

Hopu – Kanui – Honoli‘i – Humehume

“It is worthy of remark, that in the providence of God, great effects result from apparently little causes. This remark is strikingly illustrated in the history of the Church. The most signal deliverances and successes have proceeded from small beginnings; and the most illustrious displays of divine power and grace, have been made in use of the feeblest instruments.”

“The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all seeds, but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs; and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.”

“The arrival in this country of several youth from the Sandwich Islands, and the leadings of Providence respecting them, have been views from the first, by those acquainted with the facts, as an indication of some important design, respecting the heathen of this Islands. – Under this impression, several individuals undertook to assist and patronize these youth.”

“The arrival of others, from the same islands, and a knowledge of the fact, that young men of a promising character, might easily be obtained from other heathen countries, led to the plan of a School upon a larger scale”. (Five Youth)

In October, 1816, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) decided to establish the Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, Litchfield County, Connecticut, for the instruction of foreign youth. By 1817, a dozen students, six of them Hawaiians, were training at the Foreign Mission School to become missionaries to teach the Christian faith to people around the world. Initially lacking a principal, Dwight filled that role from May 1817 - May 1818.

The object of the School as set forth in its Constitution, was “The education in our own country of Heathen Youths, in such manner, as, with subsequent professional instruction will qualify them to become useful Missionaries, Physicians, Surgeons, School Masters, or Interpreters and to communicate to the Heathen Nations such knowledge in agriculture and the arts, as may prove the means of promoting Christianity and civilization.” (Missionary Herald, January 1821)

The school’s first student was Henry ‘Ōpūkaha‘ia (Obookiah,) a native Hawaiian from the Island of Hawai‘i who in 1808 (after his parents had been killed) boarded a sailing ship anchored in Kealahou Bay and sailed to the continent. In its first year, the Foreign Mission School had 12 students, more than half of whom were Hawaiian.

The school increased its number of pupils the second year to twenty-four; four Cherokee, two Choctaw, one Abenaki, two Chinese, two Malays, a Bengalese, one Hindu, six Hawaiians and two Marquesans as well as three American. By 1820, Native Americans from six different tribes made up half of the school’s students. Once enrolled, students spent seven hours a day in study. Subjects included chemistry, geography, calculus and theology, as well as Greek, French and Latin.

They were also taught special skills like coopering (the making of barrels and other storage casks), blacksmithing, navigation and surveying. When not in class, students attended mandatory church and prayer sessions and also worked on making improvements to the school’s lands. (Cornwall)

‘Ōpūkaha‘ia (Henry ‘Ōpūkaha‘ia) ‘Obookiah’

Much is said of the first student of the Foreign Mission School, ‘Ōpūkaha‘ia. ‘Ōpūkaha‘ia was being groomed to be a key figure in a mission to Hawai‘i. Unfortunately, ‘Ōpūkaha‘ia died at Cornwall on February 17, 1818. ([Click HERE for a link to more information on ‘Ōpūkaha‘ia](#)).



‘Memoirs of Henry Obookiah’ (the spelling of the name based on its pronunciation) was put together by Edwin Dwight as a fundraiser for the Foreign Mission School. It was an edited collection of ‘Ōpūkaha‘ia’s letters and journals/diaries. The book about his life was printed and circulated after his death, becoming a best-seller of its day.

‘Ōpūkaha‘ia, inspired by many young men with proven sincerity and religious fervor of the missionary movement, had wanted to spread the word of Christianity back home in Hawai‘i; his book inspired missionaries to volunteer to carry his message to the Hawaiian Islands.

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 on the Thaddeus for the Hawaiian Islands.

There were seven couples sent in the Pioneer Company of missionaries to convert the Hawaiians to Christianity. These included two Ordained Preachers (note: Bingham and Thurston were ordained as missionaries at Goshen, a more complex position than preacher), Hiram Bingham and his wife Sybil and Asa Thurston and his wife Lucy; two Teachers, Mr. Samuel Whitney and his wife Mercy and Samuel Ruggles and his wife Mary; a Doctor, Thomas Holman and his wife Lucia; a Printer, Elisha Loomis and his wife Maria; a Farmer, Daniel Chamberlain, his wife and five children.

Among the other Hawaiian students at the Foreign Mission School were Thomas Hopu, William Kanui, John Honoli‘i and George Prince ‘Humehume’ (son of Kauai’s Kaumuali‘i). Let’s look at these other four young Hawaiians who were students at the Foreign Mission School and who accompanied the American Protestant missionaries on the mission to Hawai‘i.

Hopu (Thomas Hopu) ‘Hopoo’

Hopu, “was born about the year 1795, in Owhyhee, one of the Sandwich Islands. After my mother had left me, she went and told one of my sisters to take my life away ... (however, his) aunt took a blanket with her ... (took him in her arms and took him) into her own brother's house.” (Hopu)

“Then her brother said unto his wife, this child shall be our son, for his name shall be called Nauhopoouah Hopoo, and we will be his feeders. So they nourished (him)”. He lived with his uncle until he was four; then returned to his parents until he was eight (later living with his brother.)

“Among the American traders who frequently visit the Sandwich Islands, was Captain Brintnall, of New-Haven, (Conn.) who ... touched and tarried some time at Owhyhee, one of these Islands.” In 1808, Hopu and Henry ‘Ōpūkaha‘ia sailed with Captain Brintnall on the ‘Triumph.’

The Triumph set sail for the Pacific Coast of North America to pick up sealers, one of whom, Russell Hubbard, was a Yale student from Connecticut. Six months later the ship returned to Hawai'i, then went on to China, and finally New York. During the long voyage Hubbard tutored Henry and Hopu in English, and taught them about the Bible. (Cook)

The ship returned to America by the way of China. "After Hopoo had lived for a season in New-Haven, his disposition seemed inclined rove than to study. He rejected an invitation of Obookiah to go with him to Andover and be taught." (ABCFM) However, he learned to write and spell some basic words. He chose the life of a sailor - he served on an American ship in the War of 1812.

After returning from his last voyage, he hired himself out in several families as a servant or coachman. For about nine months, Hopu settled down with a Grangor family at Whitestown, NY. He lived with various families, until September 1815, when he returned to New-Haven, joined 'Ōpūkaha'ia and resumed his studies, including religious instruction. (Narrative of Five Youth, 1816)

"In this place I become acquainted with many students belonging to the College. By these pious students I was told more about God than what I had heard before ... I could understand or speak, but very little of the English language. Friend Thomas (Hopu) went to school to one of the students in the College before I thought of going to school." ('Ōpūkaha'ia)

Hopu and 'Ōpūkaha'ia stayed together in school at Litchfield Farms from the late-1816 until April 1817, when they started their training at the Foreign Mission School in Cornwall. Of the four Hawaiian boys who came with the pioneer party, Hopu was best prepared to serve, for he had proved a good scholar, even in theology. (Kelley)

On October 23, 1819, the Pioneer Company of American Protestant missionaries set sail on the Thaddeus for the Islands. Hopu was part of the Pioneer Company of missionaries and returned to Hawai'i with them.

After about 160 days at sea, on March 30, 1820, the Pioneer Company of American Protestant missionaries first sighted the Islands. Later that day, they learned Kamehameha died, Liholiho was now King and the kapu was abolished.

"March 30th. Last night about 1 o'clock brother Hopoo came to my room almost in an ecstasy of joy and told me to get up and see Owhyhee (Hawaii); I went on deck and by the bright moonlight could just discover it 60 miles from us."

They reached Hawaii on March 30, 1820. When the boat which they had sent to a landing on the Kohala coast, returned to the vessel, these were the tidings given to the missionaries: "Kamehameha is dead; his son Liholiho is king. The tabus are at an end; the idols are burned; the temples are destroyed. There has been war. Now there is peace." (HEA) They later landed in Kailua-Kona, April 4, 1820.

Hopu remained with the Thurstons and Holmans at Kailua to serve as interpreters and aides to the king. Hopu was reunited with his father, who moved his family to Kailua, where Hopu cared for him teaching



him to know Jesus and praying with him faithfully. He also served the king's household and aided Thurston by translating his teachings and preaching. (Kelley)

Later at Lāhainā, “Hopu, in visiting the back part of Maui with the king, was particularly attracted by one of the daughters of the land. When he returned to Honolulu, he brought to our cottage the girl of eighteen, wishing to commit her to me for special training.” (Thurston)

Hopu declared “since the Almighty has excited in my heart such yearnings for her, I think it is his will that I marry her.” Lucy Thurston named her Delia.

“Their marriage (August 11, 1822) was publicly solemnized in the church. The king and principal chiefs were there. (It was the first Christian marriage in the Islands.)”

“Hopu appeared as usual in his gentlemanly black suit. By his side stood Delia, dressed in a ... complete and fashionable dress in white, was added a trimmed straw bonnet. It was the first native woman's head that had been thus crowned.” (Thurston)

After helping Bingham in Honolulu for some time, Hopu settled in Kailua where he kept busy teaching, holding Sabbath meetings for the governor, assisting in translating the Bible, and caring for his father (who died after four years at the age of 80. His funeral service was the first missionary one to be held in Hawai‘i.) (Kelley)

Throughout those early missionary years in Hawai‘i, Hopu appears here and there performing his duties; forcibly delivering a sermon, spreading cheer, comforting and aiding to those suffering.

Chester Lyman, visiting the islands in 1846 found Hopu working in a store in Honolulu. He reports he was over 50 and an interesting man. He has been a consistent and useful man since he returned and is now one of the deacons of the Kailua Church where he resides. (Kelley)

Kanui (William Kanui) ‘Tennoe’

Kanui “was born on the Island of O‘ahu, about the close of the last century. His father belonging to the party of a defeated chief, fled with his son to Waimea, Kauai, while there (1809,) an American merchant vessel ... touched for supplies.” Kanui and his brother caught a ride on the ship and ended up in Boston. (The Friend, February 5, 1864)

By 1815, many divinity school students at Yale were fascinated with the prospect of evangelizing what were considered the “heathen” (a person who does not belong to a widely held religion) in far-off lands. Henry ‘Ōpūkaha‘ia had been befriended by members of the church community, and was held up as an example of the intelligence and propensity for spirituality that could be found among the Hawaiian people. (Warne)

“Soon after their arrival, they attracted the attention of the friends of foreign missions, and when the mission school was opened ... they were received as pupils (Kanui, ‘Ōpūkaha‘ia, Thomas Hopu, William Kanui, and Prince Humehume (son of Kaula‘i’s King Kaumuali‘i’ .)) (The Friend, February 5, 1864)

The boys were taught to read and write, but the only available textbooks were in the English language - there was not yet an appropriate alphabet, nor was there a single printed page in Hawaiian. For 2 ½ years, Kanui was totally immersed in studies. (Warne)

Kanui joined the Pioneer Company – he stayed in Kailua with the Thurstons. In the Kailua mission at Kona Lucy Thurston noted, “In the morning the two Hawaiian youth (Kanui and Hopu) walked away to see the gentry; and having an eye to influence, they put on their best broadcloth suits and ruffled shirts, their conspicuous watch chains, of course, dangling from the fobs of their pants.”

“Their hair was cut short on the sides and back of the head, but left long on top, to stand gracefully erect. Their style was the same as if again about to enter the capacious drawing rooms of Boston where they had been received with much *éclat*.” (Thurston, 1882)

After the Thaddeus departed, Kanui was severely put to the test. For the first time in years he was back in a culture that he had loved in his childhood - the dress, or lack thereof, the chants and dances, swimming in the ocean, fishing, games of bowling with the ulu maika stones.

However, it was Kanui’s close association with Liholiho (King Kamehameha II) that posed the most serious temptation for the young Kanui. Liholiho “loved his liquor, and was often recorded as being extremely intoxicated. It was not long until Kanui began to drink with Liholiho and his court - an action that surely led to severe admonitions from the pastor, Asa Thurston.” (Warne)



On July 23, 1820, Kanui was the first to return to the “old ways.” Bingham excommunicated Kanui from the church. Thus, a mere 4-months after his arrival home, Kanui was on his own – he served for a time in the court of Liholiho, worked in a Honolulu grog shop and signed aboard various whaling vessels.

Kanui left the Islands and joined the California gold rush in 1848; he was successful in gold digging, but lost all (about \$6,000) when the bank where he had his deposits, Page, Bacon & Co, of San Francisco, failed. He reconnected with the church, joining the Bethel Church in San Francisco, under the charge of the Rev. M. Rowell. (The Friend, February 5, 1864)

Kanui later returned to the Islands and the first person he looked up was Hiram Bingham. Kanui was welcomed back, but told he would be treated as an outsider for a considerable period until he proved to the missionaries he was truly “pious.”

But Kanui, now 45-years of age, was a changed man. He obtained permission from local Chiefs to establish a school on a small plot of land at the foot of Palolo Valley and called it “William Tennooe’s English School.” (Although the newly-standardized alphabet would spell his name as “Kanui,” he retained the old anglicized spelling, “Tennooe.”)

It was a subscription school, charging parents were 12 ½ to 25 cents per week. Textbooks included the Bible in English, Webster’s Spelling Book and Adam’s Arithmetic. After a slow start the school grew to about 50-students. (Warne)

“Of the fourteen pioneers, I gratefully record it, after twenty-seven years, four men and the seven women are still living to praise God for his faithfulness to them, and for his surpassing favor to that mission and that nation. Wm. Kanui, after wandering twenty years, has returned to his duty as a teacher.” (Bingham)

Kanui died at Queen's Hospital, January 14, 1864, at the age of about 66 years. “(H)e departed this life leaving the most substantial and gratifying evidence that he was prepared to die. His views were remarkably clear and satisfactory. Christ was his only hope, and Heaven the only desire of his heart.”

“It was peculiarly gratifying to sit beside his bedside and hear him recount the ‘wonderful ways’ in which God had led him. He cherished a most lively sense of gratitude towards all those kind friends in America who provided for his education ... a stranger in a foreign land.” (The Friend, February 5, 1864)

Honoli‘i (John Honoli‘i) ‘Honoree’

Honoli‘i arrived in Boston in the fall of 1815. He came over in a ship belonging to Messrs. Ropes & Co merchants of Boston. He was taken on board the ship by the consent of his friends, and replaced a sailor, who died before the ship arrived at Hawai‘i.

He was curious and wanted to see the world. “Another of his countrymen set out with him, but was lost on the passage. He was about to return to his own country, but was providentially found by Mr Henry Gray and other gentlemen, who interested themselves in his behalf and with the approbation of Messrs. Ropes & Co took him under their care; and as soon as an opportunity presented, they sent him to New Haven, to the care of the Hon. E. Goodrich.”

“A place was soon found for him at the Rev. Mr. Vaill’s of Guilford, where he began to learn the first rudiments of the English language. Messrs. Ropes & Co., in whose ship he came to this country, not only cheerfully released him for the purpose of being educated, but very generously gave one hundred dollars towards the expense of his education.”

“He was supposed to be about 19 years of age on his arrival, and has now been in the country about one year.”

“He was ignorant of our language. And of every species of learning or religion, when he began to study. In about six months he began to read in a broken manner in the Bible. In the mean time, he also learned to write, which cost him but little time or labour.”



“In about eleven months from the time he first-began the alphabet, he composed a letter to his honoured patroness, Mrs. Goodrich, of New Haven. In this letter he gives vent to his feelings of gratitude to his benefactors, and especially to God, for his goodness in bringing him to this country.”

“It was about the middle of May, 1816, that his mind began to be impressed with a sense of sin. ... In the course of the summer, he hopefully found by faith, that Saviour of whom a few months before he had never heard. He gives very pleasing and satisfactory evidence of hatred to sin, and love to Christ.”

“No person can be more punctual in reading the scriptures and private devotion, than he has been, from the time he received his first impressions. And he appears to grow in knowledge, as his ability to read and understand the scriptures increases. He possesses a mild and affectionate temper, is uncommonly ingenious in all the imitative arts.”

“He is industrious, faithful, and persevering, not only in his studies, but in whatever business he undertakes. He is at present with his comrades, at South Farms, in Litchfield, under the instruction of the Rev A Pettengill, expecting to join the school for heathen youth, as soon as it shall be established.” (Five Youths, 1816)

Honoli‘i became a valuable Hawaiian language instructor because, having come at a later age, he still had good command of his native tongue. He also won praise for his considerable vigor and intellect and his discreet and stately deportment. (Kelley)

Having joined the Pioneer Company to return home; on March 30, 1920, Honoli‘i was the first to see the Islands, “March 30th, 1820. - Memorable day - a day which brings us in full view of that dark pagan land so long the object of our most interested thoughts. Between twelve and one this morning, the word was from Thomas who was up watching, 'land appears'.”

“When the watch at four was called, Honoree came down saying, ‘Owhyhee sight!’”

“There was but little sleep. When the day afforded more light than the moon we were all out, and judge you, if possible, what sensation filled our breasts as we fixed our eyes upon the lofty mountains of Owhyhee! O! it would be in vain to paint them. I attempt it not.”

“A fair wind carried us by different parts of the island near enough to discern its verdure, here and there a cataract rushing down the bold precipice—some huts, natives and smoke. I would I could put my feelings, for a little season, into your bosoms. No boats coming off as usual, Capt. B (Blanchard) thought it advisable to send ashore to inquire into the state of things, and where he might find the king.”

“Our good Thomas (Hopu) and Honoree, with Mr. Hunnewell and a few hands, set off. Our hearts beat high, and each countenance spoke the deep interest felt as we crowded around our messengers at their return.”

“With almost breathless impatience to make the communication, they leap on board and say, Tamaahmaah is dead! The government is settled in the hands of his son Keehoreeho-Krimokoo is principal chief—the taboo system is no more--men and women eat together! - the idol gods are burned!!” (Sybil Bingham Journal)

Honoli‘i, shuttling between his home island of Hawaii and Maui, labored for the Church longest of all his companions. He proved an important assistant at Kailua, Honolulu, and briefly at Kauai, during those early days while the missionaries were still acquiring their later expertness in the Hawaiian tongue and faithful to the Christian training, he walked irrefragably with his church.

Adjoining the Ka‘ahumanu Church in Wailuku is Honoli‘i Park. It is believed that John Honoli‘i is buried in an unmarked grave in the Ka‘ahumanu Church cemetery. (Honoli‘i died in 1838.)

Humehume (George Prince) 'Tamoree'

Humehume was born on Kauai in about 1797 to King Kaumuali'i and, apparently, a commoner wife. For the first six years of his life he was known as Humehume. At the time of his birth his father, the young king, is believed to have been about eighteen years of age.

His father, King Kaumuali'i, suggested he be called George (after King George of England) when he went abroad. (Warne) During his short life, this son of King Kaumuali'i was known by at least five names: Humehume, Kumoree, George Prince, George Prince Tamoree and George Prince Kaumuali'i. (Spoehr)

King Kaumuali'i had early in his reign established friendly relationships with British and American sea captains. He was a genial and helpful ruler when ships called at Kauai for supplies. Kaumuali'i decided to send his son to America, at least, in part, to receive a formal education. King Kaumuali'i provided Captain Rowan of the Hazard with, reportedly, about \$7,000 to \$8,000, an amount the king felt sufficient to cover the cost of his son's passage and the expenses of his education.

George was about six years old when he boarded the Hazard that ultimately sailed into Providence, Rhode Island on June 30, 1805 after a year-and-a-half at sea. Over the next few years he made his way to Worcester, Massachusetts.



Tamoree eventually enlisted in the US Navy and was wounded during the War of 1812. After the war ended, Tamoree was again thrown upon the world and without any means of obtaining a livelihood, or any one to care for him, ragged, dirty, and in want, he was again enlisted, and employed as a servant to the purser of the Navy Yard in Charlestown.

Humehume was "discovered" and taken under the wing of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). He was sent, along with Henry Ōpūkaha'ia and other Hawaiian youths, to be educated at the Foreign Mission School at Cornwall, Connecticut. (Warne)

"We thank Providence that I have fallen into the hands of Christians. I hope it will be provided so that I can go back to my country and do good among the people."

"Here is one my countrymen lives with me. His name is John Hoonoore (John Honolii,) he says that he wants religion. I believe we are in a fair way of getting it, if we try for it. But if we do not try we must not expect it." (Tamoree (Humehume;) Stauder)

Humehume left the Islands as a young child and spent years around English speakers; he lost the knowledge of speaking Hawaiian. With this interaction with the Hawaiians at the school, He began "learning the Owhyhee language. This friend that lives here with me is a great benefit to me, for he can learn me the Owhyhee language. I can learn him the English language." (Tamoree (Humehume;) Stauder)

Three years later, Humehume joined the Pioneer Company of American Protestant missionaries. The Company first landed in Kailua-Kona on April 4, 1820. After the Thaddeus departed for Honolulu, Humehume remained in Kailua-Kona and took Betty Davis, the half-Hawaiian daughter of Isaac Davis, as

his wife, or his "rib" as he described her. In a short time they rejoined the missionary party in Honolulu. (Spoehr)

On May 3, 1820, Humeleme returned to Kauai and was reunited with his father after many years apart. "At 11 o'clock came to anchor at Wimai (Waimea) opposite the fort. A canoe came off to us with several of the king's men, one of whom could speak English."

"George had kept himself concealed in the cabin, until we told him that one of his father's favorite men was on board, and we thought best that his arrival should be made known to him. We then introduced him to the young prince; he embraced him and kissed him, and then without saying a word, turned round and immediately went on deck, and into his canoe, telling his companions they must go on shore, for their young master had come."

"A salute of 21 guns was soon fired from the brig, and returned from the fort. ... When we arrived at the house, Tamoree and his Queen were reclining on a sofa; as soon as George entered the door, his father arose, clasped him in his arms, and pressed his nose on his son's after the manner of the country; both were unable to speak for some time."

"The scene was truly affecting, and I know not when I have wept more freely. When they had become a little more composed, Tamoree spoke and said his heart was so joyful that he could not talk much till tomorrow ..." (Ruggles Journal)

Shortly following the death of King Kaumuali'i (May 26, 1824,) Humeleme joined a group of Kauai chiefs in an unsuccessful rebellion. The insurrection began at Fort Elizabeth and ended about ten days later in Wahiawa (Kauai.) George fled to the mountains and in two months was captured. According to Samuel Whitney: "Some days before my arrival Karaimoku (Kalanimōku) left Waimea to go in search of GP Tamoree who was wandering about in the mountains on the Eastern part of the Island"

"On the morning of the 16th (September) he was found in the most wretched situation. In a dreary wilderness, alone, destitute of food, without the least vestige of clothing, half intoxicated and his only weapon a joint of bamboo filled with rum." (Whitney; Spoehr)

The closing year and a half of George's life were spent in Honolulu under the custody of Kalanimōku, prime minister of the kingdom. A victim of influenza, George died on May 3, 1826, six years to the day of his return to Waimea, Kauai.

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 Native 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)