Let love attend my letter over the sea to my darling.  
Carrie Prudence Winter, August 29, 1890

When an old house in Berkeley, California, passed from one generation to the next, it needed a new roof. That construction project revealed five old trunks in the attic that had been forgotten for more than a century. Four of the trunks contained valuable scientific research records, correspondence, photograph albums, old newspaper clippings, and more. The late professor who had owned the home had been an internationally known scientist, so University of California archivists sought the collection for its value to the history of science. When the last trunk was opened, it contained an unexpected gift, an extraordinary surprise.

The surprise was a young woman’s handwritten love letters to her fiancé. These letters were postmarked between 1890 and 1893, when twenty-three-year-old Carrie Prudence Winter was a missionary teacher at Kawaiha‘o Female Seminary in Honolulu. Carrie’s letters to her beloved “Charlie” give the reader a private view into a nineteenth-century courtship. Carrie described teaching and living with Hawaiian girls, the often strict discipline she and her colleagues imposed, and her struggles with pedagogy, classroom management, and fellow teachers. She earnestly described her encounters with royalty as well as ordinary citizens in the Islands. She discussed profound health issues, such as leprosy, smallpox, and malaria, which irrevocably affected the lives of her students. She took a lively interest in writing about the turbulent politics that would ultimately lead to the revolution and to the annexation of the Hawaiian Islands by the United States.

Carrie Prudence Winter was born August 24, 1866, in South Coventry, Connecticut, one of six children of a Congregational minister, Alpheus Winter (1839–1903), and his wife, Flora Damaris Thompson Winter (1835–1918). Carrie’s siblings were Alpheus IV, Mahlon Alpheus, Julia Flora, Eugene, and Horace. She was raised with strict Congregational principles that were old fashioned even at the time. For instance, her father sought to introduce her to mortality and consequently to encourage the development of her Christian faith when he urged her, as a very young child, to prepare a will.
Carrie’s father was a staunch New Englander who trained at Rock River Seminary in Mount Morris, Illinois, and led churches in Massachusetts and Connecticut. Even though Reverend Winter rose in prominence from pulpit to pulpit, his salary rarely increased, and Mrs. Winter supplemented the family income by growing and selling flowers. Reverend Winter served on the Connecticut State Temperance Union while his children were growing up but resigned in order to pursue some business opportunities that never proved as successful as promised. By all accounts, the Winter family was blessed with strong family ties and even stronger faith, but little ready money.

Carrie was an exceptional student at Hartford Public High School, and one of her father’s parishioners gifted her with a scholarship to Oberlin College, a rare educational opportunity for a woman in the nineteenth century. A hotbed of abolitionism, this Ohio college accepted Christian students of all races and was the first college to accept black women students. Carrie was away from home for the first time, but in this progressive environment, she flourished both academically and socially, with a particular interest in philosophy and in classmate, Charlie.

Charles Atwood Kofoid was born October 11, 1865, in Granville, Illinois, to Nelson Kofoid (1838–1908), a Danish-born carpenter and house builder, and Janette Blake (1844–1865), who died in childbirth. Charlie’s father married a
second time to Elizabeth Jane Ellis, and they had three additional surviving children. Charles entered Oberlin to study theology and then natural history and took on the duties of tutor. It was during those tutoring sessions that he fell in love with Carrie. In 1889, they became engaged, and both graduated in 1890 with bachelor’s degrees.

After their college commencement, the engaged couple faced the problem of setting the wedding date. Charlie had a strong desire to further his education and obtain an advanced degree in science, an expensive and time-intensive endeavor. Scholarships, assistantships, and money made on the side would support him as a doctoral student at Harvard, but it wouldn’t support a family. Carrie agreed with his practical decision to delay the wedding. With a lengthy four-year engagement ahead of her, she considered how best to use this time to its greatest advantage. Since childhood, she had yearned to do missionary work. She had heard that several alumni had gone to teach in the “Sandwich Islands,” and as it “seemed particularly attractive,” she resolutely pursued this opportunity through the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM).¹

Founded in 1810, ABCFM had recruited many missionary teachers from Oberlin College. However, in the early nineteenth century, ABCFM banned single women from being missionaries to the Hawaiian Islands, due to concerns about living amidst a vast number of males of “unknown sexual proclivities” who might undermine the women’s reputations (Grimshaw 1989). There was also the issue of where to house single women. But educated young women like Carrie were in great demand in the late nineteenth century. The less well educated and exhausted wives of the missionaries needed relief, and boarding schools now afforded security and living space for the young women.

With the ABCFM’s encouragement, Carrie confidently wrote to the trustees of Kawaiaha‘o Female Seminary and was quickly offered a position.

Charles A. Kofoid, 1890. Portrait by Theo Endean, Cleveland.
Once she accepted the offer, she was put in communication with another selected teacher, Ida May Pope, who became her traveling companion. Carrie then set about obtaining the “reluctant consent” of her family and fiancé. The chance to teach Hawaiian children, even at a meager salary, was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and she would not be daunted. She humorously recounted in her story “American Girl in the Hawaiian Islands,” published in 1892 by Southern Magazine, that accepting the position “was a wild thing to do,” but she “had been guilty of strange things before.”

The three-year teaching commitment wasn’t an easy decision for Carrie’s fiancé, and Charlie expressed his apprehension in a letter just prior to her departure: “I only hope that this separation will not take us far apart.” Carrie’s own trepidation was expressed when she recalled the August 15, 1890, parting: “I looked into the loved faces and thought with fear of the changes that might take place in the period of separation.”

Ultimately convinced this was the best course for their future, Carrie went off on an exhilarating but arduous journey. She mailed her “heart” for more than three years, using every available steamship sailing towards Charlie. He found her letters so riveting that he suggested she publish some special-interest stories on Hawai‘i in her hometown newspaper. Impressed by her writing ability, the Hartford Courant editor wrote her in 1893 to request articles. These were published under the byline “C. P. W.” Carrie became a prolific contributor and a local celebrity in Connecticut and earned respect among her fellow teachers at Kawaiaha‘o for her enterprise. Her articles vividly described the “glorious scenes on Hawaiian soil” as “landscapes for an artist’s brush.” She offered her readers, in poetic tour-guide style, a history of prominent Honolulu structures, charitable institutions, politics, and landscapes and provided an indepth look at how the natives lived. She was particularly eager for her American readers to think of Honolulu as a “cosmopolitan” destination, and she compared the “elegant homes of the foreigners” to those of the upper crust in New England.

Carrie depicted the busy nineteenth-century wharves as the “business tale of the islands.” Thousands of baskets of sugar from the other islands were constantly being loaded and unloaded onto sailing vessels. She described Honolulu as a place where “most of the business of the city has to do with plantation supplies, or sugar, or vessel supplies or vessels themselves.” As shipping increased in Honolulu, the city required more conveniences, and by the end of the 1880s, a transportation system of mule- and horse-drawn streetcars was installed, and Carrie, her fellow teachers, and their students, used them
with great pleasure. Prior to 1889, the piped water that fed the city came from streams and springs, but many residents drilled wells on their property. This caused surface waters to dry up (Pratt 1939, 289), which created a serious drought that often affected the operations of the school. Another nineteenth century challenge was traversing the island since there were very few inland roads. Carrie quickly found it necessary to purchase a horse to have the freedom, adventure, and exercise she craved to relieve the stress of living around the clock in a seminary full of girls.

Carrie bemoaned the fact that the transoceanic telegraph cable had not yet reached Hawai‘i: “For our size and civilization, we are the most isolated city in the world. When King Kalākaua died in San Francisco, Europe knew it, Asia knew it, and even Australia knew it before we did.” Even though Hawai‘i was one of the first places in the world to have electricity and an organized telephone system, service was scarce and unreliable. Kawaiaha‘o Female Seminary was fortunate to have both conveniences in 1890. And when the phone rang with the news that a ship carrying mail had arrived in port, the telephone became a valuable commodity. Carrie, along with every other isolated foreigner, was anxious for fresh news of the world, so the arrival of a steamship at the dock in Honolulu was the most exciting and important event of the day.

Transoceanic mail delivery in the early nineteenth-century was accomplished by slow-sailing vessels, but during the latter part of the century, the efficiency of steam-powered ships improved the dispatch of mail. Carrie told her Courant readers that “only once a month does a steamer from the colonies give us a chance to send mail to the States.” However, “steamers” did not keep to their posted schedules, and mail was frequently weeks to months behind. Ships also carried disease, and mandated quarantine periods delayed mail. Throughout her correspondence, Carrie’s moods varied with the steamers’ unreliable schedules: “Oh Charlie, I wish that steamer would come in. I’ve looked for it again and I am afraid it is not coming today.” Joy always replaced gloom when letters arrived: “It has been a great comfort these last two weeks to have your letters coming regularly and to have none of the steamers fail to bring me my letter.”

When Carrie arrived at Kawaiaha‘o Female Seminary, it was flourishing as a boarding school and was guided by strict Congregational principles typical of the nineteenth century. The school had its beginnings in 1865, when Dr. Luther Gulick’s temporary home, the Clark house on King Street, became an official, albeit ragged day school for eight girls (Chamberlain 1889). Dr. Gulick
became the secretary of the newly reorganized Hawaiian Evangelical Association (HEA), and his wife, Charlotte, and their five children welcomed into their home the daughters of Hawaiian missionaries in Micronesia (Damon 1945). Charlotte needed a ministry, these girls needed an education, and thus, the school began in earnest.

In close proximity to the Gulick home, the imposing coral-stone Congregational Kawaiaha’o Church was an integral part of seminary life. The church was located at what was known as Ka-Wai-a-Ha’o (the freshwater pool of Ha’o), a sacred bathing place of the chiefess Ha’o, Queen of O’ahu, and was named after it (Damon 1945).

In 1867 Lydia Bingham, the daughter of Reverend Hiram Bingham, who dedicated Kawaiaha’o Church in 1842, was recruited from the United States to take over the seminary. With an experienced educator and the daughter of a prominent clergyman now in charge, the school saw its reputation and student enrollment grow rapidly.

An increase in pupils required expansion, and this inspired Caroline Ather-ton to begin an intensive fund-raising campaign among missionary friends to purchase the Clark house in 1868 for the “good cause of female education” at a very charitable price. Adjacent to the Clark home on King Street was the abandoned Mission Press and Bindery, and it did not take much persuasion for the Hawaiian Mission Children’s Society (HMCS), a supporter of the seminary from its inception, to offer this building for further school expansion. In the dreary basement filled with the tiniest fleas tormenting the first pupils (Chamberlain 1889), the school began in earnest.

Early in 1869, the school was flourishing with forty-six students, and another daughter of Reverend Bingham was recruited to provide support for both sister and school. For four years, Elizabeth “Lizzie” Bingham worked closely with Lydia until her sister left to marry missionary Titus Coan. To support further expansion of buildings and more students, the monarchy offered government support, and in 1878, the seminary’s first board of trustees was appointed by the HEA to oversee finances. These first trustees were influential men and included such prominent people as William R. Castle. Under them, the school steadily increased in stature, size, and enrollment. However, the increase in responsibilities took a toll, and in 1880, Lizzie Bingham resigned. Pupil Margaret “Maggie” Powers wrote in her charming 1891 essay, included in this book, the history of the seminary from Miss Bingham’s tenure to the time Misses Winter and Pope arrived on the doorsteps in the late summer of 1890.
Ida May Pope was unquestionably the most influential person in Carrie’s life at the school and “Miss Pope” is mentioned throughout her correspondence. In one of Carrie’s first letters to Charlie, she offered this description: “[Miss Pope] is short, but has the appearance of being tall, very fair, wears glasses, is older, I think, than I, is not pretty but has something, and I don’t know what yet, which saves her from being commonplace. She is a little talkative.”

Kawaiaha’o Female Seminary’s student records have not survived. During Carrie’s era, 100 to 144 girls, aged five to twenty, were enrolled. Carrie’s letters provide readers with an opportunity to learn more about the character of the student body and the lives of young Hawaiian women of this turbulent era. Many of the students had identical last names, and there were ten sets of sisters and four sets of cousins among them. Carrie noted that in comparison to American girls, her students suffered many deaths in their families. Research revealed that 18 of the 97 girls had lost one or both parents, 12 died before their thirtieth birthday, and 4 suffered chronic ill health, including mental illness, leprosy, consumption, and blindness. Some students boarded for only a few years, but others, lived their entire childhood under missionary teachers like Carrie and Ida Pope. While the school included girls from every island, 28 were from O’ahu and 17 from Kaua‘i. Most of the girls were from Christian families; 10 were daughters of Hawaiian clergymen, many of whom were actively working as missionaries in the islands of the South Pacific. Marriage records showed that 52 girls married. The industrial education offered by Kawaiaha’o Female Seminary benefitted many students, providing them with skills that allowed them to earn wages and achieve some measure of independence. Of those students who lived to maturity, 18 became teachers. Others worked as seamstresses, musicians, midwives, court officers, telegraph operators, bookkeepers, and farmers. Sadly, while some of Carrie’s students lived long and productive
lives, her records confirm the irreversible decline of a population caused by complex economic, political, health, and social forces. These would forever change the character of Hawai‘i.

Carrie’s fellow teacher, Lilla Appleton, profiled some of the prospective students as “bright interested girls,” “girls who are anxious to learn and whose expenses the parents are willing to pay,” and “others who have no homes or worse... some bad girls, too, whose parents bring them in from the streets and beg that they be shielded from ruin” (Appleton 1888). Carrie boasted to Charlie that some of the students were attached to the royal court. Queen Lili‘uokalani’s namesake and only hanai daughter, Lydia Ka‘onohiponi-poniokalani Aholo, was enrolled in the school at age five, and was kept “under the loving ministrations of Ida Pope” for many years to follow (Allen 1982, 161). Lydia chronicled her school years until age fourteen in her essay (see page 41). According to Miss Appleton’s journal, half of the students in the school were supported by their families. The HEA, the HMCS, and the Women’s Board of the Pacific each supported several students at the school and a substantial number were supported by the Lili‘uokalani Education Society.

The Lili‘uokalani Education Society was created in 1886 “to interest the Hawaiian ladies in the proper training of young girls of their own race whose parents would be unable to give them advantages by which they would be prepared for the duties of life” (Lili‘uokalani 1964). During Carrie’s time, funds were drawn from this charity to support twenty-seven students (Appleton 1893) and an additional five students were directly supported with funds from the “modest Dominis Fund” (Allen 1982, 263).

The Queen, in her 1898 biography, Hawai‘i’s Story by Hawai‘i’s Queen, (Lili‘uokalani 1898, 117) recorded a seminary visit prior to leaving for London in April 1887:
But I could not think of leaving without saying farewell to some little girls, five in number, the charge of whose education I had assumed, and who were at Kawaiaha‘o Female Seminary. So on the day of departure, at about eleven o’clock I stopped at the schoolhouse. At my coming all the pupils were gathered together into the large room, where I made them an impromptu address, telling them…to be faithful to their duty to their teachers, and warning them that it would distress me more than could be expressed should I ever hear that any of them had done other than right during my absence.

The royal family of Hawai‘i was not merely a patron and benefactor, but also an active participant in leadership at Kawaiaha‘o Female Seminary. Portraits and the royal crest were displayed prominently in the seminary buildings. There was a well-beaten path between the school and ‘Iolani Palace. Carrie and her fellow teachers appreciated the privileged relationship the school had with the monarchy and never missed a royal opportunity to visit the palace. The frequent participation in Kawaiaha‘o exhibitions by the monarchs is documented by school programs and newspaper articles. Many in the close-knit Hawaiian community followed the example set by the royal family and contributed funds, supported students, volunteered as helpers, invited the students and teachers to their homes, attended the frequent school
fairs, academic exercises, and musicals. Most of these community events showcased student handiwork such as clothing and baked goods, which were sold to bring in needed revenue.

By 1890, the goals of Kawaiaha’o Female Seminary had shifted from preparing girls to be Christian wives for missionaries to providing an industrial curriculum that would prepare students for practical work. With no formal teacher training, Carrie ethnocentrically mirrored the education that she received in New England. All instruction was in English, and the few textbooks in the classrooms were written for American schools. The core curriculum was devoted to general education in the morning hours; supplementary instruction including sewing, music, cooking, and housekeeping in the afternoons. Carrie’s extracurricular area was sewing: “The students were so skilled on Mother Rice’s donated sewing machines that they made uniforms for the entire school.”

Carrie fully supported the school’s assimilationist policy and was dismissive of ancient Hawaiian values, customs, and beliefs inside and outside the seminary. She and other teachers spoke and behaved in a racist manner to Hawaiians including their own students. When she and her friends came upon a stone idol of Kane‘aukai, an important fishing god, they destroyed it, “feeling like iconoclasts.” Hawaiian historian David Malo (1793–1853) wrote about the bodies of ali‘i that were buried in caves, the skulls wrapped in tapa and the figures arranged in sitting positions on a shrine (Malo 1903, 137). Carrie confirmed what historians have long said about the looting of caves by nineteenth-century missionaries: she recounted an expedition by friends to
examine mummies in caves and said they “brought away four bags of skulls and some fine tapa.”

Like most novice teachers, Carrie struggled with discipline. She complained to Charlie: “Miss Pope seems to govern the girls with little trouble and it just cuts me to the quick to think I can’t.” Managing severe behavior problems sometimes required royal intervention as Carrie noted:

The Queen told Miss Pope to tell all the girls that if [a student] or any other of her girls ran away from here she would have them arrested and put in the station house. I had Bible class last night and Miss Pope came in and gave the girls a talking to. And when she gave them the queen’s command you should have seen the change in those girl’s faces. All through the school now you can feel the change and the readiness to obey…. We are delighted to have the support of the Queen.

Carrie inherited a strict system of schoolwide behavior management (Chamberlain 1889). When misbehavior arose, the first line of discipline was to assign additional work and place the girl’s name on a “punish list.” The next was for the teacher to admonish the student, first publicly and then privately to resolve the problem. Some behaviors sent girls into closets or corners for extended periods and often food was restricted.

Teachers were also allowed to whip students, and on several occasions, Carrie did so for such infractions as failure to do assigned tasks, cheating, speaking Hawaiian, or dancing the hula. For every infraction, students were required to acknowledge their actions and beg pardon after punishment had been applied. There are notations in Carrie’s teaching notebook that suggest she implemented a demerit system, common at other missionary schools at the time (Mihesuah 1998), but this method of discipline is not mentioned in her correspondence. She instead wrote explicitly about the corporal punishments she administered. While her correspondence indicates that she was deeply conflicted by these punishments, she justified her actions to Charlie and her family because she anticipated their disapproval.

Like many nineteenth-century visitors to the Islands, Carrie set out to satisfy her wanderlust. Her letters vividly describe her trips during school vacations: to Maui in 1891 and to Kīlauea Volcano on the island of Hawai‘i in 1892. She and her traveling companions took these rugged camping trips on horseback in a style that severely strained the standards of a lady from Connecticut. But as the daughter of an impoverished clergyman, she was unaccustomed to
leisure, and as the hopeful wife of a botanist and biologist, she wanted practice in camping and mountain climbing. As a teacher connected with the HEA, Carrie enjoyed enormous privilege while on holiday. Before the revolution, Hawaiians opened their homes to the teachers, cooked for them, welcomed them to their churches, and shared the best camping, swimming, and fishing spots. And everywhere she went, from Hana to Hilo, Carrie called on the homes of her students.

The overthrow of Queen Lili‘uokalani in 1893 and the annexation of Hawai‘i as a territory of the United States in 1898 remains a highly controversial and emotional subject to this day. Like everyone else, Carrie was deeply affected by the enormous economic and political tensions of this time, and she devoted much of her correspondence to the coup d’état that ended the monarchy. She could not have known when she stepped off the steamer a young and naïve preacher’s daughter that she would witness the revolution for an American audience. Referring to her article on the revolution, the editor of the Hartford Courant wrote on January 18, 1893, “It is, we believe, the first letter of the sort published in the East from an American who actually witnessed the Honolulu revolutions.” As an outright proponent of annexation, Carrie made no effort to guard her speech or to represent a neutral or balanced point of view, either as a journalist or as a teacher. In fact, she was surprised to find that her father and fiancé did not share her convictions. Charlie wrote to “My dear rebel girl” in 1893, gently admonishing her that he and his fellow students in the laboratory at Harvard had discussed “the Hawaiian Question” and were adamantly opposed to annexation. Carrie was socially placed in the very midst of the Missionary Party, which advocated annexation, and yet she lived amongst Hawaiian girls who were adamantly loyal to their Queen. As Carrie prepared to go home in 1893, she wrote, “I shall always have tales of that Revolution to tell.”

Carrie did not personally witness every public event that led to the coup. She often repeated gossip and editorial opinions from the Hawaiian Gazette and referred to the Missionary Party as if it were a cohesive political party that spoke in one voice. However, historians have documented that opinions on the politics of this time diverged greatly. As a missionary teacher of Hawaiians, Carrie was in and out of the Honolulu homes of the infamous individuals who conspired to overthrow the Queen, as well as the homes of the Hawaiians who staunchly supported their Kingdom. An unyielding supporter of “Americanism,” she was young and politically inexperienced, so her personal observations of the events
of January 1893 may be less valuable to scholars than her observations of the educational and social environments of the Islands.

Many factors, most notably the loss of the Queen’s support, led to the slow demise of the once prestigious Kawaiaha’o Female Seminary. Lili’uokalani, first as princess and later as Queen, had been a strong ally for both staff and students, as evidenced by Carrie’s correspondence. Her support for the school survived the revolution, but ended in the fall of 1893 partly due to provocative comments by annexationists. In September 1893, S. E. Bishop, editor of The Friend, wrote that Kawaiaha’o Female Seminary would be improved due to the “removal of the corrupting influences of the Monarchy.” Miss Ida Pope wrote to Carrie on October 7, 1893, that the article was written with malice and that “her late Majesty” was “incensed.”

Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop had directed in her will that a portion of her estate be used to create and maintain two schools, one for boys (established in 1887) and one for girls, ultimately to be named the Kamehameha Schools. The Kamehameha Preparatory School (1888–1932), where Carrie’s friend Iretta Hight taught, was a separate and distinct entity. Established by Charles Bishop for younger boys, this school prepared them for the rigors of the Kamehameha School for Boys. It was these two institutions, located two miles west of Kawaiaha’o Female Seminary on the outskirts of Honolulu, that Carrie constantly visited. She described many combined school events that took place in the 1891 “new and elegant Bishop Hall.” Now vacant and decaying, this historic building still stands adjacent to the Bishop Museum.

Carrie and others had speculated that Kawaiaha’o Female Seminary would cease to exist in name and instead transform into the planned Kamehameha Girls’ School: “It has as large an endowment as Oberlin College and it is eventually to be opened to girls and will probably swallow up Kawaiaha’o which will be a good thing because of the better facilities possible. I should like to see the day myself.” Carrie would learn later that a separate Kamehameha School for Girls was established in 1894, near the boys’ Kalihi campus. The indefatigable Ida May Pope was recruited to assume leadership of the school and would remain there for the next twenty years. Many Kawaiaha’o students followed her to the new school, and the exodus of talented students and fatigued staff from the Kawaiaha’o Female Seminary would continue for the next several years.

Even though Charles R. Bishop and many others donated sums to keep the seminary running, its endowment income never equaled its operating expenditures. It is well documented that Kawaiaha’o was obliged to raise funds
through concerts, fairs, and the work of its industrial departments. Those fundraising events appear throughout Carrie’s correspondence as significant but exhausting affairs. Principal Christiana W. Paulding (1895–1902) fought the seminary’s trustees over the fund-raising issue, claiming that the activities diverted both staff and students from the educational program. Principal Katheryn McLeod (1902–1908) led the students and teachers through another hard period, when repairs to the buildings on King Street were neglected in anticipation of the relocation of the school to the Mānoa Valley. Morale at this period was very low. McLeod wrote to the Board of Managers that the high attrition of her “faithful and hardworking faculty” supported the school’s “established reputation as a woman-killer” (Pratt 1957, 27).

The HEA decided in 1905 to solve two overcrowding problems and merge Kawaiahaʻo with the Mills Institute for Boys and relocate them with the intention of combining them into a comprehensive educational organization in the Mānoa Valley (Pratt 1957, 26). Three years later, the “homelike group of buildings amidst a shady grove in King Street” (Logan 1903, 47), were sold to the Castle Estate, and the school finally moved.

In 1908, the first girls moved into their new homes and classrooms. While theoretically and logistically united under the name Mid-Pacific Institute, Mills and Kawaiahaʻo retained their names and operated independently for many years. In 1923, the names were dropped as a “partial step toward the creation of an integrated institution” (Pratt 1957, 108). The stately lava-rock building is forever memorialized as “Kawaiahaʻo” and remains a prominent feature on the Mid-Pacific campus in the Mānoa Valley.

As Carrie’s teaching proficiency and confidence increased, so did her pride in her students: “I am just as proud as a peacock over them and you may always expect to hear me boasting of them. I do hate to have those girls have another teacher. Please may I bring them home with me? There are only 32.” Though she didn’t take any of her students home, she did carefully save for posterity many examples of their schoolwork.

As Carrie prepared to leave Kawaiahaʻo, she revealed the ultimate purpose of this adventure to Charlie:

I want my last term to be my best. For one thing I am going to take a few minutes each morning for a little sermonet having them write the main proposition in their notebooks. The first series will be, “Why I should be a Christian,” and the answer will be “That I may have a happy everlasting
life.” I feel very seriously the amount of responsibility I have in this matter. Many of the girls never go beyond my room, life is very uncertain with them, my time here is short and I don’t know what sort of a woman my successor may be and I don’t know how practical for them the instruction is at their church.

Carrie saw herself as an author, rather than a missionary or teacher, and had often envisioned a future for herself as a writer. She hoped to someday write a book chronicling those exciting years at Kawaiaha'o Female Seminary. Her first full-length feature article, penned on the job, is entitled “An American Girl in the Hawaiian Islands” and opens this book as chapter 1. Somewhere along the way, life’s responsibilities intruded, and her book was never written. We united hearts and combined talents to bring this book, with Carrie’s chosen title, to life. This lengthy project required us to explore both the beautiful and dark passages of the history of Hawai’i and has deeply enriched our historical understanding and increased our love for the Islands and its people. We hope the book will bring something of the same experience to the reader. An American Girl in the Hawaiian Islands is a century overdue, but is lovingly dedicated to the memory of Carrie Prudence Winter and her students.

NOTES

1. The principal American organization founded to support Protestant missions abroad, headquartered in Chicago.