



Thomas Charles Hyde Rooke

Thomas Charles Hyde Rooke MD 1806 - 1858

**by Hawaii Medical Association
Auxiliary**

When the Hawaiian Guards, a volunteer company, was organized in November, 1852, Dr. Rooke was elected surgeon. The doctor served twice as a member of the House of Representatives (1851-1855), representing the Honolulu district. For a time he was Chamberlain to the Royal Household during the reign of King Kamehameha III, and in May, 1858, he was named as a member of the Privy Council by King Kamehameha IV.

Dr. Rooke was one of the ten signers of the charter of incorporation of the Hawaiian Medical society in 1856. His interest and care of the Hawaiians impressed the future Queen Emma with the need for a hospital to treat her people. Although he did not live to see the opening of the Queen's Hospital in 1860, it was he who kindled the spark which brought it into being.

Henry M. Lyman in his "Hawaiian Yesterdays" tells of his first meeting with the doctor as follows: "One day Mr. Dole sent me with a note of introduction to Dr. Rooke...Presently he appeared, elegantly dressed, rebicund, affable, and redolent of delicious odors that I afterwards learned to recognize as indicative of acquaintance with the choicest brands of rare old wine". He was also known as a "middle of the road" man who never quarreled with anyone.

Dr. Rooke was deeply devoted to his adopted daughter, Emma, and anxious that she should have every cultural advantage. It was he who had her enrolled at Mr. and Mrs. Amos Cooke's School for the Chief's Children and, when her formal education was ended with the closing of the Royal School, he engaged a tutor and had her taught at home. To further broaden her horizons he sent to England for books and assembled a library which was the finest in Honolulu.

After living in the Islands for nearly 30 years, Dr. Rooke died in November 28, 1858, at Kailua, Hawaii, at the age of 52.

In 1838 he was listed as being a member of the Board of Trustees of the Oahu Charity School. He was one of the pioneers in the cultivation of coffee and was a charter member of the Royal Hawaiian Agricultural Society when it was organized in 1850, serving on the coffee committee. Another of his interests was meteorology and he kept a table of meteorological observations from January 1, 1844, to December 31, 1844. He held the highest degrees in the Odd Fellows and Masons, and was one of the oldest members of the Mechanic Benevolent Union.

Thomas Charles Hyde Rooke was born May 18, 1806, in Bengoe, Hertford, England. His family were professional people who had served in the Royal Navy. He was educated at a branch of Christ's College Hospital in Hertford and had studied in London where he graduated from the Royal College of Surgeons in 1826.

Clarice B. Taylor in her "Tales About Hawaii" (Star-Bulletin, December 16, 1955) says that Dr. Rooke fell in love with a woman beneath his station, and, quarreling with his father, gave up his career in the Navy and became a surgeon on a whaling ship bound for the South Seas. He first landed at Lahaina in 1829 where he met some high chiefs and some "foreigners". After another season's cruise his ship put in at Honolulu. Here Dr. Rooke was asked to remain and practice medicine, and, with the consent of his Captain, he agreed.

In 1830 Dr. Rooke married Grace Kamaikui, the second daughter of Mr. John Young, friend and counselor of Kamehameha I. Dr. and Mrs. Rooke had no children, but, according to ancient custom, in 1836 they adopted the infant daughter of Mrs. Rooke's sister. It was this much beloved daughter of the Rooke's who became Queen Emma in 1866 when she married Kamehameha IV.

Dr. Rooke had his office and dispensary in his home and soon had a large practice. He was also physician to the Court, friend and adviser to the royal family, and became a naturalized citizen. In 1844 he is listed as Port Physician, and in December, 1850, he was appointed to the first Board of Health and served as its chairman.