

JOHN M. ROSS FOUNDATION

Bank of Hawaii, Trustee

Historical Information

Born a native of Scotland in 1868, John Monroe Ross had been engaged in farming and railroad work in his homeland prior to coming to Hawaii in January 1895. Once in Hawaii, John Ross went to work for Hakalau Plantation on the Hamakua Coast of the Big Island of Hawaii. He became one of the foremost agriculturists of the Hawaii sugar industry and retired as manager in 1942 after 47 years of service.



Mr. Ross cared deeply that the prosperity of coming generations in the Islands lied in the land, and he had been an active leader in the movement to encourage young men to take up agriculture as their life work. Hakalau had become a model plantation in the promotion of this important work.

John Ross was involved with organizations such as 4-H Club, Future Farmers, Hakalau Athletic Club and Kilauea Council of Boy Scouts. Ross served as Commissioner of Public Instruction for many years and because of his concern over students having to drive the great distance to Hilo, worked diligently to provide education to plantation workers and their children. A one-room school, which grew to seven rooms with facilities, was named in his honor. Several sources feel that the loss of the Ross' only child during infancy contributed to their interest in Big Island youth.

Ross served as President of First Trust Company of Hilo, Hawaiian Insurance, Hilo Electric, and Hawaii Welfare Bureau. He also served as Commissioner of Public Instruction, Territorial District Fire Warden for North and South Hilo, Trustee of the First Foreign Church of Hilo, and on the executive committee of East Hawaii Republican Party. John M. Ross died in 1946.

John and his wife, Georgiana, were active in the community. Mrs. Ross had a beautification project of the Hakalau area with the planting of palms and flowering shrubs. The John M. Ross Foundation was established in 1963 by his wife who passed away in 1967.

Note: Portions of the above and picture were included in Volume IV (revised) edition of *Men of Hawaii*, published by The Honolulu Star-Bulletin, Ltd., Territory of Hawaii, 1930 – Courtesy of Honolulu Star-Advertiser and Hawaiian Collection Library at University of Hawaii - Manoa.