

‘When shall we all meet again?’

On October 23, 1819, the Pioneer Company of missionaries from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) from the northeast United States, set sail from Boston on the Thaddeus for the Sandwich Islands (now known as Hawai‘i.) (The following include some of their thoughts.)

The Prudential Committee of the ABCFM in giving instructions to the pioneers of 1819 said: “Your mission is a mission of mercy, and your work is to be wholly a labor of love. ...”

“Your views are not to be limited to a low, narrow scale, but you are to open your hearts wide, and set your marks high. You are to aim at nothing short of covering these islands with fruitful fields, and pleasant dwellings and schools and churches, and of Christian civilization.” (The Friend)

“Oct. 23, 1819. - This day by the good providence of God, I have embarked on board the brig Thaddeus (Blanchard master) for the Sandwich Islands to spread the gospel of Christ among the heathens.” (The term ‘heathen’ (without the knowledge of Jesus Christ and God) was a term in use at the time (200-years ago.))

“At 8 oclock took breakfast with the good Mr. Homer; at 11, gave the parting hand toward our dear friends on shore, & came on board accompanied by the Prudential Com. Mr. and Mrs. Dwight and some others.” (Samuel Whitney)

“That day week (the 23d), a great crowd of friends, acquaintances, and strangers, gathered on Long Wharf, for farewell religious exercises. The assembly united in singing the hymn, ‘Blest be the tie that binds.’”

“Dr. Worcester, in fervent prayer, commended the band to the God of missions; and Thomas Hopoo made a closing address. The two ordained brethren, assisted by an intimate friend, § then with perfect composure sang the lines, ‘When shall we all meet again?’”

“A fourteen-oared barge, politely offered by the commanding officer of the ‘Independence’ 74, was in waiting; the members of the mission took leave of their weeping friends, and were soon on board the brig ‘Thaddeus,’ Capt. Blanchard, which presently weighed anchor, dropped down the harbor, and the next day, with favoring tide and breeze, put out to sea. (Thompson)

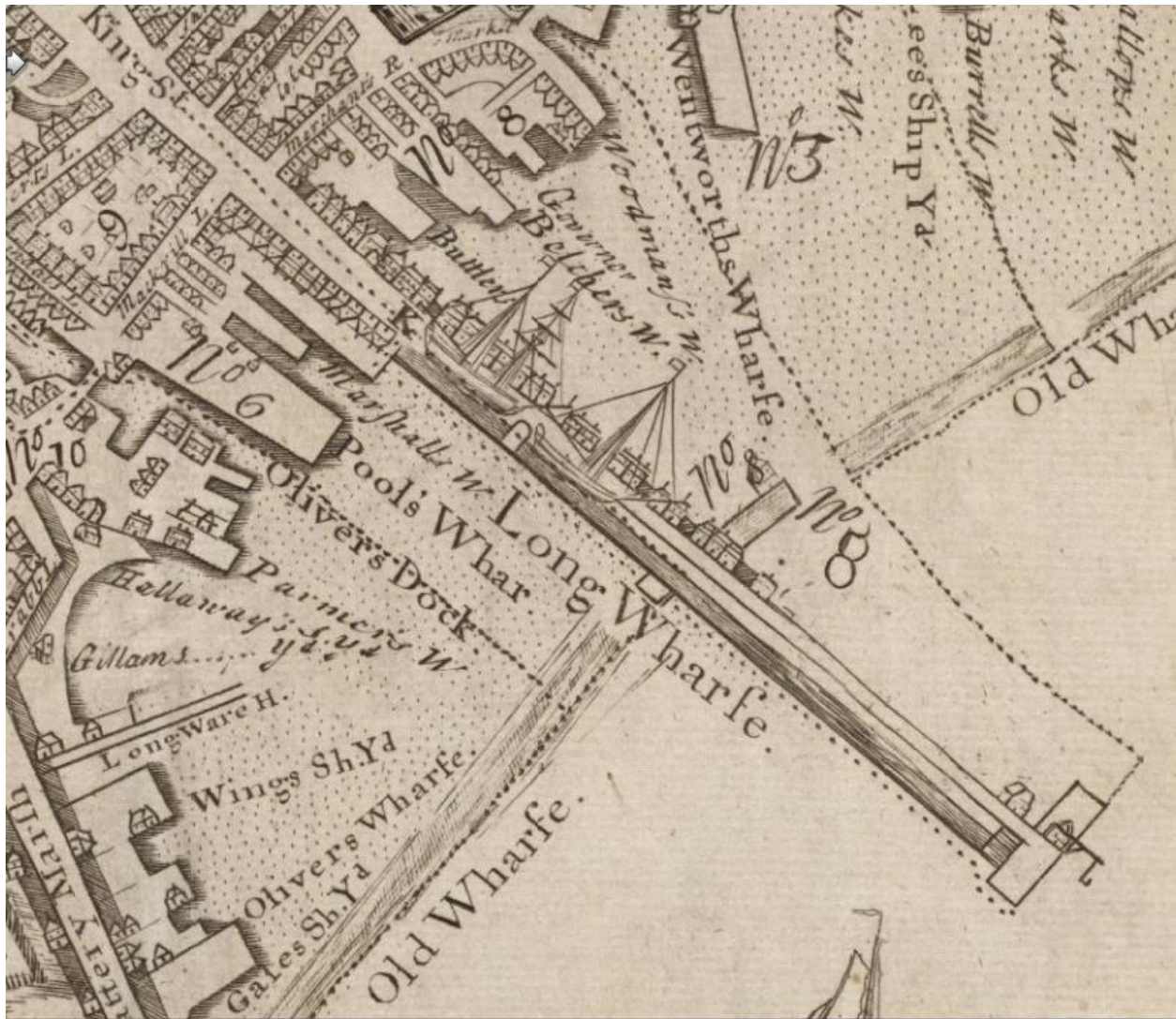
“They repaired together to the wharf, where they united in a parting hymn, pledging a close and permanent union though far and long separated;

When shall we all meet again?
When shall we all meet again?
Oft shall wearied love retire;
Oft shall glowing hope expire;
Oft shall death and sorrow reign,
Ere we nll shall meet again.

Though in distant lands we sigh,
Parched beneath a hostile sky;
Though the deep between us rolls,

Friendship shall unite our souls;
And in fancy's wide domain,
We shall often meet again.

When the dreams of life have fled;
When its wasted lamps are dead;
When in cold oblivion's shade,
Beauty, power, and fame are laid;
Where immortal spirit reign,
There may we all meet again.”



"A fervent and appropriate prayer was offered by the Secretary of the Board, and the mission was affectionately commended to the grace of God, and immediately conveyed to the brig by a barge furnished for the purpose by a US Naval officer, they being still accompanied by the Secretary and Treasurer and a few other friends."

"When these had given the parting hand and benediction, they descended into the boat and began to move off. The tender and benignant look of Dr. Worcester, as the boat left our vessel, turning his eyes upon the little band looking over the rail, as if he would say, my love be ever with you, will not soon be forgotten." (Hiram Bingham)

"At 1 the sails were hoisted & we soon left sight of a multitude of friends who were lifting up holy hands in their behalf. This evening we came to anchor off Boston light." (Samuel Whitney)

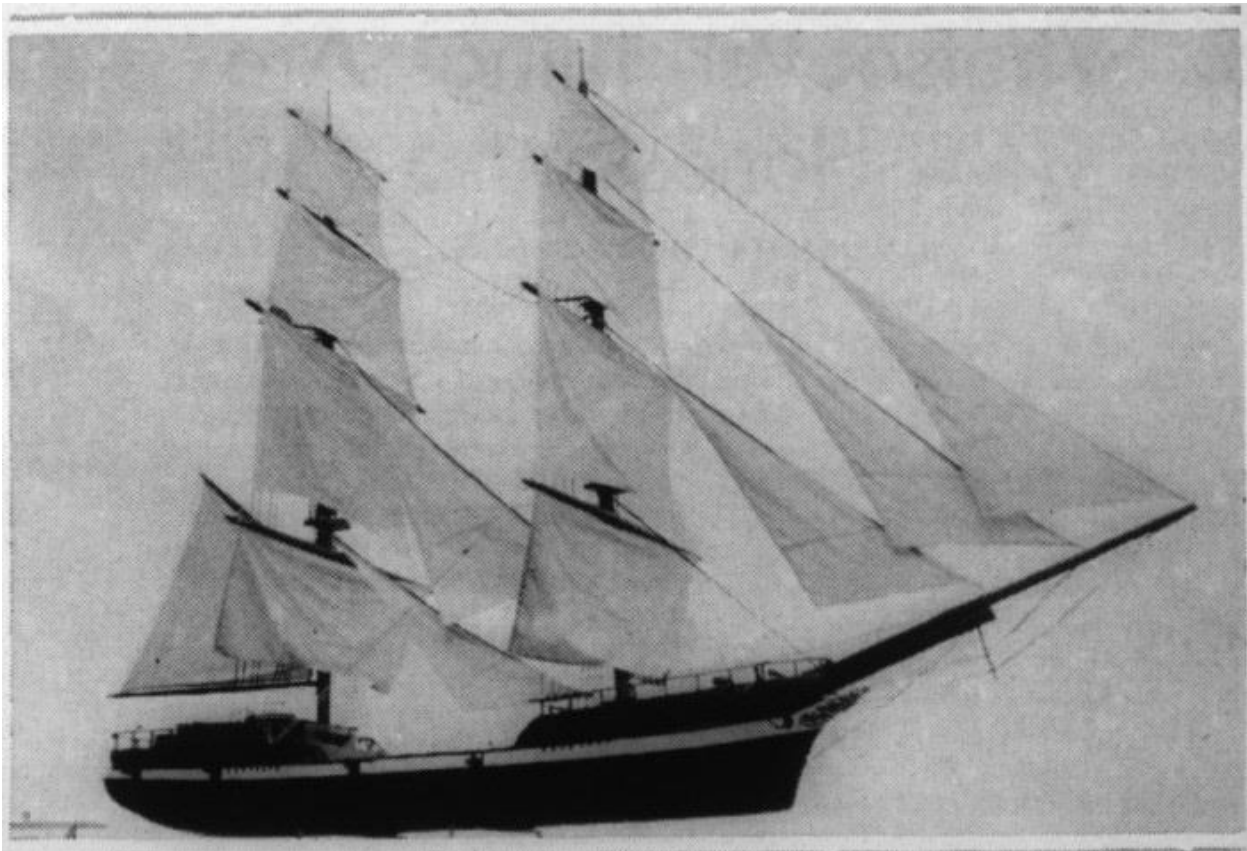
As they did at their ordination at Goshen and at the Park Street Church in Boston, receiving their instructions, Asa Thurston, tenor, and Hiram Bingham, base, sang Melton Mowbray ('Head of the Church Triumphant'). (Bingham)

“Head of the Church triumphant,
We joyfully adore thee:
Till thou appear,
Thy members here,
Shall sing like those in glory:
We lift our hearts and voices,
In blest anticipation,
And cry aloud,
And give to God
The praise of our salvation.” (Bingham)

“When they had reached the wharf, the brig weighed anchor and set sail, and as we dropped down the stream, they waved their handkerchiefs, till out of sight. Though leaving my friends, home and country, as I supposed for ever, and trying as was the parting scene, I regarded that day as one of the happiest of my life.”

“But loosing from our beloved country, and not expecting ever to tread its shores or look upon its like again, with what intense interest did we gaze upon its fading landscapes, its receding hills and mountains, till the objects successively disappeared in the distance, or sank below the horizon.” (Hiram Bingham)

“Oct. 23, 1819 - This day in the good providence of God, we have been allowed to leave our dear native shores on an embassy of mercy, having been set apart to the work of propagating the gospel in the Sandwich Isles ...”



“... having been commended to God and to the word of his grace by the Rev Dr. Worcester, and attended on board by many dear friends to whoa with tears we gave the parting hand, we left Boston harbor with a prosperous gale, and with peculiar smiles of heaven. “The little mission family containing 22 souls attended by GP Tamoree is this evening blessed with universal health.”

“He who has called as is faithful, and though we go out to a foreign land not knowing the things that shall befall us there, we cheerfully commit ourselves to his guidance and protection and endeavor to give up ourselves and all we have, to be forever employed in his service.” (Thaddeus Journal)

“The trying scene is now over, the parting hand given, the Farewell past. We shall no more behold the face of that dear, ever dear Mother whom we so ardently love, and who has shed so many tears on our account.”

“We shall not again in the flesh greet those beloved brethren & sisters and our dear friends with whom we have often had such sweet counsel and walked to the house of God in company.”

“Their advice and instructions we shall no longer enjoy, but we shall have their prayers. Morning and evening their closets shall witness the fervency of their entreaties in behalf of a far distant brother and sister.”

“Consoling thought, which will cheer us while we are crossing the tempestuous deep, cheer us when we are strangers in a pagan land, cheer us while we are endeavoring to lead the untutored heathen from nature up to nature's God.”

“A thought that will soften the arrows of persecution, and comfort us When we are called to pass the furnace of affliction. Farewell honored mother, we hope ere long to meet you in the New Jerusalem ...”

“... may you enjoy every temporal and spiritual blessing which shall be for your good, and when you close your earthly pilgrimage, may you go forth like-a shock of corn fully ripe. A long farewell.”

“Dear Brethren, Sister, friends, we love you all with a sincere attachment, and our love will ever remain. It rends our hearts to leave you but we trust our Saviour calls us, and we would cheerfully leave all for his sake. May you be abundantly blessed of God, made faithful unto death, and in Heaven may we all meet no more to say - Farewell -.”

“Ye ever memorable and dear native town; must we say farewell to you? shall we never again walk your streets, no more visit those devoted sanctuaries, and there renew our covenant engagements with our God and commemorate the dying love of Jesus?”

“May ye ever enjoy the presence of the Saviour, may unceasing showers of divine grace be shed upon you. It will afford us pleasure to look back upon you as the ^places where we first drew breath, and spent our childhood and youth, and where we first subscribed, with our hands to the Lord. Dear homes Adieu. —“

“Dear Heathen seminary at Cornwall, you are doubly dear to our hearts. We have prayed for you, we shall pray for you still. May the great head of the church, ever preside over you.”

“We hope to hear from time to time of your abundant prosperity, and. we hope that in due time many of your children may come to the S. Islands and. help us. Farewell, dear youth, we shall never forget you.”

“And. now America; for the last time we fix our eyes upon your dear shores. Your places which have known us will know us no more forever. We look upon you with hearts full of emotion as you recede from our view; we shed a tear or two, and cheerfully bid you a long, long farewell. (Samuel & Nancy Ruggles, On board the Brig Thaddeus Oct. 23, 1819)

“While receding from my sight I could not but exclaim, farewell beloved country, and thrice beloved friends, I bid you all adieu! ‘Home, that dearest sweetest spot,’ where I have spent so many happy hours, the remembrance of which will ever afford me much pleasure; I cheerfully bid you adieu.”

“Yes, dear as is that humble mansion and those beloved friends whom I shall ever love with the strangest ties of an actual affection, I can willingly part with you all, if I may but bear a humble part in promoting the glory of God, and be used as an instrument in carrying the glad tidings of salvation to the perishing heathen.”

“As many and great as are the sacrifices which I have made, I do not regret my undertaking. The souls of the heathen appear precious, infinitely more so than all the world good. O that Christians profess more of a spirit of this interested benevolence.” (Mercy Whitney, Oct 24, 1819)

Missionary Period

After 164-days at sea, on April 4, 1820, the Thaddeus arrived and anchored at Kailua-Kona on the Island of Hawai‘i. Hawai‘i’s “Plymouth Rock” is about where the Kailua pier is today.

By the time the Pioneer Company arrived, Kamehameha I had died and the centuries-old kapu system had been abolished; through the actions of King Kamehameha II (Liholiho,) with encouragement by former Queens Ka‘ahumanu and Keōpūolani (Liholiho’s mother,) the Hawaiian people had already dismantled their heiau and had rejected their religious beliefs.

Over the course of a little over 40-years (1820-1863 - the “Missionary Period”), about 180-men and women in twelve Companies served in Hawai‘i to carry out the mission of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) in the Hawaiian Islands.

Hawaiian Mission Houses’ Strategic Plan themes note that the collaboration between Hawaiians and American Protestant missionaries resulted in the

- Introduction of Christianity;
- Development of a written Hawaiian language and establishment of schools that resulted in widespread literacy;
- Promulgation of the concept of constitutional government;
- Combination of Hawaiian with Western medicine; and
- Evolution of a new and distinctive musical tradition (with harmony and choral singing)