

Lasting Legacies

Over the course of a little over 40-years (1820-1863 - the “Missionary Period”), about 184-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.

Collaboration between Native Hawaiians and American Protestant missionaries resulted in, among other things, 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)

Notable lasting legacies of the mission are the numerous historic churches and restored mission residences, across the Islands.



Among the other legacies are reminders of the Hawaiian Islands Mission and the good work of the missionaries who were part of it; here are a handful of only some of the reminders of the mission:

Hawaiian Mission Houses Historic Site and Archives

The Hawaiian Mission Houses Historic Site and Archives (Mission Houses) includes three restored houses, two of which are the oldest houses in Hawai'i, the 1821 Mission House (wood frame) and the 1831 Chamberlain House (coral block,) and a 1841 bedroom annex interpreted as the Print Shop, and a research archives which provides a unique glimpse into 19th-century Hawai'i both onsite and online.

Mission Houses sits on an acre of land in the middle of downtown Honolulu. In addition, the site has the Mission Memorial Cemetery, and a building which houses collections and archives, a reading room, a visitors' store and staff offices. A National Historic Landmark, Mission Houses preserves and interprets the two oldest houses in Hawai'i through school programs, historic house tours, and special events.

A coral and grass stage, Kahua Ho'okipa, was added in 2011; addition of a reconstructed hale pile. Thatched house, is in permitting process. This was the headquarters for the American protestant mission.

In addition to the buildings which are part of the collection, the Mission Houses object collection contains over 7,500 artifacts, including furniture, quilts, bark cloth, paintings, ceramics, clothing, and jewelry.

The archival collections include more than 12,000 books, manuscripts, original letters, diaries, journals, illustrations, and Hawaiian church records. Mission Houses owns the largest collection of Hawaiian language books in the world, and the second largest collection of letters written by the ali'i.

The size and scope of these collections make Hawaiian Mission Houses one of the foremost repositories for nineteenth century Hawaiian history.



Included in the archives are some of the original WO Smith Papers associated with the Provisional Government, including the original signed protest from Queen Lili'uokalani, dated January 17, 1893.

Hawaiian Mission Children's Society, a 501(c)3 non-profit educational institution, founded in 1852 and incorporated in 1907, acquired the 1821 Mission House in 1906, restored and opened it in 1908.

The archives, English and Hawaiian, are available on site and online. Together, these activities enrich our community "by fostering thoughtful dialogue and greater understanding of the missionary role in the history of Hawai'i." (Mission Houses' Vision Statement)

The Mission Houses collections are critical to understanding the dramatic changes in the 19th-century Kingdom of Hawai'i that helped shape contemporary Hawai'i.

With one of the most significant collections of manuscripts and photos of 19th-century Hawai'i, and perhaps surprisingly, the largest collection of Hawaiian language books in the world, the collection includes results of the recent Letters from the Ali'i translation project.

Today, is the annual meeting of the Hawaiian Mission Houses, and gathering of the cousins, reminiscent of the annual General Meetings of the early missionaries.

Lahainaluna

The missionaries who arrived in Lāhainā in 1823 explained to the Hawaiian Royalty the importance of an educational institution.

In 1823, Kalākua Kaheiheimālie (ke Ali'i Hoapili wahine, wife of Governor Hoapili) offered the American missionaries a tract of land on the slopes surrounding Pu'u Pa'upa'u for the creation of a high school. Betsey Stockton from the 2nd Company of Protestant missionaries initially started a school for maka'āinana (common people) and their wives and children on the site.

Later, on September 5, 1831, classes at the Mission Seminary at Lahainaluna (later known as Lahainaluna (Upper Lāhainā)) began in thatched huts with 25 Hawaiian young men (including David Malo, who went on to hold important positions in the kingdom, including the first Superintendent of Schools.)

Under the leadership of Reverend Lorrin Andrews, the school was established by the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions "to instruct young men of piety and promising talents". It is the oldest high school west of the Mississippi River.

In September 1836, thirty-two boys between the ages of 10 and 20 were admitted as the first boarding students, from the neighbor islands, as well as from the "other side of the island"; thus, the beginning of the boarding school at Lahainaluna.

The boarding program became coed in 1980. The two dorms are David Malo Dormitory for the boys and Hoapili Dormitory for the girls. Previously, Hoapili housed both genders. Lahainaluna is one of only a few public boarding schools in the nation.



Lahainaluna was transferred from being operated by the American missionaries to the control of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1849. By 1864, only Lahainaluna graduates were considered qualified to hold government positions such as lawyers, teachers, district magistrates and other important posts.

O'ahu College – Punahou School

One of the first things the first missionaries did was begin to learn the Hawaiian language and create an alphabet for a written format of the language. Their emphasis was on preaching and teaching.

The missionaries established schools associated with their missions 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.

However, the education of their children was a concern of missionaries.

There were two major dilemmas, (1) there were a limited number of missionary children and (2) existing schools (which the missionaries taught) served adult Hawaiians (who were taught from a limited curriculum in the Hawaiian language.)

“During the period from infancy to the age of ten or twelve years, children in the almost isolated family of a missionary could be well provided for and instructed in the rudiments of education without a regular school ... But after that period, difficulties in most cases multiplied.” (Hiram Bingham)

Missionaries were torn between preaching the gospel and teaching their kids. “(M)ission parents were busy translating, preaching and teaching. Usually parents only had a couple of hours each day to spare with their children.” (Schultz)

“(I)t was the general opinion of the missionaries there that their children over eight or ten years of age, notwithstanding the trial that might be involved, ought to be sent or carried to the United States, if there were friends who would assume a proper guardianship over them”. (Bingham)

“This was the darkest day in the life history of the mission child. Peculiarly dependent upon the family life, at the age of eight to twelve years, they were suddenly torn from the only intimates they had ever known, and banished, lonely and homesick, to a mythical country on the other side of the world where they could receive letters but once or twice a year; where they must remain isolated from friends and relatives for years and from which they might never return.” (Bishop)

During the first 21-years of the missionary period (1820-1863,) no fewer than 33 children were either taken back to the continent by their parents. That changed ... Resolution 14 of the 1841 General Meeting of the Sandwich Islands Mission changed that; it established a school for the children of the missionaries (May 12, 1841.) Meeting minutes note, “This subject occupied much time in discussion, and excited much interest.”

On July 11, 1842, fifteen children met for the first time in Punahou’s original E-shaped building. The first Board of Trustees (1841) included Rev. Daniel Dole, Rev. Richard Armstrong, Levi Chamberlain, Rev. John S Emerson and Gerrit P Judd. (Hawaiian Gazette, June 17, 1916)

By the end of that first year, 34-children from Sandwich Islands and Oregon missions were enrolled, only one over 12-years old. Tuition was \$12 per term, and the school year covered three terms. (Punahou) By 1851, Punahou officially opened its doors to all races and religions. (Students from Oregon, California and Tahiti were welcomed from 1841 – 1849.)



“The founding of Punahou as a school for missionary children not only provided means of instruction for the children, of the Mission, but also gave a trend to the education and history of the Islands. In 1841, at Punahou the Mission established this school and built for it simple halls of adobe. From this unpretentious beginning, the school has grown to its present prosperous condition.” (Report of the Superintendent of Public Education, 1900)

Lāhainā Banyan Tree

James William Smith was in the Tenth Company of ABCFM missionaries to the Islands, arriving on September 24, 1842. His son, William Owen Smith, born at Kōloa, Kauai, was educated at Rev David Dole's school at Kōloa, later attending Punahou School in Honolulu.

During the revolutionary period, WO Smith was one of the thirteen members of the Committee of Safety that overthrew the rule of Queen Lili'uokalani (January 17, 1893) and established the Provisional Government. He then served on the executive council of the Provisional Government and was sent to Washington DC when the proposed Organic Act for the Government of Hawai'i was pending before Congress.

When not filling public office, Mr. Smith had been engaged in private law practice and was affiliated with various law firms during his long career.

Smith and his firm wrote the will for Princess Pauahi Bishop that created the Bishop Estate. As a result of this, Pauahi recommended to Queen Lili'uokalani that he write her will for the Lili'uokalani Trust (which he did.) As a result, Lili'uokalani and Smith became lifelong friends; he defended her in court, winning the suit brought against her by Prince Jonah Kūhiō. (KHS)

Speaking of his relationship with the Queen, Smith said, "One of the gratifying experiences of my life was that after the trying period which led up to the overthrow of the monarchy and the withdrawal of Queen Lili'uokalani, the Queen sent for me to prepare a will and deed of trust of her property and appointed me one of her trustees". (Nellist)

Smith was also a trustee of the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Estate from 1884-1886 and 1897-1929, the Lunalilo Estate, the Alexander Young Estate and the Children's Hospital.

On April 24, 1873, while serving as Sheriff on Maui, William Owen Smith planted Lāhainā's Indian Banyan to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the first Protestant mission in Lāhainā.

Today, shading almost an acre of the surrounding park and reaching upward to a height of 60 feet, this banyan tree is reportedly the largest in the US.

Its aerial roots grow into thick trunks when they reach the ground, supporting the tree's large canopy. There are 16 major trunks in addition to the original trunk in the center.



Mission Memorial Building

“Impressive ceremonies marked the laying of the cornerstone yesterday afternoon of the Mission Memorial building in King street, Ewa of the YWCA Homestead, being erected at a cost of \$90,000 as a monument to pioneer missionaries and to be the center of the missionary work in Hawaii in the future.” (Hawaiian Gazette, July 20, 1915)

Designed by architect H.L. Kerr and built between 1915 and 1916, these structures were commissioned by the Hawaii Evangelical Association in preparation for the centennial commemoration of the arrival of the American Protestant missionaries to Hawaii in 1820. (C&C)



“Various forms of memorials have been suggested, but instead of some monument of beauty, perhaps, but which could be put to no practical use, why not something which would be of lasting value and usefulness and what would combine all so well as a building which would be the center of activity for the Hawaiian board, where work along the lines of those whose memories are now being revered, should be directed!”

“Then came the idea of combining the old with the new in a building which would honor the work of those who had gone before and provide place for the workers of the present.” (Hawaiian Gazette, July 20, 1915) (A third building, the Christian Education Building, was added in 1930.)

“The handsome new Mission Memorial Building of the Hawaiian Board of Missions was dedicated July 16th (1916), with interesting ceremonies. The event was of unusual significance. It celebrated the 96th anniversary of the beginning of Christianity in Honolulu, when Hiram Bingham and other missionaries of the American Board landed there. The dedication reviewed in a striking manner the progress civilization has made in the Hawaiian Islands.” (Missionary Review, 1916)

During World War II, the city administration moved to have the building condemned. The large, red-brick, neoclassical structures are the only example of Jeffersonian architecture in Hawaii. In 2003, after decades of use as city office space, the auditorium was renovated back to its original state.

While it is now primarily used for City and County of Honolulu departmental activities (and generally referred to as City Hall Annex), local, non-profit organizations can also use it, especially for cultural and arts events. All events must be free and open to the public. As for the Mission Memorial Building, the city renovated it in 2010. It currently houses the Mayor’s Office of Culture and the Arts, the Neighborhood Commission Office, and the Information and Complaints branches.