure the position of Federal Warden for Max Schlemmer.

Max was advised to get together all the recommendations he could. Munter would see that these recommendations reached the right persons in Washington. Max immediately set about gathering recommendations from Professor William A. Bryan, Mayor Lane, Governor Pinkham, retired Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific, Rear Admiral Chauncy Thomas, and Captain Niblack of the U.S. Navy.

Within a short time, these letters were given to Munter. About a week later, Munter again contacted Max. He suggested that Max try to get to Laysan as soon as he could. Munter explained to Max that Max being "on the job" might further enhance his chances that Washington would award the job of Federal Warden to him. Furthermore, the *Thetis* was out of order. Its machinery was being repaired and it would be two or three months before it could get underway. Max agreed that he should set sail for Laysan at the earliest possible date, but he felt obliged to give his employer a month's notice. He told Munter he would sail on June 25th. Captain Brown, commander of the *Thetis* relayed this information to Washington.

A month before Max set sail on the *Helene*, the war in Europe took a bad turn. The British ocean liner *Lusitania* was hit by German torpedoes and sunk. One hundred and twenty four American lives were lost.

People in America were beginning to take sides in the war and this incident only heightened suspicion of, and anger toward Germans. There were already those in Hawaii who viewed the Germans with jaundiced eyes. Max, now an American citizen was confident that he would be an exception to the anti-German sentiment sweeping the country.

The *Helene* left Honolulu harbor at 4:30 P.M. on June 25th, as Max promised. On board with Captain Max were his two sons Eric, twelve, and Otto, nine, and his daughter Mary, who was to do the cooking and make out all reports. Also along was Harold Brant, a twenty-one year Norwegian crewman who would join the workforce once they arrived on Laysan Island.

They sailed for Kauai amidst a squall and heavy rains. It was dark when they reached Kauai. They headed for the lighthouse and stood offshore until morning. At daybreak, the *Helene* passed Kilauea Lighthouse and dipped the flag when they saw a man waving to them.

As they passed Hanalei, Max dipped the flag to Mr. Birkmeyer and some of his old friends from the Inn. Passing Wainiha, Max again dipped the flag at sight of his friend, Mrs. George Tircomb who stood on shore with a gathering of other Kama'ainas.

After being becalmed off Mana Point, they finally picked up a light breeze and made for Waimea, but were unable to get in before dark. The *Helene* was now leaking badly. Some provisions were ruined, and most all of their clothes got wet. Otto and Mary were quite seasick and didn't want to go any further. Max hailed a passing Sampan and put them aboard. They could stay with friends and relatives in Waimea, before getting home to Honolulu.

He tried to make it into the harbor that night, but it was very dark. Eric and Harold Brant were sent ahead in a small boat to make soundings. But as the *Helene* approached the entrance of the harbor, the lead line broke. Max was not about to take a chance. He dropped anchor outside the harbor to wait for morning.

The next morning, July 1st, the sky was cloudy and very high seas were running. Max had to make a dash for it. He left Waimea at five o'clock that morning. With a strong Northeast wind in her sails, the *Helene* headed for Laysan Island.

On the evening of July 12th, Eric spotted land. As a "sometime" Skipper, Max had not done a great deal of navigating. He thanked God that his chronometer and logline corresponded to his reckoning.

The following morning they went ashore. Max was stunned by what he saw. A scene of desolation, an empty desert lay before him. Just a few birds, no grass! He

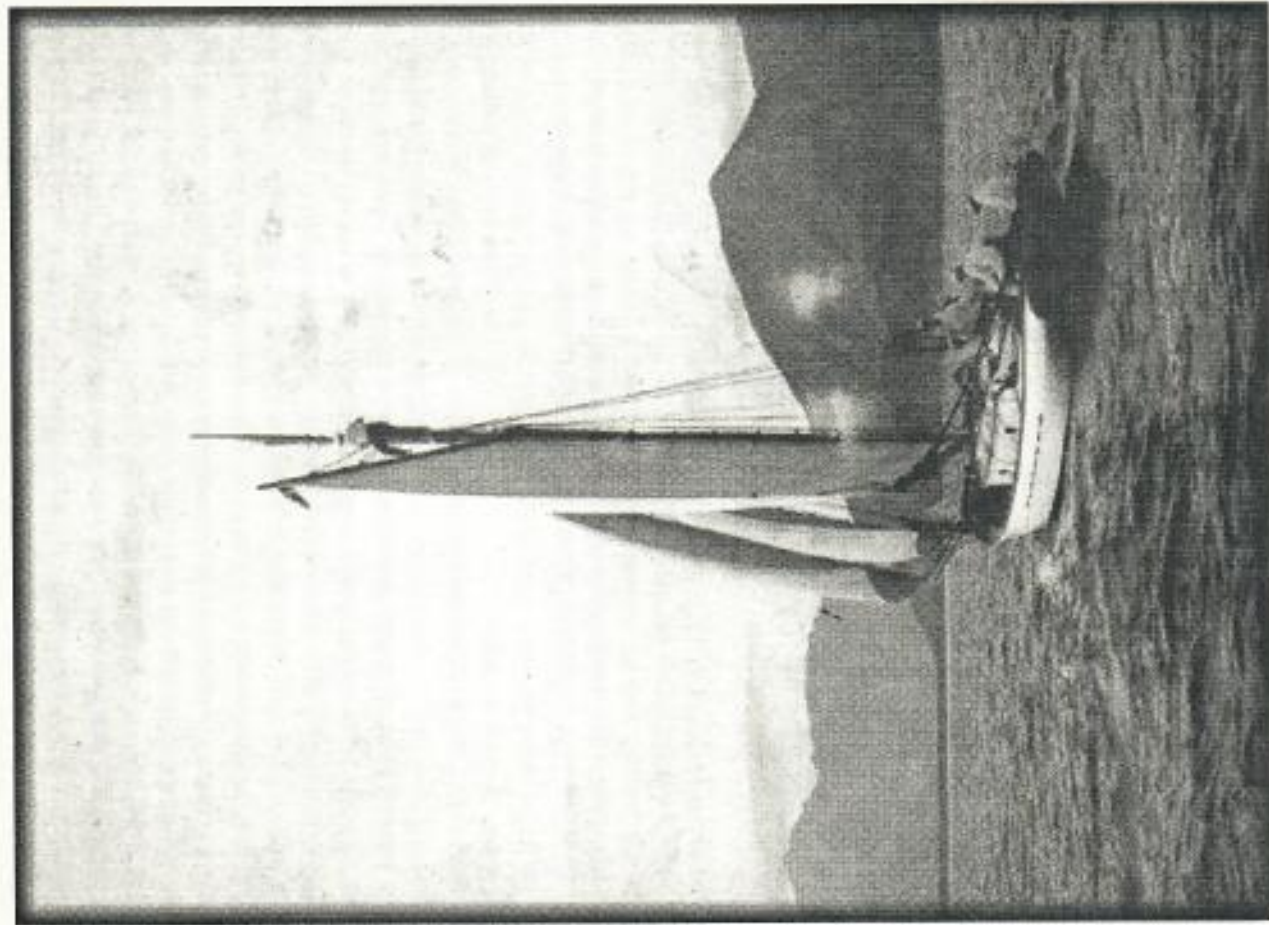
was sick. The houses and other buildings, which remained from the days of guano mining, were in a sad state of dilapidation. Windows and doors were missing in some cases, parts of the roof and sides had caved in. Sand had drifted in and filled porches and rooms. Two coconut trees, which Max had planted in 1895, were about all that showed signs of survival though they were bent and stunted. Water storage tanks lay in ruins. It was a different place. Max was unable to speak. He was terribly glad that Mary and Otto were not with them. In a daze, the "King" walked about what was once his verdant, prosperous, thriving domain. What lay before him now was a desert strewn with bird carcasses. The sun beat down on them and created a terrible stench. More than a few rabbits remained; the only sign of life as they scampered about devouring what few sprouts dared emerge from the sandy waste.

The next morning Max hiked to the southern end of the island. In his journal he recorded the following:

I discovered two turtles and a sleeping monk seal. Because we had no cooking oil or fresh meat, I shot the seal and flipped the turtles onto their backs. The boys pulled the turtles to a shack on lines fastened to their flippers. They would provide meat in the days ahead. The seal was somewhat of a disappointment. We boiled it but only got two gallons of oil. Not having salt, I preserved the skin with lime.

At seven o'clock on the morning of July 17, Max, Eric and Harold Brandt returned from a trek around the island to discover the *Helene* had broken her mooring. She was about three miles out to sea and moving away fast. Max and Eric jumped in their skiff and rowed over a wild sea for three hours before managing to board her. Max thought she had dragged her anchor, but when he tried to pull it in they discovered the anchor was gone. They were forced to hoist sail and battle the wind until they were close enough to shore to secure her lines. By this time it was six thirty in the evening. They bedded down for the night completely exhausted.

Following this incident, the *Helene* was secured by chains and anchor at both bow and stern. The Schlemmer party was then able to move about with some certainty that the fickle little craft would not desert them again. Their days were now devoted to making things more livable on the island; cleaning up waste and debris, burning rubbish and dead birds. There was only one chair on the island so Max found some scrap lumber and made two more chairs.

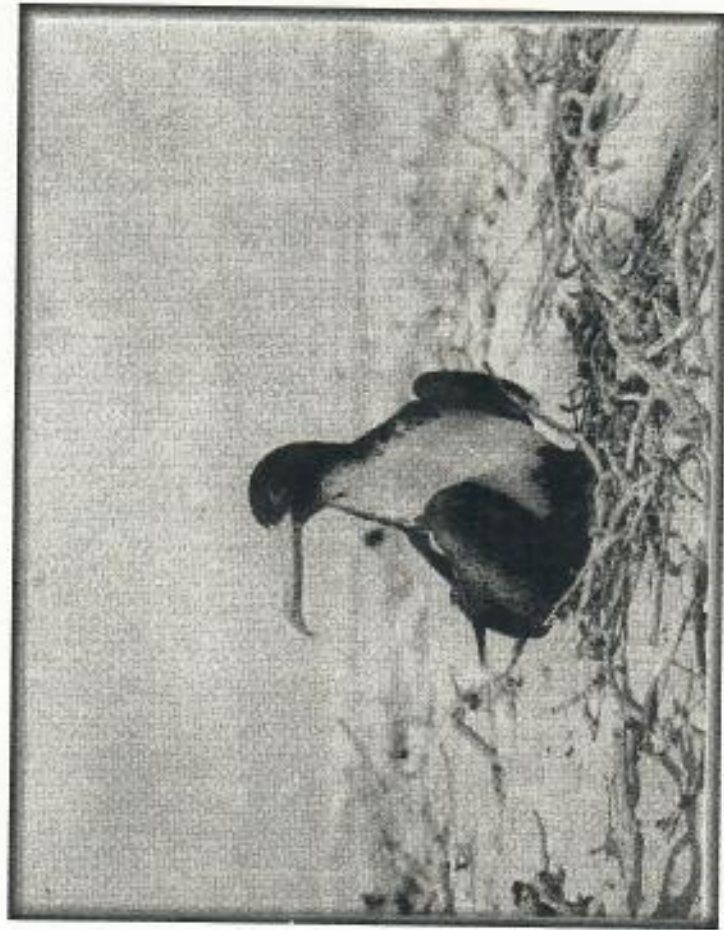


The Yacht Sloop Helene. Shown here in her glory days racing at Pearl Harbor

They also spent time killing rabbits, but that was not an easy task. When ammunition ran out, they resorted to catching them, then killing them with clubs or bare hands. Completely exterminating the rabbits proved to be an impossible task.

In late July, they were running out of water. A priority now was to dig a well. They started a well on August third; three days later they struck water. They now had a plentiful supply of water to meet their needs and this made life on the island easier.

One day in early August, they were overjoyed when they sighted 18 Laysan Teal racing about chasing flies. Birds of several different varieties were beginning to be seen on the island. At the same time, they watched the vicious attacks of the Frigate birds, the "pirates of the air" who were preying on the young terns, killing them by the hundreds. Not satisfied with destroying young terns on shore, these "pirates of the air" went after young fledglings in shoreline waters. In their frenzy, the Frigates would even attack sharks that were cruising for the same prey.



Female Frigate bird on nest. Laysan Island May 3, 1923.

Max could not stand by and watch the slaughter any longer. He told Eric and Harold to gather as many shotgun cartridges as they could. With shotguns loaded, Max and his posse crossed the island, shooting as they went. By sundown they had killed about 500 Frigate birds.

The party had now been ashore 58 days. Max's watch, the only timepiece on the island, had quit running. Time was now determined by the position of the sun. The weather had remained hot and sticky with the temperatures hovering between 90 and 100 degrees. The weather finally cooled down and they felt like working.

Max reports in his journal:

Today we dug new holes and outhouses were set over them. We raised the lighthouse and stood it up in good position. There was a good rain yesterday. The wooden cistern that we sank into the ground just the other day, is half full of water. Eric went hunting this morning and brought home 14 plovers. We sorely needed a good meal.

The trio would take turns walking around the island several times a week. They kept a watchful eye on the shore for anything that might have washed up. They scanned the horizon constantly hoping to spot the *Thetis*, due at any time now by their reckoning. The ship would have much needed provisions for them, mail and perhaps, Max hoped, confirmation that he had been appointed to the position of Federal Warden for the Northwestern Bird Islands.

In the early evening of September 28th, a small boat appeared off the southwest point of the island. Max sent the boys off in a skiff to the harbor entrance to direct the craft through the reef safely.

Max raised the American flag atop the lighthouse and waited for a response from the crew. When there was none, Max got a gun and prepared to meet them fearing they might be poachers. Max wrote:

I myself, took the shotgun and as the boat came very close and did not show any flag, I pointed my gun across the boat. I then noticed a man pulling an American flag out of a bag and holding it up in the air, at which I put down my gun and welcomed them. They landed on the beach where I found them to be a shipwrecked crew of the *O. M. Kellogg*, which got stranded on the night of the twenty fifth of September, at Maro Reef.

Aboard the boat were the Captain, his wife and the crew of the shipwrecked schooner. They had managed to bring aboard only a few provisions. The ship

had left Apia, Samoa and was bound for San Francisco when it was stranded, three nights earlier on Maro Reef.

Besides Captain Charles A Lunn and his wife there were: First mate G.G. Treaner, Second Mate Antone Fretas, A.B. and donkeymen (Able bodied seamen and engine crew) John Bell, George Douglas, S. Silva and Harold Fatty. The cook was A. Tsukamoto, Cabin Boy Max Moss and Stewardess Julia Lynn.

Max was in a quandary as to what to do with the new island residents, eleven in all. He was short on provisions and had no way of knowing when the *Thetis* would arrive.

He decided the best course of action was to offer the *Helene* to Captain Lunn. The Captain and crew could make their way to Honolulu. Max would retrieve the *Helene* when he arrived there on the *Thetis*. Captain Lunn was also short on provisions and thought it best to wait a few days. Perhaps the *Thetis* would arrive in that time.

However, about a week later with no ship in sight, Captain Lunn and his First Mate, Treaner, decided to take the *Helene* to Midway, a shorter distance than Honolulu. Max raided his already short food supply and gave Captain Lunn all the bread, beans and corn beef he could spare. Max told them he would not charge for the use of the *Helene*, but, Max wrote that "I would hold him and the owners of the *O.M. Kellogg* responsible should there be any damage done to the boat-to pay for it. The Captain agreed to this effect and we signed the said agreement-me having the original he the duplicate."

On October 4th, at 10:55 A.M., the *Helene* with Captain Lunn, his wife and crew of the stranded *Kellogg* left her moorings at Laysan and set sail for Midway. A few days after the *Helene's* departure, Laysan was wracked by a powerful storm; lightning flashed and streaked along the limestone and sand and thunder crashed above. Max was sure the mighty force from the southwest would wash ashore some of the *Kellogg's* wreckage, especially food. It would arrive, but not for a while.

15

MAROONED, RESCUED,
BETRAYED

When there was no word from Max since he sailed to Laysan on the *Helene* in June 1915, Therese wrote to Lt. Munter on the Coast Guard cutter *Thetis*. She asked him about the *Thetis*'s planned trip to Laysan Island. Max had told her when he left Honolulu that the *Thetis* would be bringing them supplies and returning with news from them. (Her concern was justified as the *Thetis* never arrived at Laysan and Max was not safely home until December of that year.)

On October 16th, the weather cleared enough for Max and the boys to whitewash the buildings. But the project was soon abandoned as squalls continued to pass over the island. The three of them kept searching the shoreline for anything usable or eatable from the wreckage of the *Kellogg*.

Eric returned one day from fishing and proudly displayed a six-pound *Moi*. It was the first fish caught by hook and line. That same day the last tin of crackers was opened. On October 23rd, a pair of geese arrived at Laysan. This had never happened before. Unfortunately Max had to shoot them. He and the boys were desperate for food. He cut off their heads and feet so they could one day be identified.

In late October, Max began to worry about the Laysan Albatross. They should have arrived by now. So he was amazed one day when Eric announced the arrival of the first Gooneys. Throughout the years, the Albatross had arrived first, followed by the Gooneys. Max knew for sure then that the island bird cycle was out of whack. If the government would only listen to him, he lamented, he could straighten things out. The bird population was greatly depreciated. There were now 71 Gooneys and 10 Albatross ashore on the island. Since it was early November, there should have been two or three thousand of each species. There were just a few Laysan Terns; there should have been twenty or thirty thousand of them.

As the days wore on, the Gooney population increased to five hundred, the Albatross to three hundred. But it was a sad decrease from earlier years and a spectacle Max found hard to believe.

The days went slowly by, and still the *Thetis* did not arrive. The morale of Max's boys sunk very low. By the end of October, they had only flour, water and what little else they could scrounge. They were becoming weak and exhausted.

Then one day, Eric caught a large eel. It was five feet long and measured fifteen inches around. And as they expected, wreckage from the *Kellogg* began to wash ashore and the boys were overjoyed to find some tins of food amongst this wreckage. A few more turtles were captured and put in a dark room. On November 13th they found the first Gooney egg. Mixed with flour, it promptly became a meal of pancakes.

Three days later, the Stars and Stripes were raised to commemorate Therese Schlemmer's birthday. It became a real celebration when Eric and Harold came trudging up the beach with several tins of potatoes that had washed ashore. Bird eggs were plentiful now and they were boiled and pickled in brine.

Through November 17th and 18th, they were struck by a sandstorm that threatened to blow them away. When it finally passed, an eerie quiet fell on the island. Dead birds and rubbish had vanished and a new glaze of sand covered the island.

It was now late November. The sky was dark and overcast. The boys were terribly homesick. Max encouraged them to pray for God to send a ship. They were now into their last bag of flour. They strained their eyes out to sea, but no ship came into sight.

Max feared America might have become mixed up in the war, and if they were, he would gladly serve his new country no matter what.

It was now December 1915. The last three months had been hard on the boys. It was all Max could do to keep their courage up. Nothing could have prepared them for this. Day after day their eyes searched for the *Thetis*. But there was no *Thetis*, there never would be.

Early on the morning of December 2nd, while sifting worms out of the flour, Max saw the smoke from a steamer northwest from Laysan and heading in their direction. At once Eric and Harold began to literally jump for joy. Max had never seen a boy jump so high.

To be sure that the ship did not pass by the island, Max signaled the party's distress by hoisting the Stars and Stripes upside down. But there was no doubt of the ship's intention to dock. As it approached, the ship loomed up larger and larger and at last Max recognized it as the U.S.S. *Nereus*, a coal ship. Max

watched in stark amazement as the monster of a ship entered Laysan harbor. It came in as near as any ship of smaller tonnage had ever come in before. As Max watch this spectacle, he muttered to the boys that this Captain knew his business. "A real number one!" he exclaimed.

Shortly before the appearance of the U.S.S. *Nereus* off the shore of Laysan Island, the ship was in port in Nagasaki, Japan, preparing to sail momentarily for Honolulu. The Commander of the U.S. Naval forces at Nagasaki received a cablegram from the Secretary of the Navy in Washington. The terse message read in part: "Proceed to Laysan Island and remove the inhabitants."

This order was then given to Captain Hutchinson, skipper of the *Nereus* who was told that there was a man, his son, and another man on Laysan Island and that they were trespassers. However, he didn't know that these trespassers were desperate to leave. Captain Hutchinson even feared that they might refuse to come with him so the Captain devised a plan. The ship was to drop anchor and go ashore with an invitation for the party to join them for lunch. If they refused to come to Honolulu, the ship would up anchor and get underway before they could get ashore.

As the *Nereus* got to the anchoring point, Max lowered the flag of distress and the ship dropped anchor. Max then hoisted the flag right side up. The shore party that arrived on the launch with Captain Hutchinson, included a young radio operator, named Harry Field. Harry was in the Naval Reserve and working his way through college to become an electrical engineer. (He was hired by Hawaiian Electric Company in 1926, and retired 32 years later as Commercial Vice President.) During these same years, Eric Schlemmer had become superintendent of the electrical contracting department of the Hawaiian Electric Company.

Harry remembered the encounter on Laysan Island in 1915 vividly and wrote about it in the July, 1967 issue of the *Hawaiian Electric Load Builder*.

When Captain Hutchinson stepped ashore, Max Schlemmer shook the Captain's hand and fell to his knees, begging him to take Max and his men to Honolulu. I was amazed to see the courageous Captain Schlemmer on his knees.

Max told the captain that he was not expecting such a big ship, but that he was expecting either the schooner *Florence Ward* or the Coast Guard cutter *Thetis* and that he thought someone aboard would have orders for him. The Captain asked Max from whom he was expecting orders.

LAYSAN RESCUE



HARRY FIELD

Max explained that the Coast Guard ship *Thetis* was in Honolulu Harbor and was probably getting ready to head for Laysan right now. Max said the Executive

Officer of the *Thetis* probably had orders that told him he could exchange his men if they didn't want to stay any longer, but that Max should stay on to prevent bird piracy.

The Captain then told Max, rather pleasantly, that yes, he did have orders for him. The orders stated that Max was to go to Honolulu with the Captain. He said he had received orders from Commander of the U.S. Navy in Japan, who had received word from Washington, that Max, his son and the other man were trespassers on Laysan Island and that he was to bring them and all their belongings to Honolulu.

Max couldn't believe Washington wanted to take everybody away and turn the island over to bird pirates again. Max asked the Captain if perhaps there was a mistake in his message. He explained to the Captain that he thought he should probably remain, and send the other two back to Honolulu.

The Captain assured Max that his orders were to take everybody. Cold fury began to well up in Max. He had been set up. Someone wanted him out of the way and they got the U.S. Navy to do it for them. Max asked how much time there was for him and his men to get ready. The Skipper replied he would wait one day. Max told him they would be ready inside an hour.

Max wrote in his journal, "The Captain gave me his hand and said, 'Captain, you are a brick.'"

Max's anger had subsided somewhat. The thought occurred to him that he could possibly be going to Honolulu to sign some papers and be sworn in as Warden of the Bird Reservation.

Harry Field remembered the trip back to Honolulu and the fact that the boys just couldn't get enough to eat and that they consumed countless loaves of bread. With Captain Schlemmer and the boys aboard, the *Nereus* arrived at Honolulu Harbor on Sunday morning, December 5th, 1915.

Max was puzzled when a launch from the *Thetis* did not come out to meet their ship. He thought surely when he got ashore some of the officers would be on hand to greet him. But none were there.

Many Honolulu friends though, were there to greet him and the boys. No one had much to say. A customs officer asked Max if he had any freight on board. Captain Hutchinson quickly replied that "Yes, the man's freight is in the boat and everything is in order. I can vouch for that."

Max was next told that he and his men must remain aboard the *Nereus* until they were taken to see Mr. Sharp at the Customs house at 9 o'clock the next morning. However, Mr. Sharp later gave Max permission to go home and report back to him at 9 o'clock the next morning. Max sent the boys home but rather

than go directly home himself, Max went aboard the *Thetis* and delivered his report. There was no order for him to sign papers; no mention about the position of Federal Warden of the Northwestern Bird Reservation.

It was an uncomfortable meeting. He was told there were some nasty rumors being circulated about him, but nobody believed them. They didn't tell Max what the rumors were about. When he got home, Therese told him that it was all over town that Max had a wireless radio on Laysan and was arrested as a German spy.

This is to certify that
I Harold Brandt have this
day Dec. 8, 1915 received from
Max Schlemmer the sum of
\$187 one hundred eighty-seven
dollars full amount of weight
due me from June 25, 1915, till
Dec. 5, 1915 to and from Laysan
Island

Harold Brandt.

The next morning, Max, Eric and Harold Brandt reported to the U.S. Customs house where Max was interrogated. It was a galling experience for the King of Laysan. He had come to America forty-three years ago. There was no one more proud to be an American citizen than Max Schlemmer. Officers at U.S. Customs told Max they would write Washington and try to help him all they could. But

they warned them that neither he nor the boys should attempt to leave Honolulu without first clearing it with them.

World War I was raging in Europe and anti-German feelings were running high. The fact that Max was born a citizen of Germany gave some validity to the spy rumor. Max called Harry Field to vouch for his loyalty, and put to rest the rumor of a wireless radio at Laysan; Harry went to Max's defense at once. Shortly thereafter word was received from Washington confirming that Max was not now, nor had he ever been, a German spy.

A disgruntled Max complained in his journal:

As I went in good faith with the best of intentions to Laysan Island to help the government to do the right thing and preserve things, and worked very hard with my two men the whole time we were there. And I had to pay Harold Brandt, the sailor, \$35.00 per month which was quite an expense for me and I had to buy provisions for my own boat which it was understood the government would later perhaps take over for themselves and pay me for it. Now as the said boat was wrecked at Midway Island, and I have not received any money yet from anywhere, I would kindly ask Congress and the American people at large whether this is any way to treat her citizens

Max was just now learning the fate of his sloop/yacht *Helene*.
He received the following letter from Lt. Munter, dated January 16, 1916:

My dear Mr. Schlemmer:

I have some bad news for you and I must say you have my sympathy. I only hope you may get something from the company that owns the *Kellogg* for the loss of your sloop yacht the *Helene*. The Captain has just received word from Mr. Morrison, superintendent of the cable station at Midway that they had a northwest storm, which caused the *Helene* to break adrift from her moorings and go aground, and swamp. He did not say whether she could be saved or not. In regard to this matter, Captain Brown wishes me to extend his sympathy and assure you that if possible, all will be done by the *Thetis* to save your property when we go to Midway on the next cruise. As you know we are due to sail from the islands in the afternoon of the 18th of this month.

I advise you to get in touch with the owners of the *Kellogg* and find out what they want to do under the circumstances.

Believe me to be sincerely yours,

W. H. Munter

On January 25, 1916, a front page article in a Honolulu newspaper, titled "SLOOP HELENE LOST AT MIDWAY ISLAND, WIND IS HURRICANE" read as follows:

News of still another wreck was received in Honolulu yesterday. This time it is the Sloop *Helene*, owned by Max Schlemmer.

The captain received a cablegram from Midway Island yesterday that she went ashore Friday during a heavy westerly gale.

Breaking from her moorings, the *Helene* ran on the shoals, about one hundred yards from the cable pier and broke up Saturday afternoon. Some of the wreckage being washed up on the beach. The gale, then north northwest, continued Sunday, blowing at times with hurricane force, with occasional hail showers. This was the second time in thirteen years that hail has fallen in Midway, where the station of the Commercial Pacific Cable Company is located.

The Sloop and Max Schlemmer have had adventure a plenty since June when the Captain sailed for Laysan Island. The schooner *O.M. Kellogg* was wrecked on Maro Reef in September and the crew made Laysan in the ship's boat. At Laysan, the men borrowed the Sloop from Schlemmer to go to Midway whence they were brought to the United States by the Navy tug *Iroquois* which made a special voyage for them. Schlemmer and his two companions were taken from Laysan by the United States Navy collier *Nereus* in November.

New mooring buoys were planted by the *Iroquois* when she was at Midway for mooring the *Helene*.

This report of bad weather at Midway proves that the Pacific is not all pacific these days. Gales near the coast, at the islands north of Fiji and at Midway show general bad weather.

Max was sure that both man and God were conspiring against him. The *Helene* was a total loss. And it would be difficult to prove that the loss of the *Helene* had been caused by negligence. Midway, which lies well out of the tropic zone, is subject to sudden and violent storms, especially during the winter.

Max was very distraught and had no idea what to do about the loss. He was advised to hire an attorney, which he did. His attorney in Honolulu contacted

Atkins, Kroll and Co. in San Francisco, who represented the owners of the *Kellogg*. On May 11, 1916 Max received a letter written aboard the S.S. *Matsonia* by attorney Kroll.

The letter explained that when the U.S.S. *Troquois* arrived at Midway to take Captain Lunn and crew to Honolulu, the Captain of the U.S. Government tug told Captain Lunn he could do nothing about the *Helene* and that he approved of her mooring place as being the safest place for her to be. The letter further explained that when Captain Lunn arrived in Honolulu he could get no instructions from the people to whom he had been referred by you. He had no alternative in the matter except to explain the situation to the government officials. This he did.

Since Max's instructions were complied with and every precaution had been taken for the safety of the *Helene* at Midway, the owners refused to assume any responsibility for her loss. However, in view of the services rendered to the Captain and crew, the owners of the *O.M. Kellogg* offered Max the sum of \$500.00. Max had no choice other than to accept it. If he refused, attorney's fees would be astronomical. He would have to sue each individual shareholder for their portion of the claim, and there were a lot of them living in different parts of the country.

16

THE TWILIGHT YEARS

The once proud Captain Schlemmer, King of Laysan Island, had to face reality. He was broke. He was now sixty years old. By this time, he and Therese had nine children; Pinkham Laysan was born January 2, 1914 in Honolulu and Helene Wilhelmina's birth followed on January 9, 1916, also in Honolulu. The three children from his first wife remained on Kauai with their grandparents.

The sole means of their support, the yacht *Helene*, now a pile of wreckage, lay deep in the Pacific Ocean at Midway. Max was in desperate need of help. The help arrived from James D. Levenson, an acquaintance who admired Max Schlemmer and had followed his adventuresome career through all its high points and low points. Levenson wrote a letter to the community at large and to some of the organizations with whom Max had been affiliated such as the Odd Fellows and the Masons.

Levenson wrote the following letter, dated February 7, 1916:

Gentlemen:

As you are aware, our fellow townsman, Mr. Max Schlemmer, has recently been returned from Laysan Island, which is one of the group of small islands forming the Hawaiian Island Bird Reservation and therefore under the jurisdiction of the U. S. Biological Survey. Owing to the timely and generous assistance rendered by Mr. Schlemmer to the ten members of the shipwrecked crew of the *O. M. Kellogg* last September and the use of his vessel by them which was left by these unfortunate people at Midway, he is back in Honolulu without his vessel and without employment.

There should be a warden stationed on Laysan to guard at all seasons the wonderful bird colonies there from further depredations and to assist shipwrecked and distressed vessels in the windward chain of islands. There is reason to hope that the Biological Survey will soon supplement the work of the *Thetis* and appoint a regular resident warden for this great bird reservation. It is to be

hoped that Mr. Schlemmer will receive this position since it is one he is well fitted to fill. But in the meantime, Mr. Schlemmer and his family are in need of temporary help. I therefore bring this matter to your attention, trusting that you will respond and assist this man who has lived long in these islands and in this instance, as well as in others that need not be mentioned, has rendered assistance of such a nature that the community should not be willing to see him suffer as a result of his humane acts on Laysan.

Please make your check payable to Max Schlemmer, and mail same in the enclosed envelope. Mr. Schlemmer will send acknowledgments personally.

Very truly yours

James D. Levenson
Honolulu

P.S. Above all Mr. Schlemmer wants employment and will be obliged if you can furnish him work or tell him where he can find a temporary or permanent job

In spite of the fact that war was raging in Europe and sentiment was on the rise against Germans in Hawaii and America, substantial funds began arriving for the Schlemmers.

Along with these charitable acts, the well-known German company H. Hackfeld, hired Max to be the superintendent of their offices in downtown Honolulu at the H. Hackfeld building. Max Schlemmer was a prominent name in the annals of H. Hackfeld and Company. At long last it appeared as though Max had escaped the ravages of fate. He was gainfully employed. Therese saw that their funds were wisely invested in real estate. A few of the older children were now able to contribute to the family's support. Surely peace, and tranquility had found its way to their Kalihī home.

Germany's unrestricted submarine warfare brought America into the war against Germany on April 6, 1917. Although the Schlemmers were not enemy aliens, they were Germans nevertheless and were restricted to Oahu.

The Schlemmer children endured taunts from other children who often threw stones at them on their way to school. The Schlemmers found one sympathetic family in their Kalihī neighborhood; the Fongs, a poor Chinese family, became their good friends. Hiram Fong and my Mother, Otrillie remained lifelong friends. (Hiram in later years built a financial empire on Oahu and became the first person of Asian descent to be elected to the United States Congress.)



The Schlemmer family, 1916. Front row: Adele, Eric, Max holding Pinkham, Grandma Therese holding Helene, Eva, Otto, Regina. Back row: Therese, Otrillie, Ida.

There were no such friends for German businesses or cultural organizations. They were seized by Richard H. Trent on behalf of the U.S. Alien Property Custodian. After a pittance was paid, H. Hackfeld and Co. and its subsidiary, B.F. Ehlers, became the properties of the American and British stockholders. H. Hackfeld Co. was renamed American Factors (AMFAC), B.F. Ehlers became Liberty House. The German school at Lihue was closed and never reopened.

By 1922, the Schlemmer family in Honolulu had increased by three; Edward Henry, born January 23, 1918, Norman David, born February 6, 1920 and my aunt Lorraine Estelle, born September 14, 1922. She is nine months older than I am.

Max was satisfied with his job at the AMFAC building, now under American and British ownership. Several years later, however, Max fell through an open elevator shaft and was seriously injured. After several months' recuperation, Max was able to return to work. As the years went on, his health began failing, perhaps

as a result of this accident. The King of Laysan was retired in 1927. His pension was \$100.00 a month.

Max, the old sea Captain, remained in Honolulu moored to the front porch of his home at Wilder Avenue. It seems a bit of irony that this street, Wilder Avenue, bears the name of Samuel Gardner Wilder, shipping magnate and former Minister of the Interior, whose son Garrit P. Wilder was now the Federal Warden of the Hawaiian Islands Bird Reservation, the position Max had coveted most of his life.

In later years, Therese managed the household and family matters. I vividly recall my grandmother driving a big Studebaker around town on her errands and shopping. Therese died two years after Max, on January 11, 1937. She was 58 years old.

During their 45 year marriage, Therese, even at a young age, was always solicitous for Max's well being. She worried when he was at sea because he couldn't swim. In her quiet way, Therese coped with all family matters and problems. Max was shielded from any controversy and the last years of his life were serene. He spent the days "talking story" and reminiscing. It was here at Wilder Avenue that my grandfather died in 1935 at the age of seventy-nine.

THE TANAGER EXPEDITION

The story of Max Schlemmer would not be complete without mention of the Tanager Expedition of 1923. The introduction of rabbits onto the minuscule Hawaiian Island of Laysan in 1902 by my grandfather Max, led to the devastation and almost total ruin, of the island's flora and fauna. But twenty-one years elapsed, before officials in Washington D.C. took any action in this regard.

In 1909, President Theodore Roosevelt had placed the far-flung group of Hawaiian Islands, including Laysan, under federal protection. These islands were henceforth known as the Hawaiian Islands Bird Reservation and were to be administered by the U.S. Biological Survey, Washington D.C.

Another fourteen years went by and still the federal government had done little if anything to protect or care for the islands. Rabbits continued to multiply and munch to the devastation of the islands' ecosystems. The Japanese continued to violate U.S. Territorial rights in this area and to slaughter birds for their valuable plumage.

Early in 1923, Dr. Herbert E. Gregory, director of the Bishop Museum in Honolulu realized that something must be done to put an end to this wanton destruction taking place within the U.S. Territory of Hawaii. He contacted E. W. Nelson, Chief of the U.S. Biological Survey in Washington and strongly advised him that immediate steps must be taken to protect these islands. Nelson immediately went to his superior, Henry Wallace, Secretary of Agriculture, briefed him on the situation and suggested that he, Nelson, be allowed to formulate a plan to protect this Hawaiian Bird Reservation and to put the plan into action. Nelson suggested that an expedition be undertaken as a fact-finding mission relative to the Bureau of Biological Survey's caretaker role as guardian of the Bird Reservation.

Nelson was also aware that rabbits introduced onto Laysan Island, had caused serious ecological damage and so the elimination of the rabbits became an impor-

tant stated goal. Secretary Wallace concurred with Nelson's plan and authorized him to proceed.

In the meantime, Henry Wallace was able to enlist the Navy's assistance to furnish transportation and other support at their disposal, for the expedition. The value of such a mission was recognized by the Acting Chief of Naval Operations and he added the islands of Johnson and Wake to the itinerary. In Hawaii, the Navy assigned the *Tanager*, a World War minesweeper, the task of providing transportation for the expedition. Thus the expedition got its name *Tanager*.

Atoll Research Bulletin Nos. 432/434 states, "The primary objective of both the Biological Survey and the Bishop Museum, however, was a thorough biological reconnaissance of the islands, including documentation by adequate series of specimens of terrestrial and marine organisms. The expedition was not without benefit to the Navy as well, through gathering navigational and other data of military use."

And so the mission of the *Tanager* Expedition had been expanded from a rabbit hunt to include collecting as many species of birds, mammals and fish as time allowed. All species were to be preserved, packed and sent to the Bureau in Washington with a few species being sent to Bishop Museum in Honolulu. All islands, islets, reefs etc. were to be given a name.

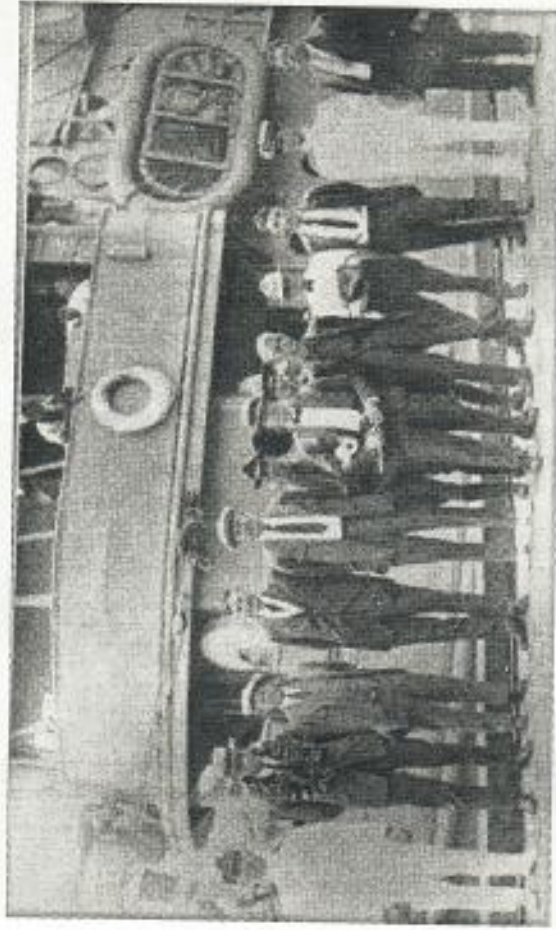
With much fanfare, the *Tanager* Expedition left Honolulu aboard the *Tanager*, April 4, 1923. The *Tanager* was under the command of Captain Stephen Ingham. They arrived at Laysan Island three days later.

The *Tanager* was to make three round trips between these islands in the Hawaiian Bird Reservation and Honolulu. The Commandant of the 14th Naval District, Admiral Simpson named Commander Samuel W. King special representative for the Navy and to act as a liaison in seeing that the expedition was given every consideration within the Navy's power to do so. Sam King, a native Hawaiian and an Annapolis graduate, was appointed Governor of the Territory of Hawaii thirty years later, governing from 1953 to 1957.

Nelson himself, a renowned mammalogist and ornithologist, appointed Alexander Wetmore to lead the expedition. Wetmore was recognized by the Smithsonian Institution as one of the leading ornithologists of the 20th century. Charles E. Reno, a Biological Assistant of the Survey in Phoenix, Arizona, joined the expedition as a pest control expert to oversee the rabbit extermination program. In a letter to Reno in February 1923, Nelson emphasized that the destruction of the rabbit population on all the islands of the Bird Reservation, was an important matter. He wrote:

I hope you will be able to actually exterminate the last rabbit on the island during the month which can be devoted to that purpose. Failure to do so will be a great disappointment to me and would necessitate another effort at considerable expense. We have arranged to have 75 ounces of strychnine sent to you directly at Phoenix for use on this trip.

You will find it necessary to arrange in San Francisco for the purchase and transportation of from one to two tons of best grade bailed alfalfa for use in poison operations. In addition you will need to purchase at least two single shot 22 rifles and perhaps twelve thousand or fifteen thousand rounds of 22-caliber ammunition for use in killing rabbits. Other measures for the extermination of these animals will probably suggest themselves to you and can be arranged for.



Tanager Expedition Members, left to right: Sam King, A.J. Ker, G. Grant, A. Wetmore, D.R. Dickey, D. Fullaway, S.C. Ball, E.L. Caum, D. Thaanum, C.E. Reno, E. Schlemmer, Lt. I. Cdr. T. Wilson, J.W. Thompson. A.J. Ker, pictured above was not a member of the expedition. He was an employee of the cable company returning to Midway after sick leave on Oahu.

Dr. Wetmore recruited a number of scientists, and other experts in their field, including my uncle, twenty-year-old Eric Schlemmer, an expert on Laysan Island. Eric was Max's son, born on the island and had been there often as a

young teenager. He knew the habits of the wild life; the nesting areas and flight patterns of the birds. He was also the expedition's "reef pilot."

Eric was hired to accompany the expedition party on all three trips of the Tanager Expedition. Donald R. Dickey, the official photographer wrote in his journal a bit about each member of the first party.

About Eric, he wrote: "We also have Eric Schlemmer, a son of the Max Schlemmer, whose name is indelibly associated with the island of Laysan, as guano manager, rabbit importer, etc.! The boy goes as my camera assistant."



Eric Laysan Schlemmer, known in his early years as the "Prince of Laysan."

As Eric and Dickey walked around the island one day, they came upon a group of five big Green Turtles. Dickey took motion pictures of Eric "rollin them over." Eric had been given the nickname "roll 'em over, Eric." Dickey wrote,

"They are helpless on their backs, but the big ones are fiends to turn. Brought in a small one of perhaps 50 lbs. to eat."

Besides being camera assistant to Dickey during the first stop at Laysan, Eric helped Reno with the rabbit extermination mission. They filled rabbit burrows with poisoned alfalfa and sometimes poisoned sweet potatoes. Together, they roamed the island with loaded shotguns and on good days, could kill as many as 50 rabbits in a few hours.

On the second trip, Dr. Wetmore announced that "Eric Schlemmer will be my assistant from now on." Eric helped to prepare the bird skins and pack the specimens for shipment to Washington. Wetmore also spent some time teaching Eric the art of skinning the birds.

Eric could always be counted on to provide food from the sea. Dickey wrote in his journal: "Schlemmer and the Filipino boy have just come in with 30 crawfish and an eel to show for two hours of 'jacking' and 'spearing' on the reef."

Besides hunting and killing rabbits, the party collected and preserved a sizable amount of wild life specimens. Eight boxes containing seal skulls and skeletons, sealskins, bird skeletons and eggs, small bird and mammal skins as well as salted bird skins, were loaded aboard the ship. From Honolulu they were sent to Washington D.C.

The expedition completed its first round trip early in May. When the *Tanager* left on its second trip, a number of so-called volunteers were aboard, led by Gerrit P. Wilder, the Federal Warden for the Hawaiian Bird Reservation. Joining the party among others were Lorrin A. Thurston, owner of the *Honolulu Advertiser*, Theodore Dranga, shell collector, John Baker, a Hawaiian fish collector and Austin Jones, along for the fishing trip.

On June 9, 1923, the *Tanager* left Honolulu on the last leg of its mission for the Bureau of the Biological Survey. Dr. Wetmore, Uncle Eric and three others were all that remained of the original Tanager party. A new group of volunteers joined the party, led by C.S. Judd, Executive Officer of the Hawaii Board of Agriculture, and including Bruce Cartwright of the Hawaii Historical Society, Dr. C. Montague Cooke, a conchologist, interested in land shells, Edwin H. Bryan, entomologist from the Bishop Museum, ALC Atkinson, interested in Heiaus on Necker, and W. G. Anderson, sailor and fisherman.

By the completion of the Tanager Expedition, one of its most important missions had been accomplished: the rabbits on Laysan Island had been exterminated. The expedition ended on July 1, 1923, as the *Tanager* returned to Honolulu after its third trip to the Hawaiian Bird Reservation.

Uncle Eric steadfastly maintained till the day he died that "if the Navy had not kicked us off the island, my Dad and I could have gotten rid of the rabbits on Laysan Island." By allowing fourteen years to pass before taking action, the U.S. Government must shoulder some blame for the depredation of what was once the "greatest bird island in the world."



J. B. Manis plotting soundings with Commander Sam King.

EPILOGUE

So far as it is known, Captain Max Schlemmer was, until his death, the oldest man still living in Hawaii who had been an active whaler in the Pacific and Arctic waters. Max, the old sea captain, remained in Honolulu until his death.

There were those who determined to see that evil would not live after him nor the good be buried with his bones. In far off Seattle, Washington, August Toeller, now a judge, had been with Max and Therese on Laysan during some of their darkest days, after the death, at birth, of their firstborn child, Adam. Toeller wrote an article in the Duwamish Valley Newspaper in praise of the life of Max Schlemmer. The final paragraph read:

In the death of Captain Schlemmer there went out from this life, one of the kindest gentlemen it was my pleasure ever to have known. He was tolerant to the fault, charitable, to the weaker of both sexes, a stern Captain when in charge of men on the island or at sea, a loveable husband, a wonderful father, a friend loyal and true, a servant faithful and obedient, a citizen who loved the flag, a neighbor who plugged for his community and a believer in truth and righteousness that made him outstanding among men.

Max fathered seventeen children, of whom fifteen lived to adulthood. His first wife, Auguste had three children and Therese had fourteen.

Max's daughter Therese Bredechoft wrote the following eulogy to her father, with perhaps a nod to Walt Whitman:

OUR CAPTAIN

Oh Captain! Our Captain

What strange wind blows thy sail,

It seems, oh beloved skipper

To carry you out beyond the pale.

In vain we try to reach you once more

For one last caress before you leave our shore

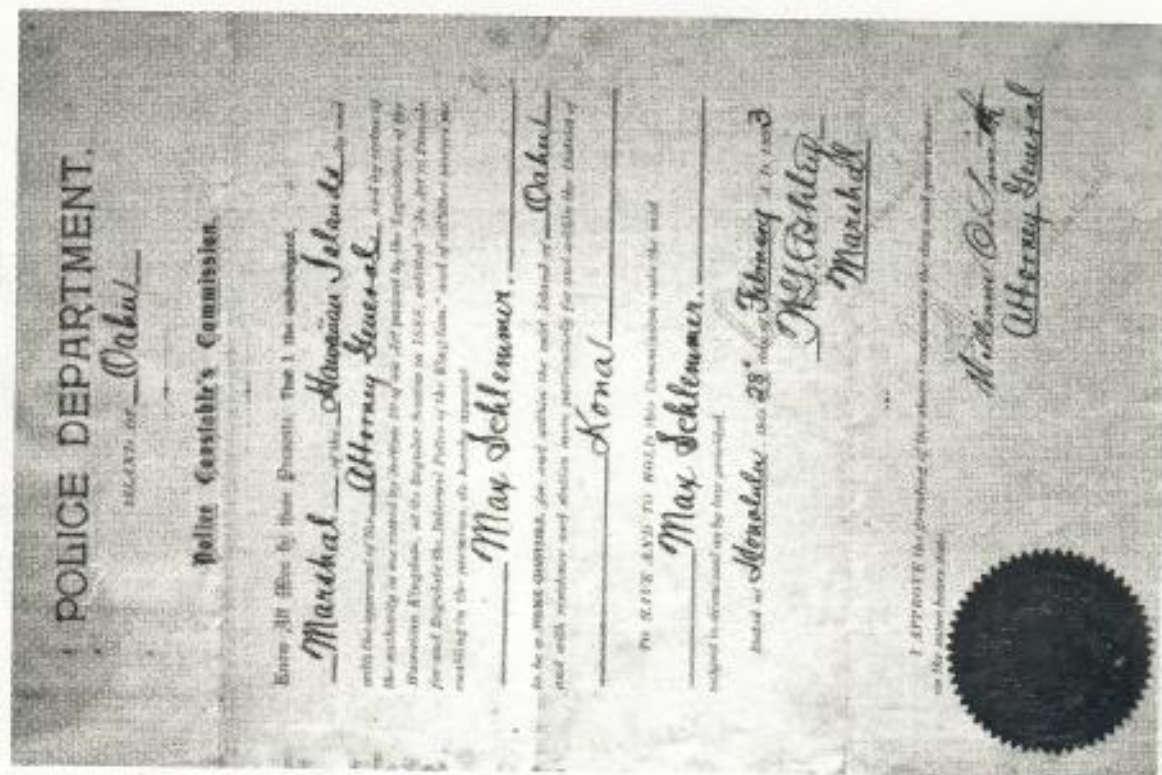
But our feeble craft must continue to be

Off here to traverse this life's great sea.
 The least we can do is our best—to make
 The Great Master proud for your dear sake
 And we'll sail with stout hearts and love
 The mate of your good ship, our Mother.
 While an angel's choir takes up our refrain
 Oh God be with you till we meet again.

Honolulu's newspapers had always considered Max "good copy," and they were not about to desert him now. The headline in the *Hawaiian Star* was: CAPTAIN MAX SCHLEMMER, LINK WITH WHALING DAYS, SAILS ON." The article read:

Eighty years of a sturdy sailor's life—63 of it at sea—ended early this morning when Maximilian Schlemmer sailed into the unknown port from the family home at 1817 Wilder Ave. For three score years and ten he had followed the sea. He started as a youngster raw from Germany, lonely, determined to be a master mariner. He ended his seafaring days as a captain of trading schooners in Hawaiian waters and devoted guardian of island properties in the great chain that stretches northwest from Oahu and Kauai. In the heyday of his busy life they called him the "King of Laysan." Hardships at sea, including the loss of a vessel on the grinding coral reef of Laysan Island took their toll on the sturdy sailor's physique. For some years prior to his death, he had broken down in his nerves. He had returned from the sea, but the sea was always in his blood. In his last months his talk and thoughts were often far away, out where the Pacific bellows, where the trade winds and sea birds have long been his companions.

APPENDIX



Herrn Max Schlemmer
 of
 Honolulu, Hawaii

Dear Sir:

Honolulu, H. I.

I am directed by a vote of the Trustees of
 the Bernice Pauahi Bishop's Museum to acknowledge
 the receipt of your gift to the Museum, and to
 return to you their thanks for the same.

I have the honor to be

With great respect,

Very truly yours

Wm. B. Brigham

A fine collection of
 birds and eggs
 from Bayan-Il.

A letter thanking Max for some birds and eggs that were sent to Bishop
 Museum

W. B. Brigham,
 Laysan, May 17th 1902.

Dear Sir:

Professor Cutting tells
 me of your patriotic
 feelings regarding the
 flag and I assume
 you they are highly
 appreciated. In our
 service we hoist our
 colors in port at 8
 o'clock in the morning.
 The Army hoists them
 at sunrise.

erect some separate
 in which we can
 arrange to locate our
 buildings, (my help
 you can give them
 will be gratefully
 received.
 Very truly yours,
 Max Schlemmer
 Attorney General
 Laysan, H.I.
 Cuddy

I should be very
 glad if you can find
 it convenient during
 our stay, to have your
 little Frenchman or
 dinner with me,
 the former at noon,
 the latter at 6 pm.
 I am sending in
 a party of officers to
 make a visit of
 the island and to

Page 2 and 3 of letter from Cmdr. Thomas

Certificate of Baptism.


Ottilie, Laysan, daughter
 of Max Schlemmer
 Schlemmer his wife, Thomas
 on the 11th of June A.D. 1897, born on the island, born
 of June is the year of her Lord one thousand eight
 hundred and ninety seven, at Laysan Island,
 was baptized by the undersigned Pastor of the
 15th of August A.D. 1897 at the same place, Hawaiian
 Island.
 God witness and in whose name. He presiding at the
 the Rev. Julius Bonhoeffer of Laysan
 and the mother of the child.
 This certificate is filed with
 the Rev. Julius Bonhoeffer, Pastor of the
 Hawaiian Islands
 Laysan, Laysan Island, Hawaii
 August 16th A.D. 1897

My mother Ottilie's Certificate of baptism

Fünftypen

Ottilie, Laysan Schlemmer, Tochter der
 Max Schlemmer, ist die Ehefrau des
 Theres Schlemmer geb. Bernke, geboren am
 11. Juni 1897 (geboren am elften Juni im Jahre
 des Herrn in Laysan, acht hundert und sieben
 und neunzig) auf der Insel Laysan, ist
 am 15. August dieses Jahres in dem evangelischen
 Gottesdienst geboren worden.
 Die Eltern sind die Eheleute
 des Johannes Bernke, geb. am 11. August 1860
 auf der Insel Laysan, und seiner
 Ehefrau Ottilie, geb. am 16. August 1897
 auf der Insel Laysan.
 Die Eltern sind die Eheleute
 des Johannes Bernke, geb. am 11. August 1860
 auf der Insel Laysan, und seiner
 Ehefrau Ottilie, geb. am 16. August 1897
 auf der Insel Laysan.

Laysan, Insel Hawaii,
 Hawaiian Islands,
 am 16. August A.D. 1897



Back of Ottilie's Certificate of baptism

Pineapple Island,

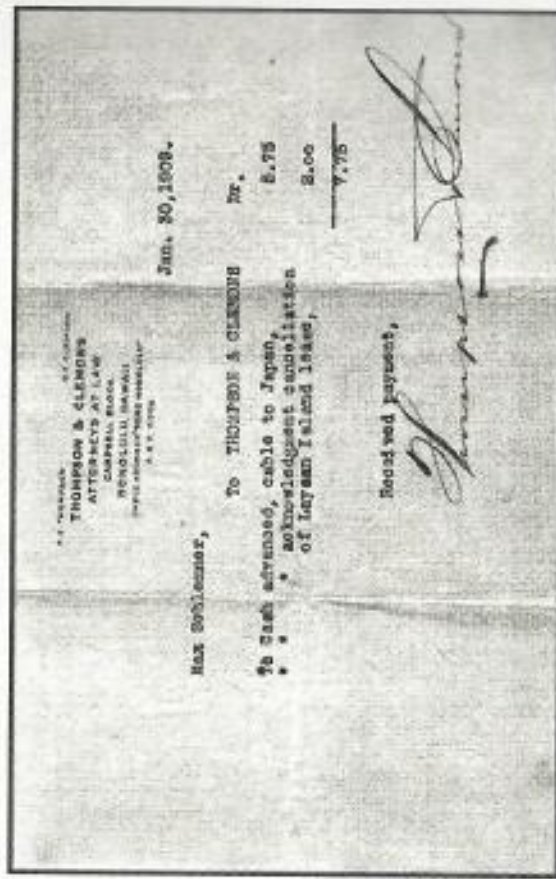
My dear Mrs Schlemmer,
 your letter of some time
 has pleased me very much
 the more so as it tells of your
 daughter at Laysan. The little
 island will probably never see
 her birthplace in later years
 even so, I believe that a person
 born in such quiet solitude
 isolation, away from the noise
 of mankind, is pleased by
 nature. May you the father
 & also the people love her
 on the child.
 It was for us a
 time on the island. We with
 my husband & I are
 longing for it. We would like
 to visit you and more about
 the difficulties of sailing
 But that's not possible, therefore
 must remain a dream.

Page 1 of a 3 page letter to Max's wife Therese from Adele, Dr Hugo H. Schlemmer's wife.

You & your husband have not
 will provided for us during our
 staying there, we will never for-
 get it. As soon we will have fish
 of us, we will send you some. The
 present one are not well made.
 Perhaps you also would favor
 us with your pictures.
 That you kept Minna on the
 Island was very useful for you.
 At present Minna will probably
 be at home or in Honolulu.
 Our voyage was beautiful
 & smooth, but at times
 very severe. My husband had to
 overcome some hardships & met
 with him. The sea was all good
 so we reached our Germany again
 after 1 1/4 years & specially our two
 children, who came to meet us
 at the Station of Bönitz, gave us
 quite a bit. Never will I forget
 the moment, when we opened the
 car door, rushing out & were
 standing in front of our children.
 Max, the elder will be 9 years.

Thankful to Capt. Schlemmer
 for the cordly objects which
 he had let throw over board
 hearty greetings to all the
 dear ones, especially to my little
 sister
 your Adela

Last page of the letter. It was written on the back of a chart from
 Hawaii's Mission Academy poultry breeding farm that you can see
 bleeding through the letter



HONOLULU, MAY 14th, 1904.

E. F. STACKS ESQUIRE,
Collector of Customs, Honolulu.

Dear Sir:-

I beg to call your attention to the fact that certain Japanese are at present encamped without authority on the Island of Laysan, belonging to the United States Government. These men are destroying the birds upon said island and otherwise committing havoc there and have been repeatedly warned to leave the island. Said island is leased by the Pacific Guano and Fertilizer Company, and I as Agent of said Company protest against said Japanese remaining on the Island of Laysan in contravention of the rights of said Company and I ask that you use all your endeavor to have said Japanese removed from the island. I have spoken up this matter to Captain Bibeck, U. S. N. who referred me to you as the proper person in the premises.


Yours truly,
(Signed) Max Schlemmer

Copy of letter sent to E. F. Stacks
May 14th 1904

Letter warning about bird poaching in 1904
Note the watermark at top of letter.

1907

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



BILL OF SALE OF ENROLLED VESSEL.

To all to whom these presents shall come, Greeting:

Know Ye, That ALEXANDER A. HOBBS & COMPANY, LIMITED,
a Corporation duly organized under the laws of the Territory of Hawaii,
with principal place of business at Honolulu, said territory,

do hereby certify that the vessel, called the "Iuka"
of the burden of Seventy tons or thereabouts,
for and in consideration of the sum of Five (50-) dollars,
lawful money of the United States of America, to it in hand paid, before the selling and delivery
of these presents, by Theresa Schlemmer, wife of Max Schlemmer, of
Honolulu, Territory of Hawaii,

the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged and is herewith fully satisfied, contented, and
paid, have bargained and sold, and by these presents do bargain and sell, unto the said Theresa
Schlemmer, her

executors, administrators, and assigns, the whole

of the said Seventy tons or thereabouts, with the all of

Front of the Bill of Sale for the Leika

Enrollment No. 83.

ENROLLMENT.

In conformity to Title 1, "REGISTRATION OF VESSELS IN DOMESTIC COMMERCE," of the Revised Statutes of the United States, S. W. Spencer of Honolulu, Secretary having taken and subscribed the oath required by law, and having sworn that he, Allen & Robinson Ltd., a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the Territory of Hawaii, is

owner of the United States, and the sole owner of the vessel called the "L. U. K. A." of Honolulu, whereof Kalua Madlow, Washington is master, and that the said vessel was built in the year 1878, at Port as appears by P. E. #14 issued at Honolulu, Aug. 9, 1880, now surrendered. Owners changed.

and said enrollment having certified that the said vessel is a schooner built of wood has one deck two masts and is a sailing vessel that her length is 77 feet, her breadth 23 feet, her depth 8 feet, her height (feet) that she measures as follows:

Capacity upper cargo deck	123	55
Capacity between decks above lower deck		
Capacity of hold below on the upper deck	123	55
Deck surface under bottom iron Riveted strakes, as assembled by Act of March 3, 1885.		
Crew space		
Boat's cabin		
Boat's deck		
Boat's stores		
Boat's engine and boiler		
Tyrod Inspection		70

That the following described spars, and so others, have been mounted, and are as follows: and said vessel has been duly enrolled at the Port of Honolulu

U. S. S. IROQUOIS,
Honolulu, T. H.,
April 18, 1905.

S I R :-

I. Referring to our conversation of the other day, I understand that the Cable Company has 70 tons of stores to go to Midway, and I will have about 25 tons for the IROQUOIS to take. I wish to take a lot of soil for gardening purposes, and I would like to negotiate with the schooner LEVI WOODBURY to take such part of my cargo as I may designate, for the consideration that I will tow the schooner to Midway Island, and subsequently to Laysan, leaving her at the latter island, the schooner to take all risks. Please call and see me at your earliest convenience.

Very respectfully,

A. S. Wilson

Chief Commander, U.S.N.,
Commanding IROQUOIS & Station.

Captain Max Schlemmer,
Honolulu, T. H.

Letter from the Skipper of the Iroquois to Max about towing the Levi Woodbury to Laysan Island 1905

Back of the Bill of Sale for the Larka

EXECUTIVE BUILDING
SECRETARY OF HAWAII

HONOLULU, T. H., August 10/07.

My dear Captain:-

As Arthur Brown is up on Molokai and the "Iroquois" is leaving today, and will call at your Island, I take this opportunity in writing you.

The "Tuna" left here on June 30th, and has not yet arrived. I am a little bit worried about it.

I am sending by the "Iroquois" some apples, pineapples, oranges and other fruit for yourself and family. I hope that you will enjoy some fresh fruit.

Captain Carter of the "Iroquois" is going to visit all the Islands in search of shipwreck crews. I am also sending you a file of papers.

I hope that you are in the best of health and that everything is all right with the "Tuna".

Your friend,



F. S. Brown has just arrived from Molokai. He told me to give you his regards.

Letter expressing concern for the whereabouts of the Luka.

HONOLULU, HAWAII September 7th 1908

Messrs. Thompson & Clemens,
Honolulu, Hawaii.

Gentlemen:-

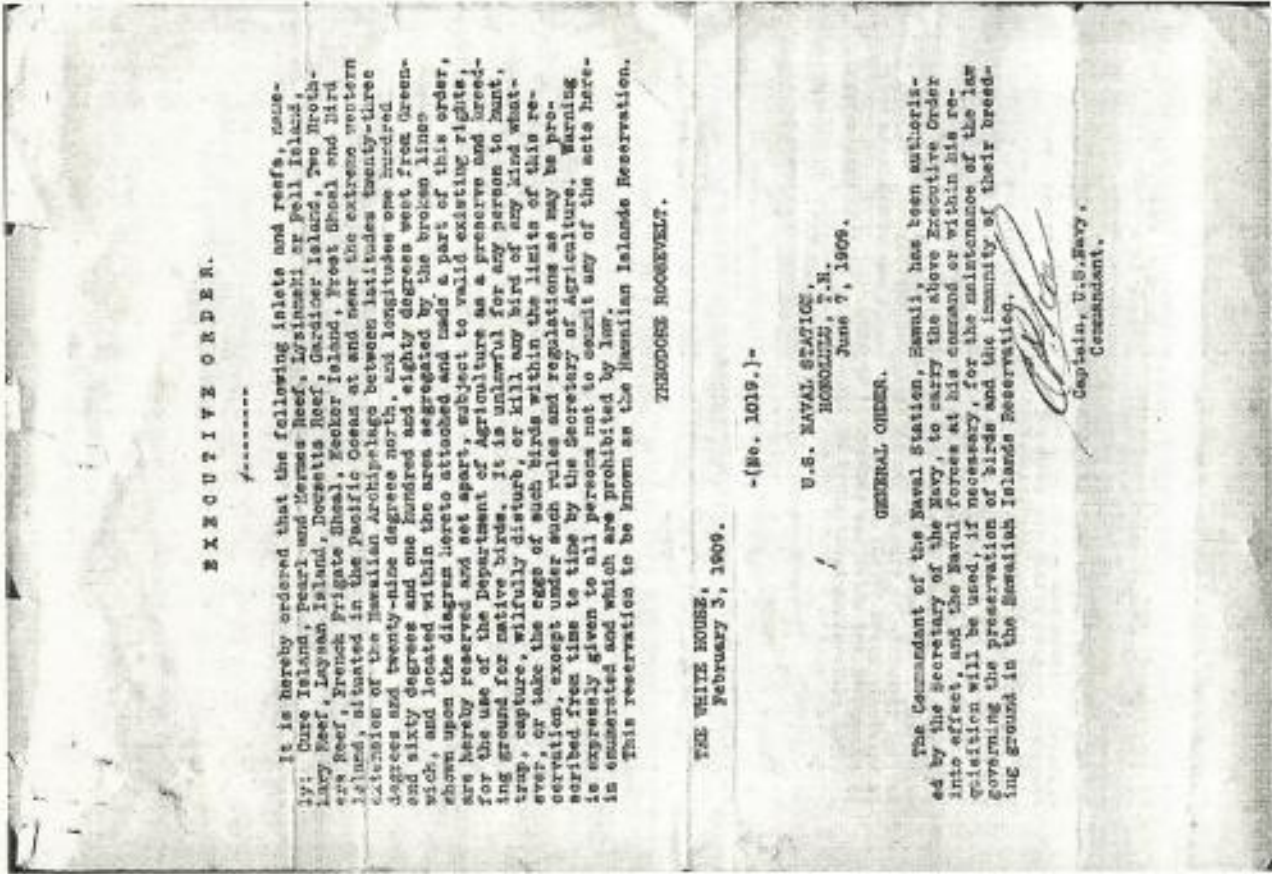
In the matter of the lease of Laysan and Lisiansky Islands in the Pacific Ocean, as I am not likely to be in the Territory of Hawaii at the time when the said lease will be put up at auction, by the Government, I hereby authorize your firm, or Mr. F.E. Thompson or Mr. Charles P. Clemens to bid at said auction in my name and behalf as follows: An offer of \$25.00 per annum rental over and above the Royalty of fifty cents (50¢) per long ton of guano shipped from said Islands and an agreement to plant or set out five hundred (500) coconut trees per annum.

In case other bidders should offer more than \$25.00 per annum rental I hereby authorize you or either of you to bid in my name and behalf as high as \$100.00 per annum, but not in excess thereof. But in case I should instruct you by cable or otherwise before said auction sale to bid any other sum or in excess of said \$100.00 you are to bid in my name and behalf as so directed.

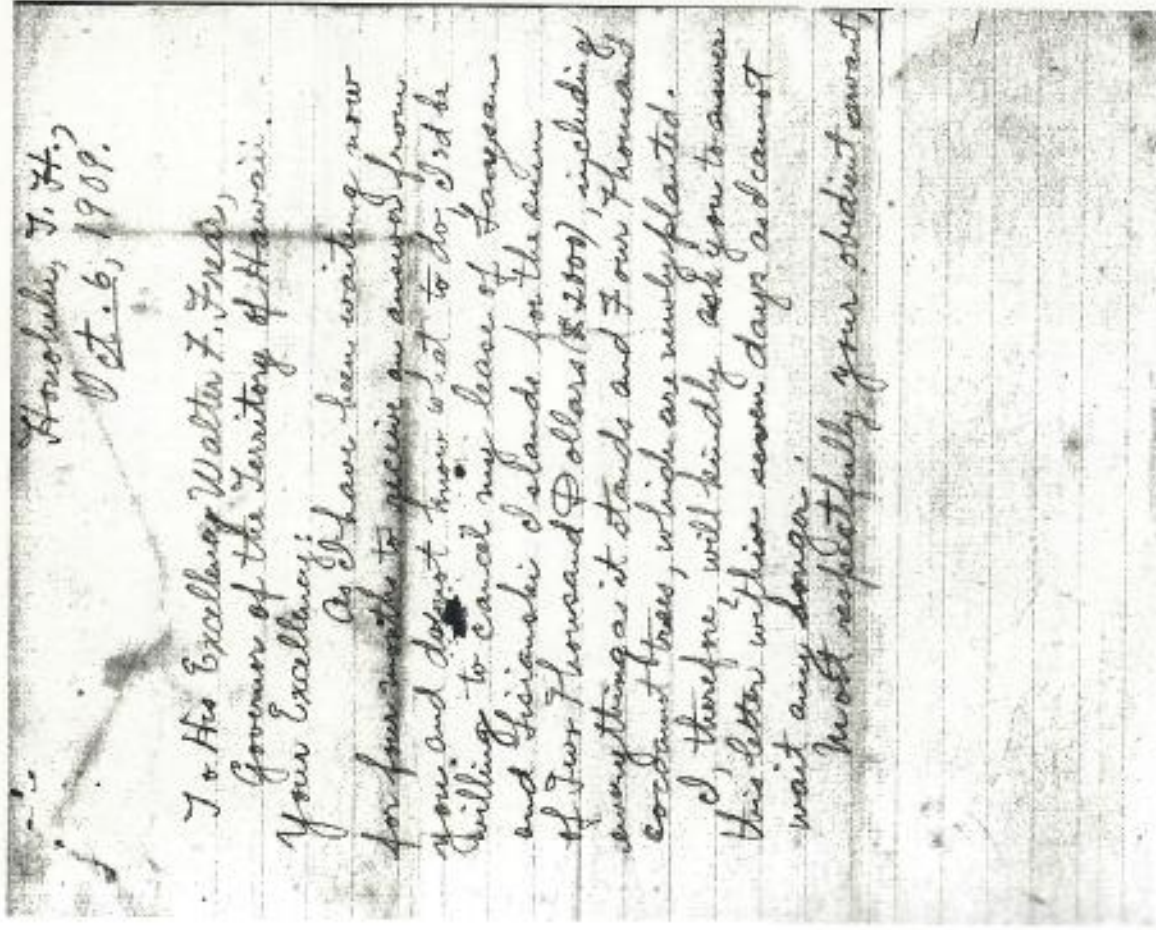
Witness:



Letter from Max to his agent giving authorization to bid for the lease of Laysan and Lisiansky Islands



The Executive order that stopped Max's lease



An offer from Max to Governor Frear to cancel his lease

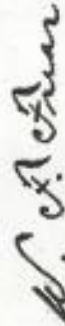
October 7, 1909.

Mr. Max Schlemmer,
Honolulu, T. H.

Dear Sir:

Replying to your letter of the 6th instant, in which you state that you would be willing to cancel your lease of Laysan and Lisianski islands for \$2,000, the Territory of course cannot pay you for a cancellation of the lease; indeed, it is immaterial to the Territory whether the lease is cancelled or not. What view the authorities in Washington take as to the validity of the lease they have not yet indicated.

Respectfully yours,



Governor.

Governor's reply to Max's letter on previous page

Executive Chamber,
Honolulu, Hawaii

November 30, 1909.

Mr. Max Schlemmer,
Honolulu, T. H.

Dear Sir:

I have to inform you that we have received advices from the Secretary of Interior that the Commissioner of Public Lands of the Territory was on February 8, 1909, without jurisdiction or authority to execute the lease of ~~the~~ islands to you of the islands of Laysan and Lisianski, an executive order having been made by the President of the United States on February 3, 1909, which appropriated these islands to the use and purpo~~se~~ of the Federal Government. It has been held by the Secretary of Interior that such appropriation terminated territorial control; at least, to the extent that the Territory ~~was~~ ~~without~~ authority to execute said lease to you.

You are therefore requested to return your copy of the lease, in order that cancellation thereof may be duly entered upon our records.

Very respectfully,

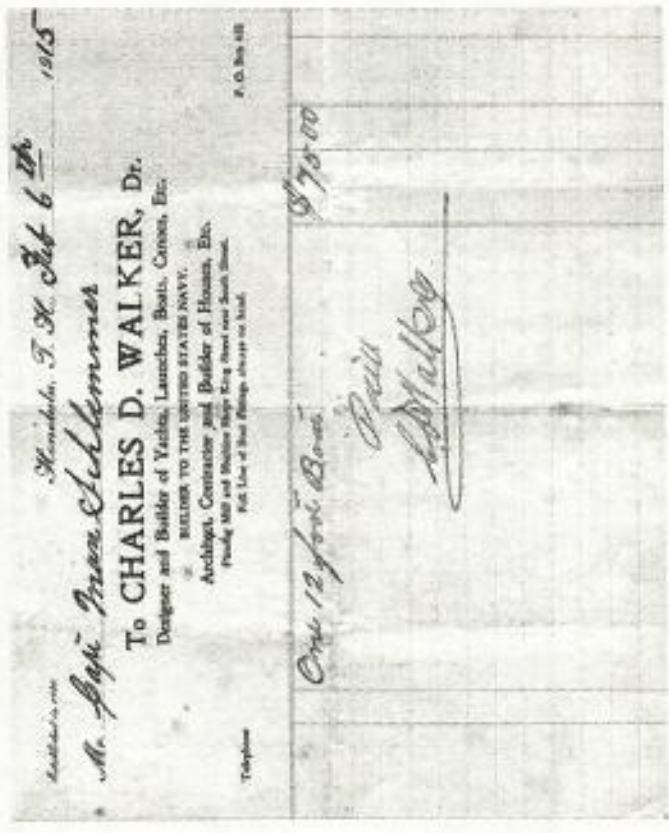


Acting Governor.

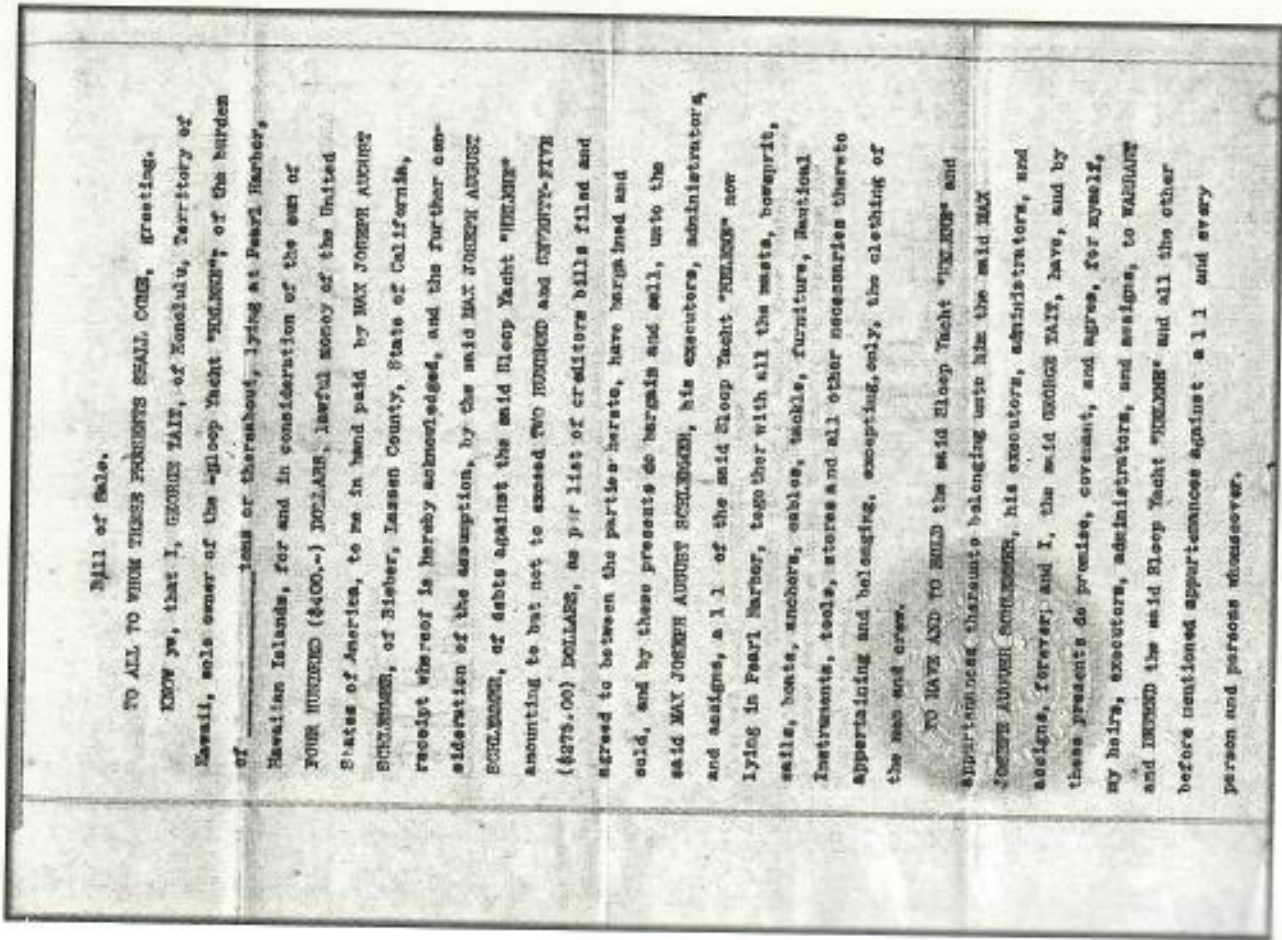
Official termination of lease letter



Envelope letter came in. Note that the envelope marked OFFICIAL BUSINESS much the same as we have today



Receipt for a small boat before last trip to Laysan Island



Bill of Sale for the HuiKong

No. 51 EXPENDITURE


INVOICE of *Provisions* Addressed to *E. J. Rodgers, United States*
C. S. U. S. - O. - Honolulu,
to Max Schlemmer, in accordance with Article 1000, U. S. Navy Regulations

QUANTITY	DESCRIPTION	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL PRICE	AMOUNT PAID	AMOUNT DUE
3	100. Flour, in tins.	.031	0.093		
10	100. Soda Beans,	.010	0.100		
100	100. Milk, condensed,	.005	0.500		
400	100. Rice,	.02	8.000		
25	100. Lard,	.10	2.500		
40	100. Tinned Apples,	.07	2.800		
40	100. Unspiced Salt,	.05	2.000		
					16.893

Received of Max Schlemmer, sixty three and 70/100 Dollars
in full of the above invoice
E. J. Rodgers
Asst. Paymaster, U. S. Navy

APPROVED: *E. J. Rodgers* U. S. ASST. PAYMASTER
 207 NOV 1907

A provision receipt in the year 1907



TREASURY DEPARTMENT
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Honolulu, T.H., December 25, 1915.

Mr. Max Schlemmer,
 1160 Gulick Avenue,
 Honolulu, T.H.

Subject: Information desired; poachers
 last winter.

My dear Sir:

1. I have your communication of the other day and in reply thereto wish to state that in my opinion there is nothing to be done until word from Washington has been received.

2. Kindly keep me informed of anything that you might learn as to which party or parties were poaching on Laysan Island last winter.

3. With best wishes, I am,

Sincerely yours,
W. M. Schlemmer
 1st. Lieut. U.S.C.G.

Answer to Max's complaint regarding bird poaching at Laysan Island

ORDER PAYABLE MONTHLY INTEREST CHARGED AFTER Maturity

C. G. YEE HOP & CO., II.
 WHOLESALE AND RETAIL BUTCHERS
 NO. 123 KING STREET, NEAR FISH MARKET
 HONOLULU, T. H.

1917

POST OFFICE MAIL BOX
 PHONE 4851, 4848

July

Stops Hellen

1	20	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	75
2	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	150
3	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	450
4	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	70
5	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	80
6	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	80
7	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	320
8	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	470
9	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	520
10	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1070
11	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	250
12	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	420
13	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	620
14	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	500
15	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	100
16	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	810
17	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	750
18	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	80
19	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	140
20	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	160
21	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	287
22	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	40
23	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	110
24	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	90
25	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	102

Theo. H. Davies & Co., Ltd.
 HARDWARE DEPARTMENT

1917

No. 4583

1	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	75
2	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	60
3	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	130
4	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	200
5	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	30
6	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	50
7	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	10
8	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	10
9	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	70
10	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1070
11	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	200
12	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	100
13	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	730

James Ford

Theo. H. Davies & Co., Ltd.
 HARDWARE DEPARTMENT

1917

No. 4584

1	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	75
2	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	30
3	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	10
4	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	10
5	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	70
6	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1070
7	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	200
8	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	100
9	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	70
10	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1070
11	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	200
12	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	100
13	10	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	1/2 lb. a. d. 1/2 lb. 45	730

James Ford


U. S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE
 DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
 WASHINGTON, D. C.



**PORT SANITARY STATEMENT,
 U. S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE.**

Port of Honolulu, T.H.
 Bound from Honolulu to South Sea Islands
 Number of cases of and deaths from the following named diseases reported during the
two weeks ending July 4, 1914.

DISEASE	NUMBER OF CASES	NUMBER OF DEATHS	REMARKS
Cholera (epidemic)	---	---	---
Cholera (Asiatic)	---	---	---
Diphtheria	4	1	---
Measles	---	---	---
Plague	---	---	---
Poliomyelitis (acute)	---	---	---
Scarlet Fever	---	---	---
Smallpox	---	---	---
Typhoid Fever	---	---	---
Typhus Fever	---	---	---
Yellow Fever	---	---	---
TOTAL	4	1	---

Vessel last fumigated at _____, 19
 On board under my hand and seal this 16th day of July, 1914.

 Surgeon, U. S. Public Health Service.

Sanitary Inspection Certificate for the Helene allowing her to leave Pearl Harbor on her last trip to Laysan Island

RECEIVED FROM ATTORNEYS, FROST & CO., the sum of five hundred twenty-five dollars (\$225.00) in full satisfaction of my and all claims that the undersigned, Max Schlemmer, may have against the said Atkins, Frost & Co., or against any of the owners, or against the master or crew of the wrecked schooner "Odelia" for any services of any nature whatsoever rendered to date, and in particular all services in connection with transporting the master, the master's wife, and the crew of the said schooner from Laysan Island to Midway Island; and in full satisfaction of any and all claims that the said Max Schlemmer, or any other owner of the ship "Helene", may have against the parties aforesaid by reason of the loss of the ship "Helene" made to the master of said schooner in October, 1916, to carry them from Laysan Island to Midway Island, and by reason of the subsequent accident to said ship and of any and all damages which the undersigned may have suffered by the loss of said ship.

San Francisco, California,
 June 2^d, 1916.

Max Schlemmer
 By Att. Clouston & Selby
 His attorneys authorized to make this settlement on behalf of said Max Schlemmer.

A settlement letter for the loss of the Helene

ATKINS, KROLL & CO.

CABLES: "ATKRO"
CODES: A. S. IN AND 514 6171010
HONOLULU, HAWAII

TELEPHONE: MAIN 11-1100

21 CALIFORNIA ST.

SAN FRANCISCO, Dec. 22, 1915.

Max Schlemmer, Esq.
1160 Caliook Ave.,
Honolulu, T. H.

Dear Sir:

We are in receipt of your favor of Dec. 14th, and contents have our attention.

Captain Lunn of our schooner "O. M. Kellogg", has reported to us your kind action in loaning him your Sloop Yacht "Helene" and we very much appreciate this and thank you for having rendered this assistance.

We understand from Captain Lunn, that you are desirous of having the Government return your yacht to Laysan Island, and we have already taken this matter up with the Government at Washington. As soon as we have any definite reply regarding this matter, we shall advise you. In the meantime, we note that you do not mention having the yacht returned to Laysan in your letter and we are wondering if it will now suit you better to have the yacht stay at Midway Island. We shall be glad to hear definitely from you on this point.

With regard to the accusation which had been made against you, excusing you of being a German spy, we note your remarks. We are sending a copy of your letter on to Washington and this will be given to the proper authorities there.

Accepting the favor of your reply, and again thanking you for your kindness to our ship-wrecked crew, we beg to remain,

Yours very truly,

ATKINS, KROLL & CO.

CHK.

Letter to Max prior to loss of the Helene

SLOOP HELENE LOST AT MIDWAY ISLAND. WIND IS HURRICANE

News of still another wreck was received in Honolulu yesterday. This time it is the sloop Helene, owned by Max Schlemmer. The captain received a cablegram from Midway Island yesterday that she went ashore Friday during a heavy westerly gale.

Breaking from her moorings, the Helene ran on the shoals, about one hundred yards from the cable pier, and broke up Saturday afternoon, some of the wreckage being washed up on the beach. The gale, then north northwest, continued Sunday, blowing at times with hurricane force, with occasional hail showers. This was the second time in thirteen years that hail has fallen at Midway, where the station of the Commercial Pacific Cable Company is located.

The sloop and Max Schlemmer have had adventures aplenty since June, when the captain sailed for Laysan Island. The schooner O. M. Kellogg was wrecked on Maro reef in September, and the crew made Laysan in the ship's boat. At Laysan the men borrowed the sloop from Schlemmer to go to Midway, whence they were brought to the United States Navy tug Iroquois, which made a special voyage for them. Schlemmer and his two companions were taken from Laysan by the United States Navy cutter Nerens in November.

New mooring buoys were placed by the Iroquois, when she was at Midway for mooring the Helene.

This report of bad weather at Midway proves that the Pacific is not at all peaceful these days. Gales near the coast, at the islands south of Fiji and at Midway show general bad weather.

Log of Post HeleneJune 25th 1915.left Honolulu 4.30 P.M. got
beach at Waianua.June 26that beach of Waianua got
big squall with rain and wind
for Hawaii.June 27thof Hawaii, mad for Helene
Lighthouse and set of out on Hill
next morning.June 28thpost Helene Lighthouse and Digt
our flag and saw on Hill morninghis hat and Kuwalei and digt
our flag to Mr. Bickmeyer and
other friends of old Laysan
Hawaii and digt our flag to
Mrs. George Stearns and other old
Hawaiians, and saw great crowd
Hona was me one beach.June 29that beach of Hona Point
on mt. Laysan with 3 Japanese
I. and then were the morning and the
said Fish Lighthouse there were
low Mt. W.June 30thgot light wind and mad for Waianua
not able to get in before dark & build

GENERAL OFFICE
AMERICAN FACTORS, LIMITED
CAPITAL \$ 5,000,000
SUGAR FACTORIES
WHOLESALE & COMMISSION MERCHANTS
INSURANCE

SAN FRANCISCO
NEW YORK
HONOLULU
PACIFIC COAST
HAWAIIAN ISLANDS

HONOLULU, HAWAII Sept. 1, 1927.


Capt. Max Schlemmer,
Honolulu.

My dear Captain:

As the years roll by, for all of us a time will come when each and everyone of us must turn over his duties to younger men. This Company has been very fortunate in having you with it for the great number of years that you have been connected with the firm, and the services that you have rendered have been so conscientious and faithful as any man could render, but nevertheless, owing to the passing of the years, the time has now come when you for your own good should turn over the reins which you have held for so long to a younger man in order that you may in the years to come take life easier than you have done in the past.

In recognition of the faithful services which you have rendered this Company, which are deeply appreciated by everyone who has been associated with you, it gives us pleasure to advise you that until further notice the Company will pay to you each month the sum of \$100.00.

Accepting we may have the pleasure of seeing you from time to time, we remain

Yours very truly,
AMERICAN FACTORS, LIMITED.

J. M. Lowrey,
Treasurer.

JAMES D. LEVENSON
Honolulu

HONOLULU, HAWAII, February 7, 1916.

As you are aware, our fellow townsman, Mr. Max Schlemmer, has recently been returned from Laysan Island, which is one of the group of small islands forming the Hawaiian Island Bird Reservation and therefore under the jurisdiction of the U. S. Biological Survey, owing to the timely and generous assistance rendered by Mr. Schlemmer to the ten members of the shipwrecked crew of the O. M. Kellogg last September and the use of his vessel by them which was left by these unfortunate people at Midway, he is back in Honolulu without his vessel and without employment.

There should be a warden stationed on Laysan to guard at all seasons the wonderful bird colonies there from further depredations and to assist shipwrecked and distressed vessels in the windward chain of islands. There is reason to hope that the Biological Survey will soon supplement the work of the Thetis and appoint a regular resident warden for this great bird reservation. It is to be hoped that Mr. Schlemmer will receive this position since it is one he is well fitted to fill.

But in the meantime Mr. Schlemmer and his family are in need of temporary help. I therefore bring this matter to your attention, trusting that you will respond and assist this man who has lived long in these islands and in this instance, as well as in others that need not be mentioned, has rendered assistance of such a nature that the community should not be willing to see him suffer as a result of his humane acts on Laysan.

Please make your check payable to Max Schlemmer, and mail same in the enclosed envelope. Mr. Schlemmer will send acknowledgment personally.

Very truly yours,



P.S.—Above all Mr. Schlemmer wants employment and will be obliged if you can furnish his work or tell him where he can find a temporary or permanent job.

Hon. Delegate Prince Jonah Kalanianaʻole,

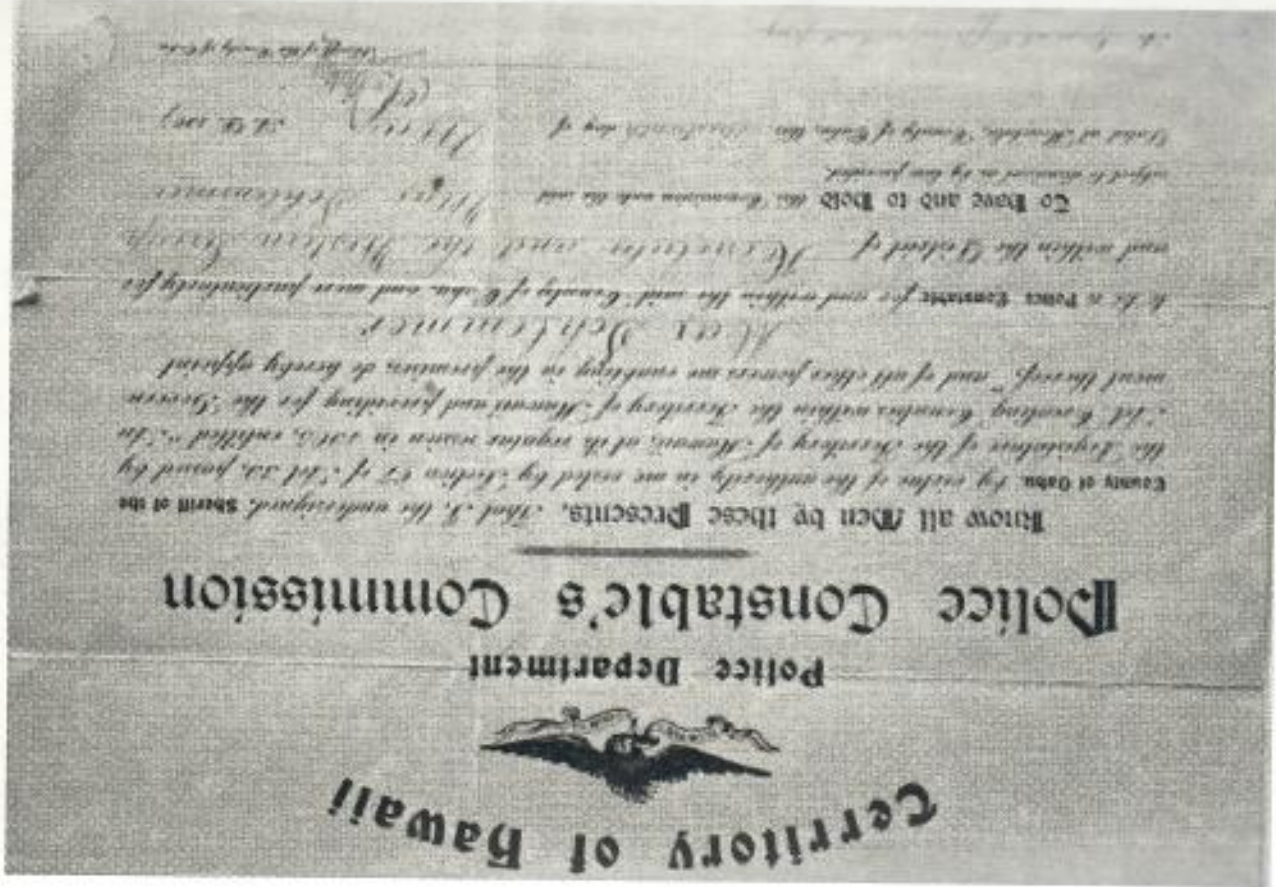
Dear Sir:-

I herewith would kindly ask you to help me secure the position as Warden for the North West Group of Bird Reserve Islands, as I have been recommended for the same by Rear-Admiral Chauncey, Commander-in-Chief of the U. S. Pacific Fleet; Prof. Wm. A. Bryant; and Captain A. P. Niblack of the U. S. Navy; and as I have been a resident here for forty-one (41) years and have a family of twelve (12) children to support and have always done what's right but did not believe of being robbed of my rights, as an American citizen, I will therefore inclose you a copy of "Happenings on the Islands of Laysan and Lisianski" as near as I can remember.

Trusting in you
I remain

Yours Respectfully
Max Schlemmer

Letter from Max requesting help in getting the Federal Warden's Position for the islands of Laysan and Lisianski



Certificate for Police Constable's Commission, Territory of Hawaii

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bailey, Alfred M. *Laysan and the Black Footed Albatross*, Museum Pictorial, Denver Museum of Natural History, July 15, 1952.
- Bailey, Alfred M. *The Hawaiian Monk Seal*, Museum Pictorial, Denver Museum of Natural History, August 1, 1952.
- Bailey, Alfred M. *Birds of Midway and Laysan Islands*, Museum Pictorial, Denver Museum of Natural History, September 4, 1956.
- Bensen, Bruce. "Laysan Island, The Last Refuge." *The Honolulu Advertiser*, April 8, 1973.
- Bryan, Dr. E.H. *Laysan, an Island of the Pacific, Paradise of the Pacific*, May 1938.
- Bryan, William A. *Laysan Island, A Visit to Hawaii's Bird Reservation*, *Mid Pacific Magazine*, October 1911.
- Carus, Jr. Edward H. *Forgotten Islands of the Hawaiian Archipelago*, Ka'Elele, Bishop Museum, December 1990.
- Day, A. Grove. *History Makers of Hawaii*, Mutual Publishing, 1984.
- Day, A. Grove. *Mad About Islands*, Mutual Publishing, 1987.
- Day, A. Grove. *Mark Twain's Letters From Hawaii*, University of Hawaii Press, 1975.
- Ely, Charles A. and Clapp. *Natural History of Laysan Island*, Smithsonian Institution 1973.
- Gast, Ross H. *Traveling Hawaiian Byways With Pen and Camera*, Old Blanc House Press, 1936.
- Krauss, Bob and Alexander, W.P. *Grove Farm Plantation*, Pacific Books, 1976.

Lipman, Victor. "Life, Death and Rebirth of an Island," Honolulu Magazine, November 1984.

MacIntyre, Ian G. *Atoll Research Bulletin*, Smithsonian Institution, 1996.

Mellen, George. *Sales Builder, Pacific Guano and Fertilizer Co. Ltd.*, Star Bulletin Printing House, 1939.

Mifflin, Thomas. *Schooner From Windward*, University of Hawaii Press, 1983.

Morris, Penrose G. *How The Territory of Hawaii Grew and What Domain It Covered*, Hawaii Historical Report, 1933.

Rayson, Ann. *Modern Hawaiian*, Bess Press, 1984.

Swchweizer, Nikluea R. *Hawaii and the German Speaking People*, Top Gallant Publishing, 1982.

Whitten, Harry. *Laysan-born Islander Recalls Mining Days*, *The Honolulu Star Bulletin*, March 13, 1980.

Wisniewski, Richard. "Hawaii, the Territorial Years," Pacific Basin Enterprises, 1984.

Yamashita, Stanley. "Forgotten Hawaii, the Leeward Islands," *The Sunday Star Bulletin and Advertiser*, Honolulu, October 13, 1968.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Tom Unger was born in Honolulu, June 12, 1923. He is a graduate of Roosevelt High School, 1941, and the University of Portland, 1950.

He received a combat commission and Purple Heart while serving with the 88th Infantry Division during World War II in Italy.

Tom was manager of General Mills Inc. in Hawaii and later held the same position with Beatrice Foods in Hawaii, on Okinawa and in Korea. He returned to Hawaii in 1972 and was a pioneer in the marketing of macadamia nuts. In 1977, he was president of the Hawaii Macadamia Nut Growers Association.

Tom and his wife Janice, were proprietors of the Honomu Plantation Store on the island of Hawaii for nine years until their retirement in 1988. They have six children and ten grandchildren. Tom and Janice presently reside in Honolulu.

**MAX SCHLEMMER,
HAWAII'S KING OF
LAYSAN ISLAND**



Tom E. Unger