

# Pambu

The monthly newsletter of the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau,  
Research School of Pacific Studies,  
Australian National University, Canberra

No. 6

Executive Officer: Robert Langdon

January, 1969

## HOUSEKEEPING IN SAMOA A HUNDRED YEARS AGO

"I sometimes think I am more impatient every year, but I assure you there is more to try one's temper and patience in housekeeping in Samoa than you in England can imagine..."

This outburst on the trials of domesticity in Samoa is contained in a journal written just over a century ago by a young Englishwoman, Amy (Amelia) Williams, which the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau has recently obtained for copying for its member libraries.

The journal was sent to the Bureau by Mrs T.R. Robbins, of Hove, Sussex, England, a grand-daughter of Amy Williams and her husband, John Chauner Williams, who was the British consul in Samoa from 1858 to 1873. J.C. Williams also held the post of United States consul for a time, and was a son of the celebrated missionary John Williams, who was murdered in the New Hebrides in 1839.

Amy Williams began her journal in Apia on September 1, 1864, and continued it for 19 days to give a woman friend in England "some little idea of our daily life."

Although a good deal of the journal reads pretty much the same as any young housewife's would who had four young children of her own to look after, plus several step-children and one or two other household retainers, there are numerous little touches and snippets of information in it which will be of value to historians studying the Samoa of her time.

On September 13, 1864, for example, Amy recorded that a ship had arrived from Tahiti bringing news that her husband had been superseded as American consul, and that, as a result, their income would drop by £200 a year.

---

*The Pacific Manuscripts Bureau was established in 1968 as part of the Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, Canberra. Its purpose is to locate unpublished documents of value concerning the Pacific Islands and to obtain copies of them on microfilm for four world libraries specialising in Pacific research. The four libraries are the National Libraries of Australia and New Zealand; the Mitchell Library, Sydney; and the Library of the University of Hawaii, Honolulu.*

---

"If our cotton does not turn out something, we shall feel it pretty much," Amy wrote. However, she added that she and her husband had been expecting a new consul to be appointed "so cannot say we are surprised."

The new consul, Amy went on, was a Mr Coe. "He will do very well for the office," she said, "but he has a native wife, & one of the worst specimens, so that is very unfortunate."

A few days later, Amy recorded that she and her family had attended a meeting at the "Native Chapel" to see if the children, principally Samoans, would give something towards a new missionary ship.

"We were all there, as I wished our little ones to help with their mite, even down to little Baby," she wrote. "We had a good meeting. Papa was one of the speakers. I like to hear him speak in Samoan much better than in English, I mean for public speaking, because I never feel nervous for him, and the natives always like his speeches. We were there two hours and found the children brought over 12f..."

Besides Amy's journal for September, 1864, the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau has also recently located in South Africa four other journals of hers which cover the periods from October 22, 1855, to January 4, 1856, and from September 10, 1873, to January 22, 1874. From the same source have also come two journals of her husband for the period, October 25, 1873, to February 20, 1874.

The six journals, all written in school exercise books, generally with mid-Victorian angels, cherubs, ponies and paddlesteamers, etc. adorning their covers, were found to be in the possession of Mr E.A. Collett, of Cathcart, Cape Province. Mr Collet, who is also a grandchild of J.C. and Amy Williams, brought the journals to Australia for the P.M.B. during a recent holiday trip.

The earliest of Amy's journals was kept in Sydney soon after she and her husband were married - he for the second time. J.C. Williams

had just left to return to Samoa, leaving Amy to care for his six children by his first wife, one of whom, Samuel Foster Williams, also became a British consul in Samoa.

Amy kept the journal so that she could post her husband a full budget of day-by-day news as soon as the exercise book in which it was kept was full. The first page or so reveals her as an exceedingly gushing and lovelorn bride:

"This long sad weary day has nearly come to its close," she wrote, "it wants but a few minutes to ten, and both Mary and I feel thoroughly tired, but I must just put down the events of today for you, by dearest husband, before I retire to my now solitary bedroom. After we had watched the cab round the corner and caught the last glimpse of your waving handkerchief, we all came into the parlour, and, with the exception of little Willie, indulged in a good cry. It was a relieve [sic] to the first anguish of the parting. After a little while, one by one stole away and Mary came in to clear away breakfast, so I sauntered upstairs intending to look out some clothes for the wash, but when I got into our room, and saw some of your clothes and papers lying about, the thought of what might happen before you used them again was too much for me, I sat down by the little table feeling unutterably wretched; but in a few moments my promise to you came into my mind, and I resolved not to give way, so determined to be very busy, and I think succeeded pretty well, tho' all through the day I have been forced to give up every now and then..."

Amy's journal for 1855-56 contains a good deal in this strain. On January 1, 1856, for example, she was "so very miserable" because, during her absence from home, a Mrs Watson had called and had "said all she could to set the children against me, being very kind to them, while she would only speak of me by the hated name of step-mother."

"This", Amy wrote, "is hard to bear, and I feel quite upset tonight, to think that anyone should take advantage of my being away to try and make the dear children hate me because I am not their own Mama. Who can say how much evil this may do. I am so very miserable, dearest, I wish you were only here..."

The journal ends on a similar note, but with an added hint that a little stranger was shortly expected in the Williams household. "I only hope you may be able to get home before I am confined," Amy wrote, "tho' I am afraid that is rather a selfish wish."

Amy's journals of 18 years later were also written during a separation from her husband - she being in Samoa, and he being in Sydney for treatment for a most distressing complaint, apparently a combination of lockjaw and cancer of the face.

Amy, by this time, had had eight children, and as she also still had the younger of her six step-children to care for, plus various retainers, she was frequently, as she said, "worn out."

Willie, the youngest of her step-children, was a particular worry to her. "Willie," she wrote on October 27, 1873, "has taken to smoking, & smokes a very great deal, & one afternoon he called at Sam's & I was almost sure he had taken too much to drink, he acted so strangely, and now I hear he is ulavale with women. I do so fear he is going wrong, & there is no one here to set him right..."

Other matters were a worry, too. The corn at the back of the house was not doing well. Much of it was withered, and the fowls had scratched some up, too. The front of the house was full of weeds, and although four Samoans had been engaged to clean it up, they had scarcely done a thing. Worse still, Amy had no money, apart from a few fees for teaching school and a little raised from the sale of corn. The family cattle, also, were "such a trouble" and Amy thought she would have to sell one to raise some money, particularly as she had wages to pay.

"Sam has written twice to the chiefs about the fine money," Amy went on, referring to a sum that Williams, as consul, had apparently mulcted the Samoans, "but they have sent him no answer. I am so afraid you will be depending on that, for you were so sure it would be paid." Amy added that it then seemed too late for a ship of war to arrive in Samoa to buy provisions from them, and that "troubles seem thick just now."

Further along in the diary there is a brief reference to the fact that a Mrs Hayes had had twins (a boy and a girl) and both were doing well. The twins in question were apparently the second twosome of the notorious Captain Bully Hayes, who was killed in a shipboard affray near Jaluit in 1877 after a rascally career in the Pacific extending over 20 years.

Despite his evil reputation, Hayes was on good terms with the Williams family, and Amy took a close interest in his children. On November 3, 1873, she recorded that the baby girl was ill with thrush; that she had had it for 10 days and was "very bad," and that "Mrs Dean is with her, but they want me to give her medicines."

Next day, Amy wrote: "I prescribed for the poor baby, but it was no use, she died yesterday afternoon. Mrs. Dean, Mary and I were all there; poor Mrs Hayes feels very sad to think she left it so long. The boy has a bad mouth too, but I hope he will soon get over it..."

A fortnight later Amy wrote that H.M.S. Pearl, under Commodore Goodenough, had been in Apia and that she had sat at the commodore's

right hand at the shipboard tea table, and had given him what information she could about the Samoans. She had also sold the Pearl four cattle, which left only an ox to be sold to the next ship of war that turned up - "unless the wild ones are caught, and I don't think there is much chance of that."

Although the sale of the cattle to the Pearl must have considerably improved Amy's finances, new troubles soon came to try her. Eliza, wife of her stepson Sam, was laid up with a fallen womb, and Amy had the additional worry of nursing her and her young baby.

So her first journal goes on; and her second; and her third - all of them punctuated with frequent yearnings for news, good news, from her stricken husband in Sydney. "How my heart beats every time they say 'sail oh,'" she wrote on one occasion. "I think I shall surely hear from you, but alas it is only disappointment..."

Meanwhile, Amy's husband was diligently keeping his journals for her, and pining for her with equal fervour. His two journals are, indeed, pathetic documents, for he was so badly affected by lockjaw that he could barely open his mouth and could only suck his food.

"I hope you will come by the John Williams with the dear little ones" or "Oh, I wish I were returning in the vessel to you, dear Amy," are sentiments that occur over and over again in his journal, interspersed with grim details about sleepless nights and the hapless state of his face.

On January 5, 1874, Williams recorded that it was his 55th birthday and that no doubt Amy had been thinking about "the old man far away and suffering." However, he went on with unwonted cheerfulness: "I have had a pleasant life, free from much pain...and I have cause for gratitude to our Heavenly Father for others suffer more than I do...I wish I loved Jesus more and felt better prepared for dying. He knows my heart and I do want to love him more. Shall we all be still in this world this time next year?"

Williams' second journal continues for some seven weeks past his 55th birthday, and ends with another pathetic wish that his "dear Amy" would arrive from Samoa to join him. He died less than nine months later.

Although Williams' two journals do not add much to existing knowledge of Samoan history, they do reveal a good deal about a man who, as British and American consul, played a prominent part in Samoan affairs for just over 15 years.

HOW RICHARD BRANSCOMBE CHAVE  
 ESCAPED FROM SUWARROW ATOLL

Since publishing our item in the November issue of Pambu about the adventures in the Eastern Pacific in 1871 of Richard Branscombe Chave, we have obtained further information on that subject from Mr A.G. Bagnall, Chief Librarian of the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington.

Chave, it will be remembered, was a young Englishman in charge of a guano-digging team on Starbuck Island. When supplies began to run low on that island, Chave and three of his men tried to sail an open boat from Starbuck to Malden Island, 120 miles away. Having lost their way, they were fortunate to finish up at Penrhyn Island in the opposite direction. There Chave's companions deserted him, but Chave persuaded a young Penrhyn Islander to join him to try to sail back to Starbuck. This plan, however, also came unstuck, and the pair were finally wrecked on uninhabited Suwarrow Atoll, where they lived a Robinson Crusoe existence for two years before being rescued by a ship from Pago Pago.

Chave subsequently wrote an account of his adventures which the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau obtained for copying from Mr Walter L. Young, of St. Ives, New South Wales. However, Chave's narrative is incomplete. It breaks off abruptly after he and his companion had been on Suwarrow for nine months, although it does mention that after Chave returned to civilisation, an account of his adventures was published in a New Zealand paper, followed by a letter from H.B. Sterndale (a ubiquitous figure in the Pacific of the time), whom Chave had met on Penrhyn Island.

A request from the Bureau to Mr Bagnall at the Alexander Turnbull Library to see if his staff could turn up the newspaper items mentioned in Chave's narrative has now produced photocopies of two items from the New Zealand Herald, of Auckland, for May 28 and June 2, 1873.

The first item, which is headed in part, "Extraordinary Narrative. Two Men on an Uninhabited Island for Two Years. - The Account Authenticated," speaks of the arrival in Auckland from Rarotonga of the schooner Prima Donna (Captain Norris) with "very sensational intelligence."

The report then describes how Captain Norris had met Chave in Rarotonga and gives a summary of his adventures. The report states that Chave's Penrhyn Island companion had been "very disagreeable" and that Chave had been in constant fear of his life throughout his stay on Suwarrow. In the end, the report adds, "a small schooner happened to call at the island" and Chave and his companion were taken in her

to Autu [Atiu?], close to Rarotonga, from where Captain Trayte of the schooner Edith took Chave on to Rarotonga. There he was being taken care of by an L.M.S. missionary, the Rev. John Chalmers, until "means could be found to return him to Starbuck Island."

The second item on Chave's adventures in the New Zealand Herald is headed, "The Extraordinary Narrative. Further Particulars." There is no by-line to indicate that the item was written by Sterndale, but it is clear from the internal evidence that this was the case. "As very many readers of the Herald," Sterndale began, "may have been in doubt as to whether this apparently Robinson Crusoe story might or might not be all true, I send you this additional information."

Sterndale then launched into a long account of Chave's adventures up to his arrival on Penrhyn Island, and described his meeting with him there. "At this time", Sterndale went on, "I was engaged upon that island in fishing for pearl shell. Mr Chafe [sic], after recruiting his strength, was very anxious to get back to Starbuck Island, but his three companions refused to go with him, or after having so greatly suffered, to again run the risk of being lost at sea. However, he was greatly determined, and engaged a young lad of Penrhyn's Island (not more than 16 years of age) to accompany him. He was obliged to go to sea by night, as the people of the island would not allow the boy to go, fearing that they would be lost. Myself and my companions also did all we could to dissuade him from going, as we plainly perceived that he was not willing to believe in the strength of the current or the great drift of his boat, both of which we understood from experience.

"Finding his resolution unchangeable, we went to work to assist him to the extent of our means. We hauled his boat on shore and bolted a false keel on to her, gave him a bolt of light canvas, and helped him to make a suitable sail, and also supplied him with food and such necessaries for his voyage as we possessed, and bade him farewell, not without many misgivings as to what might become of him.

"We told him to keep close to the wind and make all the easting he could until he made the latitude of his own island, then if he did not find it after one day's running to the westward, to lose no more time in looking for it, but to shape his course for the island of the Grand Duke Alexander [Rakahanga Atoll], which is inhabited by a kind and hospitable sort of people, and where I would meet him, being myself bound for that place.

"I heard no more of him, neither has any one else, until a few weeks ago he was picked off Suwarrow Island by Captain Ellicott, a Tahitian trader. This Suwarrow Island is a place well known to me, I having been there several times. Upon one occasion I spent there the greater part of a year, accompanied by twenty-one natives of Polynesia,

whom I had carried there to fish for pearl. For three months we lived on the cocoanuts and food we had brought with us, the remainder of the time on fish and sea birds' eggs. There is no water but such as may lodge from rain in the hollows of the rocks.

"Several parties have lived at different times on this desert place. Some companies of pearl and beche-de-mer fishers; - some, who having landed there, quarrelled, and deserted their comrades - one Captain Jeff Strickland, who was there for a great part of two years, quite alone, and one Joseph Bird, Tom Charlton and Jules Tirel, who fished for pearl last there before me, and who were all killed there by their own men...

"That they [Chave and his companion] should have been two years upon this place without chance of escape is not surprising, inasmuch as it is out of the track of all navigation, and such vessels as may by any chance approach it do usually give it a wide berth, from its extremely dangerous appearance, the vast coral reef seeming to stretch from north to south as far as the eye can reach, not more than 15 feet above high-water in any place, with a tremendous swell even in calm weather, the result of the current; and it is, moreover, marked upon the English charts in italics, as being inhabited by hostile savages - a great mistake, as it has never been permanently inhabited in these days, though I did find there frequently quantities of stone axes, and other relics of a people which have disappeared, buried a few feet beneath the soil...

"It is fortunate that Captain Ellicott happened to come there. He had never been there before, but he had received from me some four or five years ago in Tahiti, an account of the place, a sketch of the form of the reef, and the position of the passage, which is not dangerous to those who are acquainted with it...He told me that he would go and look at it the first time he went that way, which, on this occasion he did, having been to Danger Island [Pukapuka Atoll] in search of cocoanut oil.

"After the terrible misery which poor Chafe must have endured during the past two years, his happiness must have been very great to reach the beautiful island of Rarotonga, where he is now (or was very lately), a guest of the Rev. Mr Chalmers. This minister and his wife are Christian missionaries in the widest sense of the term. Those who have read the Earl of Pembroke's South Sea Bubbles will remember with what admiration he speaks of them; and had he known more of them he would have esteemed them even more...

"During the past few years they have had frequent opportunity of affording hospitality to castaway mariners, all of whom, in whatsoever part of the world they may now be, will, as long as they live, have reason to remember their kindness."

Footnote: In view of the vast store of information that H.B. Sterndale had on the Pacific islands of his time - witness, also, his Memoranda...on Some of the South Sea Islands, printed as an appendix to the New Zealand House of Representatives papers for 1874 - the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau would very much like to know whether, at his death, he left any papers, and if so, what became of them. If any reader has any clues on this subject, the Bureau would be pleased to hear about them.

#### WHAT CANNIBAL JACK DIDN'T SAY IN HIS PUBLISHED AUTOBIOGRAPHY

When the Rev. William Hadfield was serving as a missionary at Lifu in the Loyalty Islands in the late 1880's, he met, during a visit to the island of Mare, an old trader called William Diaper, otherwise known as Cannibal Jack. Diaper had had a most colourful career in the South Sea Islands.

"I do not remember much of our conversation," Hadfield wrote some 40 years later, "but his personality made a deep impression on my mind. I was surprised to learn during our talk that he spoke the Mare language (which I did not speak), also the three languages of the other two islands of the group (of which I spoke only two). I gathered also that Mr Diapea [sic] was in low water as regards funds, and I was pleased to be of service to him in giving him a few light articles of clothing.

"I have no doubt that it was in thankful recognition of this that he asked me to accept an exercise book closely filled with an account of some years of his adventurous life... I could not find an opportunity of reading the manuscript at the time, but later when I had leisure, I took it up more from curiosity than from any expectation of pleasure. Although the handwriting was most trying and indistinct, I found I must finish it before laying it down. I was charmed, and at times thrilled as I accompanied Cannibal Jack from island to island.

"My regret on closing the book was that the writer had used such coarse language and described events in so realistic a manner as to preclude any thought of publication [in those Victorian times]... I therefore stowed the MS. away with other derelict material, where it would have remained in obscurity or have been destroyed had it not been unearthed and perused by one of my sons... who clamoured for its immediate publication..."

As a result of the enthusiasm of Hadfield's son, Hadfield interested a London publisher, Faber & Gwyer, in the Diaper manuscript, and in 1928 the manuscript was published as Cannibal Jack: The True Autobiography of a White Man in the South Seas.

According to an introduction which Hadfield wrote for the book, the book was presented "just as it left the hands of Cannibal Jack, excepting one incident mentioned by him which the most friendly censor would hardly have passed."

Hadfield gave no hint as to what this mysterious, expurgated incident could be: and Pacific scholars have long been wondering whether some priceless piece of South Seas lore was suppressed through the over-friendly attentions of Cannibal Jack's editor.

Now, at last, the veil of mystery is about to be torn down; the expurgated is to become unexpurgated; the unknown is to be made known. Or so we hope! For after a correspondence extending over several months, the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau has both located the present owner of the Diaper manuscript and has finally prodded him into digging it out from a mass of papers at the family farm, so that it can be microfilmed for the Bureau's member libraries.

The owner of the manuscript is Dr Ian Hadfield, of Winchester, Hampshire, England, a busy medical practitioner, who said in a recent letter that the manuscript is now in a very delicate condition.

Arrangements are now being made for the manuscript to be microfilmed in England.

#### MORE LIGHT ON THE PACIFIC CAREER OF JAMES LYLE YOUNG

Further information on the life of James Lyle Young, whose fascinating 60-year career in the Pacific was outlined in the last issue of Pambu, came to light in January when another of his notebooks was found by his son, Mr Walter L. Young, of St. Ives, New South Wales.

The newly-discovered notebook gives a summary of all of Young's voyages in the Pacific from 1882 to 1911, and arouses further regrets about the apparent disappearance of most of his day-by-day journals.

The first entry in the notebook, for example, reads as follows: "Left San Francisco April 1st, 1882, in schooner Greyhound; arrived Taiohae [Marquesas Islands] April 19th. Chartered schooner Eugenie, Capt. C. Stevens; and made the tour of the Marquesas Group; visiting Uapou, Vaitahu, Atuana, Tahuku, Puamua, Haniapa and Hanamate. Left Taiohae in brig Paloma, Capt. J.G. Berude, (H. Meuel, passenger) and reached Papeete, June 1st, 1882. (See Journal for 1882 for details of voyage)."

Young's notebook reveals that he made nearly 100 sea voyages in the 30 years from 1882 to 1911, and that in the course of them he visited almost every island in the Eastern Pacific. Details of the

voyages are generally brief and statistical, but occasionally there is a hint of drama, viz:

Concerning a voyage from Tahiti to San Francisco in 1891 in the brig Courtney Ford, Young recorded that "the vessel leaked steadily about 6 inches per hour throughout the voyage, and when she was put in dry dock on June 20th, the bottom was found to be so much injured that 76 feet of new main keel and 4 new planks had to be put in on starboard side. In one place, the plank was chafed to only 1/2 an inch thickness, and a piece of rock had penetrated to the skin."

BUREAU MICROFILMS ARE AVAILABLE  
TO NON-MEMBER LIBRARIES

Copies of all microfilms of Pacific Islands manuscripts and other material produced by the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau for its member libraries are available for sale to other libraries, archives, universities, etc., except where restrictions have been placed upon them by the owners of the original manuscripts.

A price list is available on application to the Bureau.

Details of microfilms made for the member libraries since the last list was published in Pambu No. 3 are:

<u>No. of film</u>	<u>Title</u>
PMB 16	Nauru - German Administration - Official Records, 1887-1916.
PMB 17	Dictionnaire de Mekeo, by Father Gustave Desnoes, M.S.C.
PMB 18	Private Journal of Theodorus B.M. Mason on a voyage to the Pacific in 1872-75.
PMB 19	Papers of Mrs R.H. Rickard relating to the New Guinea Islands.
PMB 20	Adventures of a Guano Digger in the Eastern Pacific, by Richard Branscombe Chave
PMB 21	Private Journal of James Lyle Young, January 6, 1875, to December 31, 1877.
PMB 22	Private Journal of James Lyle Young, January 1, 1880, to July 9, 1881.
PMB 23	Miscellaneous Papers of James Lyle Young, 1878-1929.
PMB 24	Journal-Letters of John Chauner Williams and his wife, Amy, 1855-6, 1864, 1873-4.

