

'Common Friends to Mankind'

On April 19, 1775, the Battles of Lexington and Concord were the first military engagements of the American Revolutionary War. The battles marked the outbreak of open armed conflict between the Kingdom of Great Britain and its thirteen colonies of British North America.

The first shot ("the shot heard round the world") was fired just as the sun was rising at Lexington. The American militia were outnumbered and fell back; and the British regulars proceeded on to Concord.

Following this, the Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence and it was signed by 56-members of the Congress (1776.)

The next eight years (1775-1783) war was waging on the eastern side of the continent. The main result was an American victory and European recognition of the independence of the United States.

It was the turning point in the future of the continent and an everlasting change in the United States.

At this same time, there was a turning point in the future of the Islands.

Captain James Cook's third and final voyage (1776-1779) of discovery was an attempt to locate a North-West Passage, an ice-free sea route which linked the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. Cook commanded the Resolution while Charles Clerke commanded Discovery. (State Library, New South Wales)

In the dawn hours of January 18, 1778, British explorer Cook first sighted apparently uncharted islands in the middle of the Pacific.



“Old Spanish charts and a 1613 AD Dutch globe suggest that explorers from Spain had sighted Hawai‘i long before Captain Cook. When Cook arrived in 1778, galleons laden with silver from the mines of Mexico and South America had been passing south of Hawai‘i for two centuries on annual round trip voyages of 17,000 miles between Acapulco and Manila.” (Kane)

“It seems to be almost certain that one Juan Gaetano, a Spanish navigator, saw Hawaii in 1555 AD. A group of islands, the largest of which was called La Mesa, was laid down in the old Spanish charts in the same latitude as the Hawaiian Islands, but 10 degrees too far east.” (Hawai‘i Department of Foreign Affairs, 1896)

Cook’s crew noted, “This group consists of eleven islands, extending in latitude from 18° 54’ to 20° 15’ N., and in longitude from 199° 56’ to 205° 06’ E.”

“They are called by the natives, 1. Owhyhee [Hawai‘i]. 2. Mowee [Maui]. 3. Ranai, Oranai [Lāna‘i]. 4. Morotinee, or Morokinnee [Molokini]. 5. Kahowrowee, or Tahoorowa [Kaho‘olawe]. 6. Morotoi, or Morokoi [Molokai]. 7. Woahoo, or Oahoo [O‘ahu]. 8. Atooi, Atowi, or Towi, and sometimes Kowi [Kauai]. 9. Neeheehow, or Oneeheow [Ni‘ihau]. 10. Oreehoua, or Reehoua [Lehua]; and, 11. Tahooraa [Ka‘ūla]; and are all inhabited, excepting Morotinee [Molokini] and Tabooraa [Lehua].”

“Besides the islands above enumerated, we were told by the Indians, that there is another called MODOOPAPAPA, or KOMODOOPAPAPA [Mokupāpapa, Kure Atoll], lying to the W.S.W. of Tahooraa [Lehua], which is low and sandy, and visited only for the purpose of catching turtle and sea-fowl; and, as I could never learn that they knew of any others, it is probable that none exist in their neighbourhood.”

“They were named by Captain Cook the Sandwich Islands, in honour of the Earl of Sandwich, under whose administration he had enriched geography with so many splendid and important discoveries; ...”

“... a tribute justly due to that noble person for the liberal support these voyages derived from his power, in whatever could extend their utility, or promote their success; for the zeal with which he seconded the views of that great navigator; and, ...”

“... if I may be allowed to add the voice of private gratitude, for the generous protection, which, since the death of their unfortunate commander, he has afforded all the officers that served under him.” (Captain King’s Journal; Kerr)

Hawaiian lives changed with sudden and lasting impact, when western contact changed the course of history for Hawai‘i.

Cook continued to sail along the coast searching for a suitable anchorage. His two ships remained offshore, but a few Hawaiians were allowed to come on board on the morning of January 20, before Cook continued on in search of a safe harbor.

On the afternoon of January 20, 1778, Cook anchored his ships near the mouth of the Waimea River on Kauai’s southwestern shore. After a couple of weeks, there, they headed to the west coast of North America.



After the West Coast, Alaska and Bering Strait exploration, on October 24, 1778 the two ships headed back to the Islands; they sighted Maui on November 26, circled the Island of Hawai'i and eventually anchored at Kealahou Bay on January 17, 1779.

At the time of Cook's arrival (1778-1779), the Hawaiian Islands were divided into four kingdoms: (1) the island of Hawai'i under the rule of Kalani'ōpu'u, who also had possession of the Hāna district of east Maui; (2) Maui (except the Hāna district,) Molokai, Lāna'i and Kaho'olawe, ruled by Kahekili; (3) O'ahu, under the rule of Kahahana; and at (4) Kauai and Ni'ihau, Kamakahelei was ruler.

Kalani'ōpu'u was on the island to Maui to contend with Kahekili, king of Maui. The east side of Maui had fallen into the hands of Kalani'ōpu'u and Kahekili was fighting with him to gain control.

Kalani'ōpu'u returned to Hawai'i and met with Cook on January 26, 1779, exchanging gifts, including an 'ahu'ula (feathered cloak) and mahiole (ceremonial feather helmet.) Cook also received pieces of kapa, feathers, hogs and vegetables.

In return, Cook gave Kalani'ōpu'u a linen shirt and a sword; later on, Cook gave other presents to Kalani'ōpu'u, among which one of the journals mentions "a complete Tool Chest."

Throughout their stay, the ships were plentifully supplied with fresh provisions which were paid for mainly with iron, much of it in the form of long iron daggers made by the ships' blacksmiths on the pattern of the wooden pāhoa used by the Hawaiians.

The Hawaiians were permitted to watch the ships' blacksmiths at work and from their observations gained information of practical value about the working of iron. (Kuykendall)

After a month's stay, Cook got under sail again to resume his exploration of the Northern Pacific. Shortly after leaving Hawai'i Island, the foremast of the Resolution broke.

"At midnight, a gale of wind came on, which obliged us to double reef the topsails, and get down the top-gallant yards."

"On the 8th (of February 1779) at day-break, we found, that the foremast had again given way ... and the parts so very defective, as to make it absolutely necessary to replace them, and, of course, to (remove) the mast."

“In this difficulty, Captain Cook was for some time in doubt, whether he should run the chance of meeting with a harbour in the islands to leeward, or return to Karakakooa (Kealakekua.)”

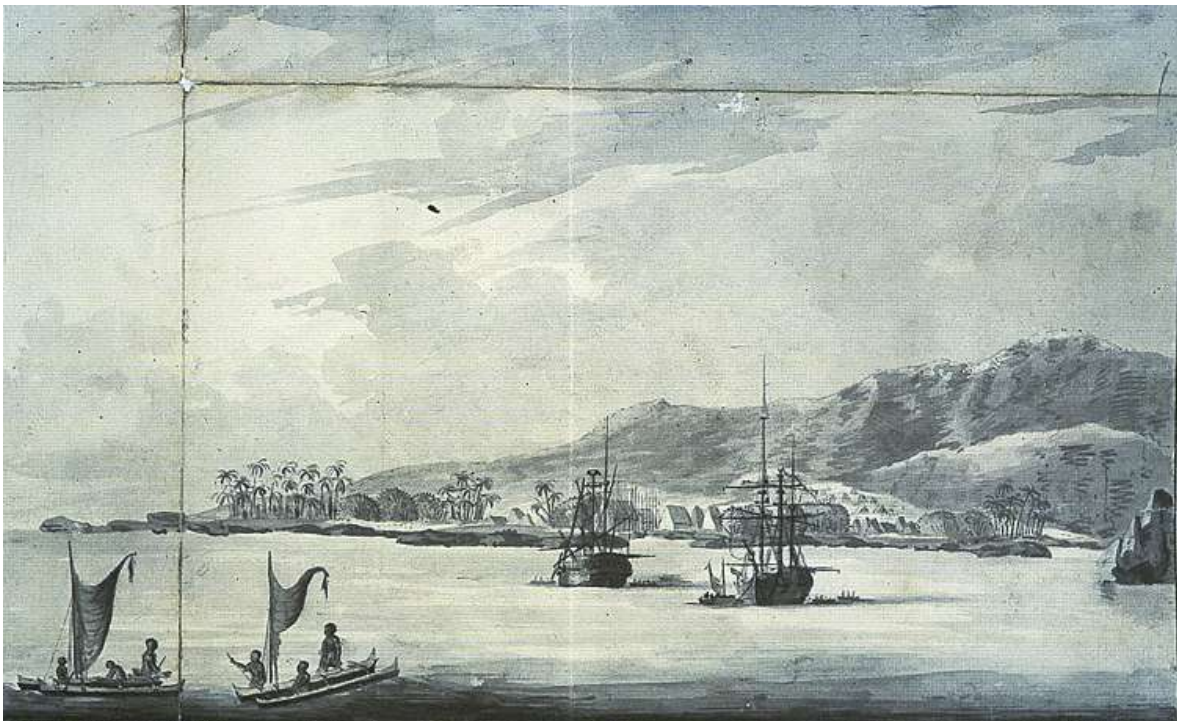
“In the forenoon, the weather was more moderate, and a few canoes came off to us, from which we learnt, that the late storms had done much mischief; and that several large canoes had been lost.”

“During the remainder of the day we kept beating to windward, and, before night, we were within a mile of the bay; but not choosing to run on, while it was dark, we stood off and on till day-light next morning, when we dropt anchor nearly in the same place as before.”

“Upon coming to anchor, we were surprised to find our reception very different from what it had been on our first arrival ; no shouts, no bustle, no confusion ...”

“... but a solitary bay, with only here and there a canoe stealing close along the shore. The impulse of curiosity, which had before operated to so great a degree, might now indeed be supposed to have ceased ...”

“... but the hospitable treatment we had invariably met with, and the friendly footing on which we parted, gave us some reason to expect, that they would again have flocked about us with great joy, on our return.”



“... there was something at this time very suspicious in the behaviour of the natives; and that the interdiction of all intercourse with us, on pretence of the king's absence, was only to give him time to consult with his chiefs in what manner it might be proper to treat us.”

“For though it is not improbable that our sudden return, for which they could see no apparent cause, and the necessity of which we afterward found it very difficult to make them comprehend, might occasion some alarm”.

“(T)he next morning, [Kalaniopu‘u] came immediately to visit Captain Cook, and the consequent return of the natives to their former, friendly intercourse with us, are strong proofs that they neither meant nor apprehended any change of conduct.”

However, “Soon after our return to the tents, we were alarmed by a continued fire of muskets from the Discovery, which we observed to be directed at a canoe, that we saw paddling toward the shore in great haste, pursued by one of our small boats.”

“We immediately concluded, that the firing was in consequence of some theft, and Captain Cook ordered me to follow him with a marine armed, and to endeavour to seize the people as they came on shore. Accordingly we ran toward the place where we supposed the canoe would land, but were too late; the people having quitted it, and made their escape into the country before our arrival.”

“When Captain Cook was informed of what had passed, he expressed much uneasiness at it, and as we were returning on board, ‘I am afraid,’ said he, ‘that these people will oblige me to use some violent measures; for,’ he added, ‘they must not be left to imagine that they have gained an advantage over us.’”

“However, as it was too late to take any steps this evening, he contented himself with giving orders, that every man and woman on board should be immediately turned out of the ship.”

That night a skiff from the Discovery had been stolen. “It was between seven and eight o’clock when we quitted the ship together; Captain Cook in the pinnace, having Mr Phillips and nine marines with him; and myself in the small boat.”

“Though the enterprise which had carried Captain Cook on shore had now failed, and was abandoned, yet his person did not appear to have been in the least of danger, till an accident happened, which gave a fatal turn to the affair.”

“The boats which had been stationed across the bay, having fired at some canoes that were attempting to get out, unfortunately had killed a chief of first rank.”

“One of the natives, having in his hands a stone, and a long iron spike (which they call a pahooa), came up to the Captain, flourishing his weapon, by way of defiance, and threatening to throw the stone. The Captain desired him to desist; but the man persisting in his insolence, he was at length provoked to fire a load of small-shot. “

“The man having his mat on, which the shot were not able to penetrate, this had no other effect than to irritate ,and encourage them. Several stones were thrown at the marines; and one of the [Hawaiians] attempted to stab Mr. Phillips with his pahooa, but failed in the attempt, and received from him a blow with the butt end of his musket.”

“Captain Cook now fired his second barrel, loaded with ball, and killed one of the foremost of the natives. A general attack with stones immediately followed, which was answered by a discharge of musketry from the marines, and the people in the boats.”

“Our unfortunate Commander, the last time he was seen distinctly, was standing at the water's edge, and calling out to the boats to cease firing, and to pull in.”



“If it be true, as some of those who were present have imagined, that the marines and boat-men had fired without his orders, and that he was desirous of preventing further bloodshed, it is not improbable that his humanity, on this occasion, proved fatal to him.”

“For it was remarked, that whilst he faced the natives, none of them had offered him any violence, but that having turned about to give his orders to the boats, he was stabbed in the back, and fell with his face in the water.” (Voyages of James Cook)

On February 14, 1779, Cook was killed – having left a few days before “satisfied with their kindness in general, so I cannot too often, nor too particularly, mention the unbounded and constant friendship of their priests” - having returned to make repairs to a broken mast.

Captain Charles Clerke took over the expedition and they left the Islands, heading first to Canton, China, then around the Cape of Good Hope and back home to Britain. (The quotes are from ‘The Voyages of Captain James Cook,’ recorded by Lieutenant James King (who, following these events was appointed to command HMS Discovery.))

At this same time, recall that back in the Atlantic, the American Revolutionary War was still ongoing with the Americans (with support from the French) fighting the British.

At Canton, King learned that the French government had issued a directive to all French sea captains exempting Cook from military action on his way back to England.

“Not long after Captain Cook’s death, an event occurred in Europe, which had a particular relation to the voyage of our Navigator, and which was so honourable to himself, and to the great nation from whom it proceeded”. (King)

On March 19th, 1779, Monsieur Sartine, secretary of the marine department at Paris, sent to all the commanders of French ships the following statement/directive:

“Captain Cook, who sailed from Plymouth in July, 1776, on board the Resolution, in company with the Discovery, Captain Clerke, in order to make some discoveries on the coasts, islands, and seas of Japan and California ...”

“... being on the point of returning to Europe, and such discoveries being of general utility to all nations, it is the king's pleasure that Captain Cook shall be treated as a commander of a neutral and allied power ...”

“... and that all captains of armed vessels, etc., who may meet that famous navigator, shall make him acquainted with the king's orders on this behalf, but at the same time let him know that on his part he must refrain from all hostilities.”

“By the Marquis of Condorcet we are informed that this measure originated in the liberal and enlightened mind of that excellent citizen and statesman, Monsieur Turgot.”

“When war was declared between France and England, M. Turgot saw how honourable it would be to the French nation that the vessel of Captain Cook should be treated with respect at sea. He composed a memorial, in which he proved that honour, reason, and even interest, dictated this act of respect for humanity; and it was in consequence of this memorial, the author of which was unknown during his life, that an order was given not to treat as an enemy the common benefactor of every European nation.”

(Kippis)

“Whilst great praise is due to Monsieur Turgot for having suggested the adoption of a measure which hath contributed so much to the reputation of the French government, it must not be forgotten that the first thought of such a plan of conduct was probably owing to Dr. Benjamin Franklin.”

“Thus much at least is certain, that this eminent philosopher, when ambassador at Paris from the United States of America, preceded the court of France in issuing a similar requisition”. (Kippis)

Franklin “earnestly recommended” that they treat “the most celebrated navigator and discoverer, Captain Cook ... with all civility and kindness should they encounter his vessels at sea.”



On March 10, 1779, just a few days before the French initiative, Benjamin Franklin, who at age seventh-three, had himself issued a similar directive to the captains of American ships. Franklin wrote:

To all Captains & Commanders of arm'd Ships acting by Commission from the Congress of the United States of America, now in War with Great Britain.

Gentlemen,

A Ship having been fitted out from England before the Commencement of this War, to make Discoveries of new Countries, in Unknown Seas, under the Conduct of that most celebrated Navigator and Discoverer Captain Cook ...

... an Undertaking truly laudable in itself, as the Increase of Geographical Knowledge, facilitates the Communication between distant Nations, in the Exchange of useful Products and Manufactures, and the Extension of Arts ...

... whereby the common Enjoyments of human Life are multiplied and augmented, and Science of other kinds increased to the Benefit of Mankind in general.

This is therefore most earnestly to recommend to every one of you; that in case the said Ship which is now expected to be soon in the European Seas on her Return, should happen to fall into your Hands ...

... you would not consider her as an Enemy, nor suffer any Plunder to be made of the Effects contained in her, nor obstruct her immediate Return to England, by detaining her or sending her into any other Part of Europe or to America ...

... but that you would treat the said Captain Cook and his People with all Civility and Kindness, affording them as common Friends to Mankind ...

... all the Assistance in your Power which they may happen to stand in need of. In so doing you will not only gratify the Generosity of your own Dispositions, but there is no doubt of your obtaining the Approbation of the Congress, and your other American Owners.

I have the honour to be Gentlemen, Your most obedient humble Servant

B Franklin (US Archives)

“Franklin stressed that Cook's undertakings, being essentially scientific, were devoted to the ‘benefit of mankind in general.’”

“Ironically, at the time Franklin drafted these instructions, Cook had already met his death on the Island of Hawaii. He had discovered this important island group, together with most of Alaska, during his third great Pacific voyage in the ‘sloop’ Resolution and her consort Discovery.” (Sea History, Brett)

Franklin, apparently on his own authority, sent his letter to all American vessels in French ports, and he had the text published in newspapers in Holland for American sea captains to read when they sought sanctuary there; a copy was also sent to the Royal Society of London.

Franklin's gesture of good will toward Cook was not least among the honors he brought to his fledgling country. On the return of the Discovery and Resolution, the met neither French nor American ships on the way home. (Captain Cook Society)



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obtaining the Approbation of the Congress and your own
American Owners.

I have the honour to be;

Gentlemen,

At Paris, near Paris

this 10 Day of March (signed) B. Franklin,

1779.

Your most obedient
humble servant,

Minister Plenipotentiary
from the Congress of the
United States at the Court
of France.