

# General Meeting

The Prudential Committee of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (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.”

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 ABCFM in the Hawaiian Islands.

In the early years, they lived in the traditional thatched houses – “our little cottage built chiefly of poles, dried grass and mats, being so peculiarly exposed to fire ... consisting only of one room with a little partition and one door.” (Sybil Bingham) The thatched cottages were raised upon a low stone platform. Later, they lived in wood, stone or adobe homes.

One of the earliest efforts of the missionaries, who arrived in 1820, was the identification and selection of important communities (generally near ports and ali‘i residences) as “stations” for the regional church and school centers across the Hawaiian Islands.

The missionaries were scattered across the Islands, each home was usually in a thickly inhabited village, so that the missionary and his wife could be close to their work among the people. Meeting houses were constructed at the stations, as well as throughout the district. Initially constructed as the traditional Hawaiian thatched structures; they were later made of wood or stone.

The Prudential Committee in Boston counseled dividing the Hawaiian Mission into four independent district missions, with their boundaries corresponding to those of the present four counties in the Islands; but the Hawaiian Mission favored continuation of the single, Islands-wide organization.

It could truly be attributed to the mission’s centripetal tendencies that throughout the Islands each morning ‘twenty thousand learners committed to memory and recited the same text in the daily morning prayer meeting.’

The missionaries established schools associated with their mission stations across the Islands. This marked the beginning of Hawai‘i’s phenomenal rise to literacy. The chiefs became proponents for education and edicts were enacted by the King and the council of Chiefs to stimulate the people to reading and writing.

The instruction of students in schools (initially, most of whom were adults), in reading, writing and other skills initially fell to the missionaries. The schools generally served as both native churches and meeting houses, and were established in most populated ahupua‘a around the islands; native teachers and lay-ministers were appointed to oversee their daily activities.

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By 1850, eighteen mission stations had been established; six on Hawai'i, four on Maui, four on O'ahu, three on Kauai and one on Molokai. The following listing of Mission Stations begins at the north-west end of the Island chain and noted the year it was established, as well as the present Congregational church in the area of the initial Station.

**Kauai**      **Waimea**, Established 1820 – Waimea United Church of Christ  
**Kōloa**, Established 1834 – Kōloa Union Church  
**Waioli**, Established 1834 - Wai'oli Hui'ia Church

**O'ahu**      **Honolulu**, Established 1820 – Kawaiaha'o Church  
**Waialua**, Established 1832 – Lili'uokalani Protestant Church  
**'Ewa**, Established 1834 – 'Ewa Community Church  
**Kāne'ohe**, Established 1834 – Kāne'ohe Congregational Church  
**Punahou**, Established 1841 – O'ahu College (Punahou School)

**Molokai**    **Kalua'aha**, Established 1832 - Kalua'aha Congregational Church

**Maui**      **Lāhainā**, Established 1823 - Wai'ola Church (Waine'e)  
**Lahainaluna**, Established 1831 – Lahainaluna High School  
**Wailuku**, Established 1832 – Ka'ahumanu Church  
**Hāna**, Established 1837 - Wānanalua Congregational Church

**Hawai'i**    **Kailua**, Established 1820 – Mokuaikaia Church  
**Ka'awaloa**, Established 1824 – Kahikolu Congregational Church  
**Hilo**, Established 1824 – Haili Congregational Church  
**Waimea**, Established 1832 – 'Imiola Congregational Church  
**Kohala**, Established 1837 - Kālahikiola Congregational Church  
**Waiohinu**, Established 1841 - Kauaha'ao Congregational Church

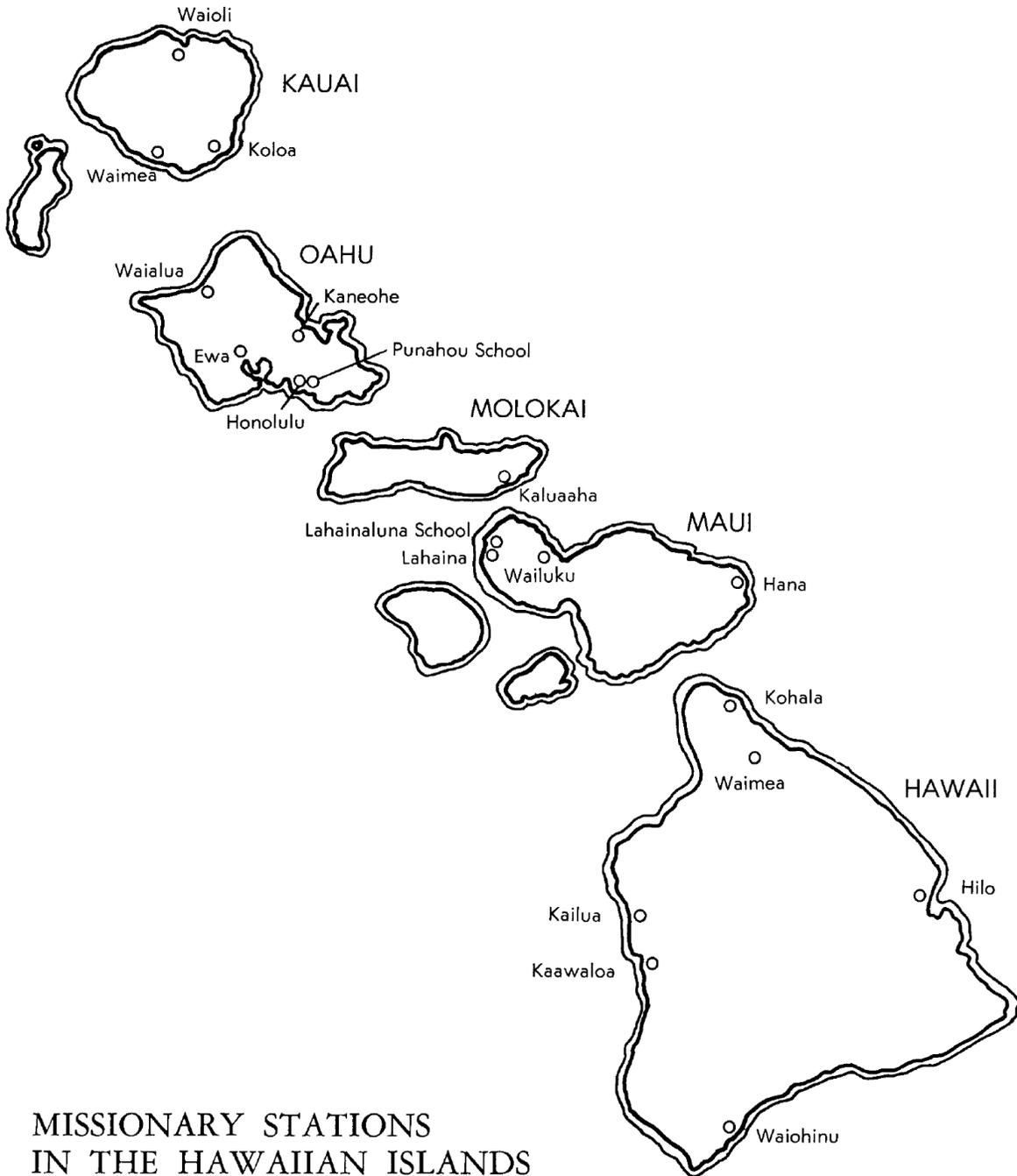
## General Meeting

Very prominent in the old mission life was the annual “General Meeting” where all of the missionary families from across the Islands gathered at Honolulu from four to six weeks.

“The design of their coming together would naturally suggest itself to any reflecting mind. They are all engaged in one work, but are stationed at various and distant points on different portions of the group, hence they feel the necessity of occasionally coming together, reviewing the past, and concerting plans for future operations.”

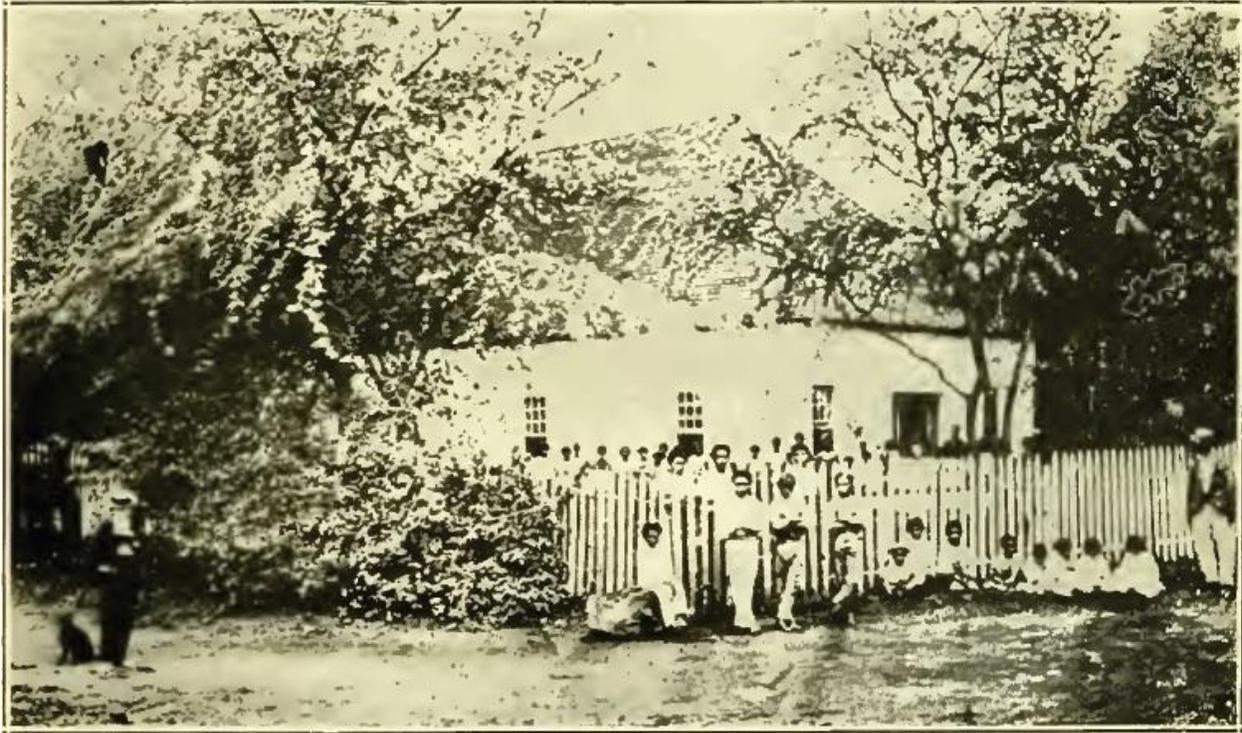
“Were it not for these meetings, missionaries at extreme parts of the group might never see each other, and in some instances we know that persons connected with the Sandwich Island Mission, have never seen each other's faces, although for years they have been laboring in the same work.” (The Friend, June 15, 1846)

The primary object of this gathering was to hold a business meeting for hearing reports of the year's work and of the year's experiences in more secular matters, and there from to formulate their annual report to the Board in Boston.



**MISSIONARY STATIONS  
IN THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS**

The General Meeting was held in an adobe school house (constructed during the period 1833-1835) still standing south of the Kawaihahe Church, on the makai side of Kawaihahe Street. Its interior was filled with the old-fashioned long school desks and benches of unpainted wood. There was sufficient room for the Fathers, who loosely filled the front part of the room, and their wives and the few spectators further back, and the boys and girls in the seats given over to them near the door.



Annual General Meetings of the mission fixed policy not alone for haole (white) members of the mission but for all native church members as well. The fact that “the majority ruled” in the mission did not make it the less oligarchical insofar as government of the entire church was concerned.

Also, with the holding of the General Meeting, for a long time an inner group - the ordained members of the mission – met as the Hawaiian Association, apparently to decide matters considered more definitely ecclesiastical, although there appears to be no sharp line of demarcation between matters considered at the General Meetings and those solely within the jurisdiction of the Association. (Meller)

The work of the General Meeting usually required a month or more. Of course, some of this time was occupied with religious meetings; mothers’ meetings were held, a church was organized in the missionary body, but perhaps a dominant influence in the consumption of so much time was the appreciation of the social opportunity, and the unwillingness to bring it unnecessarily to a speedy close. (Dole)

“Often some forty or more of the missionaries besides their wives were present, as well as many of the older children. ... Much business was transacted relating to the multifarious work and business of the Mission. New missionaries were to be located, and older ones transferred.”

“Expenditures upon schools, printing, dwellings, etc., were decided upon. Assignments of work were made in translating, revising and writing books.” (Bishop)

## Mission Houses Annual Meetings

The annual gathering of the Cousins, descendants of the early missionaries, continues. Today, the Hawaiian Mission Children's Society, a nonprofit educational institution and genealogical society, exists to promote an understanding of the social history of nineteenth-century Hawai'i and its critical role in the formation of modern Hawai'i.

The Society operates the Hawaiian Mission Houses Historic Site and Archives, comprised of three historic buildings and a research archives with reading room. The Society also



compiles the genealogical records of the American Protestant missionaries in Hawai'i and promotes the participation of missionary descendants in the Society's activities.

Through the Site and Archives, the Society collects and preserves the documents, artifacts and other records of the missionaries in Hawai'i's history; makes these collections available for research and educational purposes; and interprets the historic site and collections to reflect the social history of nineteenth century Hawai'i and America.

Guided tours of the house and other parts of the historic site are offered Tuesday through Saturday, starting on the hour every hour from 11 am with the last tour beginning at 3 pm.

Nominal fees include: General - \$10; Kama'āina, Senior Citizens (65+) & Military - \$8 and Students (age 6 to College w/ID) - \$6; Kama'āina Saturday (last Saturday of the Month) 50% off admission for residents. (Reservations for groups of 10 or more are required.)

## Missionary Period

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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)