ELLA LURY EMBREE WISWELL, 1909-2005

FINDING AID

Prepared by Patricia Polansky, Russian Bibliographer, Hamilton Library UH, a student of Ella Wiswell.

Scope and Content
Subjects
Information for users
Biographical note
Chronology of Life
Publications
Box and folder list
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   Box 2 Family, Correspondence
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Wiswell Library

SCOPE AND CONTENT
The Ella Lury Embree Wiswell papers consist of personal information (family letters, passports, photographs), University of Hawaii information (employment records, articles, degree), some Japan files on John Embree and Suye Mura, her translations, research materials on Nikolaevsk-on-Amur, Russia (her birthplace), and correspondence. The collection includes photographic materials on Ella and various members of her family, as well as materials about her and John Embree’s daughter Clare Embree.

SUBJECTS
Names:
   Wiswell, Ella Lury, 1909-2005
   Embree, Ella L(ury)
   Embree, John Fee, 1908-1950
   Embree, Clare, 1933-1950
   Wiswell, Frederick J., 1913-2004
   Lury, Meier Moiseevich, 1881-1954
   IUzefov, Vladislav Innokent’evich
BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

SHORT

Ella Lury received a Diploma from the Ecole des Professeurs de Francais a l'Etranger at the Sorbonne University (Paris) in 1931 and a B.A. from the University of Hawaii in 1941. During the war she was employed by the US Office of Economic Warfare, US War Dept. of Civil Affairs, and the US Commerical Company. After John Embree’s death, she was invited to teach French at the University of Hawaii in 1951. In 1954 she established the Russian language undergraduate program, where she remained until her retirement in 1968.
On Feb. 20, 1909 Ella Meierovna Lury was born in the Tsarist Russian Far Eastern town of Nikolaevsk-on-Amur. Her father, Meier Moiseevich Lury was a merchant of the First Guild and owner of an extensive fishery business not only in Russia, but also China and Japan. The primary fish he dealt in was salmon and its red caviar, both of which Ella adored. She was educated at home by a series of governesses and tutors from England and Germany. By 1920 Ella's father fortuitously had moved the family to Yokohama, Japan. In March of that year a renegade band of Bolsheviks held the residents of Nikolaevsk hostage and proceeded to kill a large percentage of the population, including many of Ella's relatives.

In Japan Ella graduated from the Canadian Academy in 1926 and left to attend the University of California at Berkeley (1927-29) where she studied French. From 1929 to 1931 she attended the Sorbonne University in Paris, majoring in French. Having met John Embree on various ships when she returned each year to see her family in Japan; she married him in 1932. While living in Canada John obtained an MA in Anthropology at the University of Toronto, and their daughter Clare was born (Dec. 29, 1933). From 1934-35 they were at the University of Chicago, where John began to work on his PhD; he received a scholarship to live from 1935-36 in the village of Suye Mura (Kyushu, Japan), where John was doing fieldwork with Ella's assistance. Ella's field notes on her interactions with and observations of the women in the village were later published. Back in Chicago (1936-38) John received his doctorate, and the family next moved to Kona, Hawaii (1938-39), where a study of the acculturation of Japanese farmers growing coffee was undertaken. John taught in the Anthropology Dept. at UH (1939-41) and Ella taught Russian in night school. A teaching invitation in August of 1941 took them back to the University of Toronto, but after Pearl Harbor, John was called to Washington DC as a Japan specialist. From 1944-45 they returned to Chicago where John and Ella were both teaching. From 1945-47 they lived in Honolulu and worked for the US Office of War Information. John headed the US Information Service in Bangkok and later Saigon (1947-49). In the fall of 1949 John accepted a position at Yale University as Chairman of the Southeast Asia Studies Program. On the 22nd of December 1950 tragedy struck. Ella had been preparing dinner and did not know why John and Clare had not returned home...until a knock on her door...and a police officer informed her that both were killed as they crossed the street.

Ella was forever grateful that in February of 1951 UH President Gregg Sinclair, whom John and Ella knew quite well, sent her a cable asking her to come at once to begin teaching French and to start a Russian program. That summer when the village held a memorial service for John and Clare, Ella returned to Suye Mura for the first time since 1935. By 1954 the Russian program was set up. In April of 1955 she married Fred J. Wiswell. Ella went to the Soviet Union three times (1957, 1964 and 1979), but she always regretted never being able to return to Nikolaevsk.
During her retirement years Ella kept busy publishing many articles and books. She was an active member of the Bishop Museum's Pacific Translators' Committee and did many translations from French and Russian concerning visits to Hawaii. As a result of this work she also published a translation from Russian of V.M. Golovnin's *Around the world on the Kamchatka, 1817-1819* (Hawaiian Historical Society and UH Press, 1979). *The women of Suye Mura* (co-authored with Robert J. Smith; Univ. of Chicago Press, 1982) was a pioneering text of Women's Studies. Her other publications concern the town in which she was born: *The destruction of Nikolaevsk-on-Amur, 1920* by A.Ya. Gutman (translated from Russian by E. Wiswell; Limestone Press, 1993), and *Liudi v adu [People in hell]* by Konstantin Emelianov (translated by E. Wiswell; Vladivostok State Univ. of Economics and Services, 2004).

On the 16th of August 2005 Ella Lury Wiswell died. She is survived by her cousin and adopted sister Sophy Kraslavsky (Tokyo, Japan); her niece Carolyn Karcher, well-known Professor of American Literature at Temple University (Washington DC); her nephew Richard R. Lury, a lawyer (NYC/NJ); and sisters-in-law Catherine Harris (Honolulu) and Edwina Devereux (Ithaca, NY).

**PUBLICATIONS**

[aranged mostly by date]


Maspero, Georges, *The Kingdom of Champa*; a translation of chap. 1 of *Le royaume du Champa*; basic translation by Ella Embree and Lillian Dotson. [New Haven]: Yale University, Southeast Asia Studies, 1949. 56 l.


Golovnin, Vasili Mikhailovich. *Chapters on Hawaii and the Marianas in V.M. Golovnin's Voyage around the world on the sloop of war Kamchatka*...transl. with introduction by Ella Wiswell. (Honolulu: 1974. xii, 88 l. UH Pacific Islands Studies
Program, Misc. work papers, 1974: no. 2) Revised and corrected version of the translation done in 1939.


Reviews:
Raymond H. Fisher, Pacific historical review, 1981, v. 50, no. 4 (Nov.), p. 533-34
Richard Pierce, Western historical quarterly, 1980, v. 11, no. 4 (Oct.), p. 442-3
Basil Dmytryshyn, Oregon historical quarterly, 1981, v. 82, no. 4, p. 411-12
O.H.K. Spate, Pacific history, bibliography and comment, 1982, p. 77-78
Ann Chandonnet, Alaska journal, 1980 (spring), p. 80
Richard Dillon, Westways, April 1980

Excerpt from chap. 11 published in the Honolulu Advertiser, June 10, 1994:
“Kamehameha: gifted man”


Reviews:
Oliver Statler, Honolulu Sunday Star Bulletin and Advertiser, April 24, 1983
Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, American Ethnologist, 1984, v. 11, no. 2 (May), p. 408-409
Merry I. White, Sex Roles, 1984, v. 10, nos. 3 & 4 (spr.), p. 312-314
Scott Davis, Mankind, 1983, v. 14, no. 2 (Dec.), p. 155-156
Takie S. Lebra, Signs, 1984 Spring, p. 502-503
Gail Bernstein, Pacific Affairs, 1983-84, v. 56, no. 4 (Winter), p. 752-753
Brian Moeran, School of Oriental and African Studies Bulletin, 1984, v. 47, no. 2,
Masako Tanaka, *Asian Folklore Studies*, 1986, v. 45, no. 1, p. 139-140
Laurel Kendall, *Reviews in Anthropology*, 1985, v. 12, no. 3 (Summer), p. 213-219


Reviews:


**Articles**


Wiswell, Ella, “[The University of Hawaii],” *Nash student;* American student’s Russian monthly, 1966, v. 1, no. 2 (Oct.), p. 3-4, illus. On cover: Russian in Honolulu


Articles [by and about Ella] – filed in Box 1

Polansky, Patricia. “Iz Nikolaevska v Gonolulu: biblioteka i arkhir Elly Liuri (Embri)
Vizvell,” Vlast’ knigi: biblioteka, izdatel’stvo, VUZ: al’manakh, 2006, no. 6, p. 79-82. Transl. by A. Khisamutdinov. [Original English text also here]


Utsumi, Takashi, [Russia and Yokohama: interview with Ella Wiswell], p. 312-315 IN Making Yokohama: Yohohama keizai no kataribe-tachi (Yokohama: Yokohama no Kataribe Seisaku Jikko linkai, 2002)

IUzefov, Vladislav Innoken’tevich, Gody i druz’ia starogo Nikolaevska: sbornik ocherkovi novell o Nikolaevske (Khabarovsk: Khab. kraevaia tip., 2005. 266 p., illus. Section on Ella, p. 226-228 with photo


“Soviet writers and émigré journals..letter to the editor” [n.d. or name…but, probably Honolulu Advertiser, 12/66 or 1/67]

UH language broadcasts, Sunday Star-Bulletin & Advertiser, March 6, 1966 [photo of Ella], p. 37


“Group schedules Chekhov play,” Feb. 3, 1961 *Hon. Adver. or SB??

“University Professor visits Russia,” Sunday Advertiser, March 16, 1958, D4 [photo]


Ella Embree assisted Dr. Earl Ernst with drama translation, Dec. 9, 1952 *A or SB?? [photo] Mrs. Ella Embree coaches principal actors in “Squaring the circle,” Honolulu Advertiser, Nov. 5, 1952

University faculty greeted at President’s annual tea, Honolulu Star-Bulletin, Oct. 4, 1952, c1 [photo]

To be hostess at ball [photo of Mrs. John Embree who will be one of the hostesses at the 2d annual Chinese benefit ball], Honolulu Advertiser, January 12, 1939

*Difficult to tell on the fiche if it is the Advertiser or Star Bulletin; citation is usually to Honolulu newspaper agency clipping file….[ie, The Morgue]

Unpublished translations

Lury, Meier M. A brief survey of the fishing and marine industry of Japan, 15 p. with chart. Translated by Ella Embree, 1942.

Economic background of Japanese fishing in Soviet waters, 8 p.
Cherry orchard, by Anton Chekhov. Transl. by Ella Embree; edited by Erle Ernst for the University of Hawaii Theatre production in 1952 by Erle Ernst; and again in 1965

Short stories by Vsevolod Mikhailovich Garshin:
The red flower
Attalea princeps [both transl. 1961]

Short story by Ilya Grigor’evich Erenburg:
The old furdresser, 6 p. [transl. in 1933; see Max Eastman folder, Corresp. Box 2]

Transl. 1937, 17 p. Sent to the Living Age for consideration.


Hagemeister, Leontii Andreianovich, [Les Russes aux isles Hawaii, 1816-1818. Reports, letters, etc. of the Russian American Co., of Alaska from Hagemesiter, Scheffer, Baranov, etc. concerning the Sandwich Islands, from original manuscript in the Bancroft Library]. Transl. from the Russian by Ella Embree. 98 leaves.
[Incomplete transl.; UH Library also has these materials in the RAC microfilms]

Golovnin, Vasilii Mikhailovich. Tour around the world performed by the command of His Majesty the Emperor on the sloop of war Kamchatka in 1817, 1818, 1819… (Honolulu: [1939] 6 p.l., 87, 5, [3], 16 l. Typewritten. [this was eventually published]


Vysheslavtsev, Aleksei Vladimirovich. “A Russian visitor to Japan in 1859: From Edo”
Mandrik, Anatolii Timofeevich. Ella’s translation from his book on the history of the fishing industry in the Russian Far East (Vladivostok: 1994)—table of contents, and excerpts from several chapters dealing with Nikolaevsk and Dalmoreprodukt with which M.M. Lury was connected. 11 p.

Translations of archival documents – see Nikolaevsk boxes

Newspaper article translations on Nikolaevsk: [full translations, unless noted]
IUzefov – “Krepost’ Chokkurakh”
Khisamutdinov – “Vostochnyi vorota Rossii”
Khlebnikov – “Amurskaia tragedia” [just notes]
Levkin – “Iakov Triapitsyn”
Pelipas – “Tragediia Nikolaevska…” and “Mariinsk…” [just notes for Mariinsk]
Spizhevoi – “Russkii flag”
Suturin – “Konets anarkhista…”
Zuev – “Vrag on ili geroi?”
Zvereva – “I voznesetsia…” [summary]

Conferences
Presentation:
Asia Orientation Conference on Southeast Asia, Jan. 1954 UH Ella is keynote speaker
Participation:
American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies [AAASS], November 1988 [Honolulu]. Chair of two panels: Imperial Russia in America: arrival and departure and The emergence of Japan and Russian Imperial strategy

Attended:
Modern Language Association Conference, Dec. 1963 [Chicago]
Western Slavic Association, March 1982 [Honolulu]
2d International Conference on Russian America, August 1987 [Sitka]

Lectures
Talk to Honolulu Rotary, Aug. 1953
After 1957 trip to Soviet Union:
Navy Wives Club, Apr. 1958
AAUW, Apr. 1958
Central Union Church Forum Club, Oct. 1958
Campus students, Frear Hall, 1958
Lecture on Russia to Womens’ Club, Kauai, Feb. 1960
Lecture on Russia, Kamehameha School, Oct. 1960
Invited to classes by Takie Lebra (UH Anthropology Dept.[and others]) on Japanese
women and anthropology
Invited to seminars by John J. Stephan (UH History Dept.) to talk on Nikolaevsk

Other
Interpreting during visit of Soviet ship Vitiaz’, 1959
Member, selection committee, Library prize for Pacific Islands Area Research, April 1976
Active attendee of UH Faculty Retirees Association
Member of UH Women’s Campus Club
Member of Alpha Epsilon Phi at U C Berkeley
Listed in Contemporary authors