

Written Hawaiian Language, Schools ... Literacy

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) the Revolutionary War was waging on the eastern side of the continent.

The war for independence closed the colonial trade routes within the British empire, the merchantmen and whalers of New England swarmed around South America’s Cape Horn, in search of new markets and sources of supply. A market was established in China.

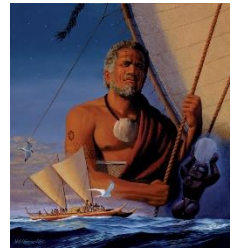
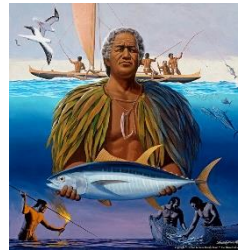
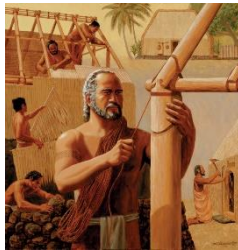
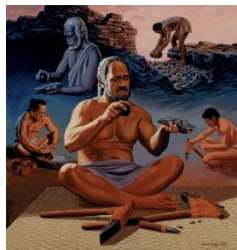
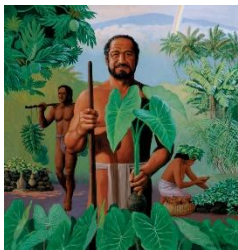
China took nothing that the US produced; hence Boston traders, in order to obtain the wherewithal to purchase teas and silks at Canton, spent 18-months or more of each China voyage collecting a cargo of sea-otter skins, highly esteemed by the Chinese.

Years before the westward land movement gathered momentum, the energies of seafaring New Englanders found their natural outlet, along their traditional pathway, in the Pacific Ocean.

What helped started in the dawn hours of January 18, 1778, on his third expedition, when British explorer Captain James Cook on the HMS Resolution and Captain Charles Clerke of the HMS Discovery first sighted what Cook named the Sandwich Islands (that were later named the Hawaiian Islands).

On the afternoon of January 20, 1778, Cook anchored his ships near the mouth of the Waimea River on Kauai’s southwestern shore. When Captain Cook first made contact with the Hawaiian Islands in 1778, Hawaiian was a spoken language but not a written language. Historical accounts were passed down orally, through oli (chants) and mele (songs).

Before the foreigners arrived, Hawaiians had a vocational learning system, where everyone was taught a certain skill by the kahuna. Skills taught included canoe builder, medicine men, genealogists, navigators, farmers, house builders, priests, etc.



After a couple of weeks, there, Cook headed to the west coast of North America.

The formal end of the Revolutionary War did not occur until the Treaty of Paris and the Treaties of Versailles were signed on September 3, 1783 and recognized the sovereignty of the United States over the territory bounded roughly by what is now Canada to the north, Florida to the south, and the Mississippi River to the west.

The last British troops left New York City on November 25, 1783, and the US Congress of the Confederation ratified the Paris treaty on January 14, 1784.

Practically every vessel that visited the North Pacific in the closing years of the 18th century stopped at Hawai'i for provisions and recreation; then, the opening years of the 19th saw the sandalwood business become a recognized branch of trade.

Sandalwood, geography and fresh provisions made the Islands a vital link in a closely articulated trade route between Boston, the Northwest Coast and Canton, China.

At the same time, the Hawaiian demand for American goods was rapidly increasing, owing to the improved standard of living. The central location of the Hawaiian Islands brought many traders, and then whalers, to the Islands.

“And so for forty years Hawaiians wanted everything on every ship that came. And they could get it; it was pretty easy to get. Two pigs and ... a place to live, you could trade for almost anything.” (Puakea Nogelmeier)

In the Islands, as in New France (Canada to Louisiana (1534)), New Spain (Southwest and Central North America to Mexico and Central America (1521)) and New England (Northeast US), the trader preceded the missionary.

Arrival of American Protestant Missionaries

A new era opened in the Islands with the arrival of the first American Protestant missionaries. On October 23, 1819, the Pioneer Company of American Protestant missionaries from the northeast US, led by Hiram Bingham, set sail on the Thaddeus for Hawai'i. They arrived April 4, 1820.

The Mission Prudential Committee 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)

The American Protestant missionaries were preachers and teachers.

Hawaiian Alphabet and Written Language

After Western contact and attempts to write about Hawai'i, early writers tried to spell words based on the sound of the words they heard. People heard words differently, so it was not uncommon for words to be spelled differently, depending on the writer.

In addition to preaching the gospel, one of the first things the missionaries did was begin to learn the Hawaiian language and create an alphabet for a written format of the language.

Initially, the missionaries worked out a Hawaiian alphabet of 17-English letters. On January 7, 1822, on the mission press set up in Levi Chamberlains' thatched house, "we commenced printing the language in order to give them letters, libraries, and the living oracles in their own tongue, that the nation might read and understand the wonderful works of God."

"... Most of the printing done at the islands has been done by native hands." (Bingham) (Chamberlain was teacher, accountant and superintendent of Secular Affairs (quartermaster) for the mission).

Then, on July 14, 1826, the missionaries established a 12-letter alphabet for the written Hawaiian language, using five vowels (a, e, i, o, and u) and seven consonants (h, k, l, m, n, p and w) in their "Report of the committee of health on the state of the Hawaiian language." The report was signed by Bingham and Chamberlain. (b, d, r, t and v were dropped from the 1822 alphabet.) The alphabet continues in use today.

A	a	Aa	aa	Ae	ae	Ai	ai	Ao	ao	Au	au	1	I
E	e	Ea	ea	Ee	ee	Ei	ei	Eo	eo	Eu	eu	2	II
I	i	Ia	ia	Ie	ie	Ii	ii	Io	io	Iu	iu	3	III
O	o	Oa	oa	Oe	oe	Oi	oi	Oo	oo	Ou	ou	4	IV
U	u	Ua	ua	Ue	ue	Ui	ui	Uo	uo	Uu	uu	5	V
H	h	Ha	ha	He	he	Hi	hi	Ho	ho	Hu	hu	6	VI
K	k	Ka	ka	Ke	ke	Ki	ki	Ko	ko	Ku	ku	7	VII
L	l	La	la	Le	le	Li	li	Lo	lo	Lu	lu	8	VIII
M	m	Ma	ma	Me	me	Mi	mi	Mo	mo	Mu	mu	9	IX
N	n	Na	na	Ne	ne	Ni	ni	No	no	Nu	nu	10	X
P	p	Pa	pa	Pe	pe	Pi	pi	Po	po	Pu	pu	11	XI
W	w	Wa	wa	We	we	Wi	wi	Wo	wo	Wu	wu	12	XII
		Aha	Ake	Ali	Amo	Anu	Apu	Awa				13	XIII
		Eha	Eke	Eli	Emo	Eno	Epa	Ewa				14	XIV
		Iha	Ike	Ili	Imo	Ino	Ipo	Iwi				15	XV
		Oha	Oke	Oli	Omo	Ono	Ope	Owa				16	XVI
		U'ha	Uke	Uli	Umo	U'no	Upa	Noa				17	XVII
		Hae	Kao	Lau	Moa	Niu	Pua	Wai				18	XVIII
		Hana	Hema	Hipa	Hoku	Hulu						19	XIX
		Kala	Kena	Kipi	Koko	Kumu						20	XX
		Lalo	Lewa	Lili	Loma	Luna						21	xxi
		Mala	Meha	Miko	Moni	Muli						22	xxii
		Nahu	Newa	Nini	Noke	Nunu						23	xxiii
		Papu	Pehu	Piko	Pono	Pule						24	xxiv
		Wela	Wela	W'ili	W'iki	Wawe						25	xxv

Success of Missionary Efforts

“The missionary effort is more successful in Hawaii than probably anywhere in the world, in the impact that it has on the character and the form of a nation. And so, that history is incredible; but history gets so blurry ...”

“The missionary success cover decades and decades becomes sort of this huge force where people feel like the missionaries got off the boat barking orders ... where they just kind of came in and took over. They got off the boat and said ‘stop dancing,’ ‘put on clothes,’ don’t sleep around.”

“And it’s so not the case”

“The missionaries arrived here, and they’re a really remarkable bunch of people. They are scholars, they have got a dignity that goes with religious enterprise that the Hawaiians recognized immediately. ...”

“The Hawaiians had been playing with the rest of the world for forty-years by the time the missionaries came here. The missionaries are not the first to the buffet and most people had messed up the food already.”

“(T)hey end up staying and the impact is immediate. They are the first outside group that doesn’t want to take advantage of you, one way or the other, get ahold of their goods, their food, or your daughter. ... But, they couldn’t get literacy. It was intangible, they wanted to learn to read and write”. (Puakea Nogelmeier)

The Hawaiian frustration with the early foreigners and support for the missionaries is illustrated in comments from Kaumuali’i (King of Kauai).

Missionary Samuel Ruggles notes in his Journal entry on May 8, 1820, “The inhabitants treated me with all the attention and hospitality which their limited circumstances would afford; and even carried their generosity to excess ...”

On May 10, 1820, Ruggles notes, “This afternoon the king (Kaumuali’i) sent to me and requested that I would come and read to him in his bible. I read the first chapter of Genesis and explained to him what I read as well as I could.”

“He listened with strict attention, frequently asking pertinent questions, and said I can’t understand it all; I want to know it; you must learn my language fast, and then tell me all. No white man before ever read to me and talk like you.”

Formation of First ‘School’

On O’ahu, Hiram’s wife, Sybil, formed the first ‘school’ and noted in her journal, “Very soon I gathered up 12 or 15 little native girls to come once a day to the house so that as early as possible the business of instruction might be commenced. That was an interesting day to me to lay the foundation of the first school ever assembled in this dark land.” (Sybil Bingham, June 1820)

Betsey Stockton's School

Then, in November 1822, Betsey Stockton and other missionaries in the Second Company set sail on the 'Thames' from New Haven, Connecticut for the Hawaiian Islands. She became the first single American woman sent overseas as a missionary.

Stockton began life as a slave (she had been previously presented as a gift to her master's eldest daughter and her husband, the Reverend Ashbel Green (who was later the President of Princeton College (later known as Princeton University))). The Second Company arrived at Honolulu on April 27, 1823.

"On the 26th of May (1823) we heard that the barge (Cleopatra's Barge, or "Ha'aheo o Hawai'i," Pride of Hawai'i) was about to sail for Lāhainā, with the old queen (Keōpūolani) and princess (Nāhi'ena'ena;) and that the queen was desirous to have missionaries to accompany her".

"A meeting was called to consult whether it was expedient to establish a mission at Lāhainā. The mission was determined on, and Mr. S. (Stewart) was appointed to go; he chose Mr. R. (Richards) for his companion ... On the 28th we embarked on the mighty ocean again, which we had left so lately." (Betsey Stockton Journal)

Per the requests of the chiefs, prior to this, the American Protestant missionaries were typically teaching their own children and the children of the Hawaiian chiefs.

"Now the chiefs have expressed their determination to have instruction in reading and writing extended to the whole population and have only been waiting for books, and an increase in the number of suitably qualified native teachers, to put the resolution, as far as practical, into effect."

"A knowledge of this having reached some of the maka'āinana, or farmers of Lāhainā ... application was made by them to us for books and slates, and an instructor; and the first school, consisting of about thirty individuals, ever formed among that class of people, has, within a few days, been established in our enclosure, under the superintendence of B (Betsey Stockton), who is quite familiar with the native tongue." (Charles Stewart Journal, August 1824)

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 school. Stockton founded a school for maka'āinana (common people) including the women and children. The school was situated on what is now Lahainaluna School (and some suggest it served as the initial basis for that school).

Stockton's school was commended for its teaching proficiency, and later served as a model for the Hilo Boarding School and also for the Hampton Institute in Virginia, a historic Black college in Virginia established after the Civil War (founded by General Samuel C. Armstrong (son of missionary Richard Armstrong, former Pastor at Kawaiaha'o Church)). (King Kalākua visited Hampton Normal and Agricultural School - later known as Hampton Institute on one of his trips to the continent.)

Because of the serious illness of Mrs. Harriet Stewart, the Stewarts decided to return to Cooperstown, New York, after two and a half years in Hawai'i. Stockton accompanied them; leaving native Hawaiian teachers she had trained to take her place. She spent the rest of her life in Princeton working on behalf of its African American and white residents to enrich the lives of the members of the local African American community.

Lahainaluna

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).

Recognizing there were a limited number of missionaries to teach the chiefs and makaʻāinana, the missionaries effectively set up Lahainaluna to teach teachers. When Lahainaluna first opened, Lāhainā was the capital of the kingdom of Hawaiʻi, and it was a bustling seaport for the Pacific whaling fleet.



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.

The missionaries soon saw that the future of the Congregational Mission in Hawaii would be largely dependent upon the success of its schools.

The Mission then established "feeder schools" that would transmit to their students' fundamental reading, writing, and arithmetic skills, and religious training, before admission to the Lahainaluna.

In many of the mission schools the focus was educating the head, heart and hand. In addition to the rigorous academic drills (Head), the schools provided religious/moral (Heart) and manual/vocational (Hand) training.

Rise in Literacy

The arrival of the first company of American missionaries 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 missionaries established schools associated with their missions across the Islands.

In 1820, missionary Lucy Thurston noted in her Journal, Liholiho's desire to learn, "The king (Liholiho, Kamehameha II) brought two young men to Mr. Thurston, and said: "Teach these, my favorites, (John Papa) Ii and (James) Kahuhu. It will be the same as teaching me. Through them I shall find out what learning is."

With the vigorous support of the Queen-Regent Ka'ahumanu, attendance in mission schools increased from about 200 in 1821 to 2,000 in 1824, 37,000 in 1828 and 41,238 in 1830, of which nearly half were pupils on the island of Hawai'i. (Canevali)

Common schools (where the 3 Rs were taught) sprang up in villages all over the Islands. In these common schools, classes and attendance were quite irregular, but nevertheless basic reading and writing skills (in Hawaiian) and fundamental Christian doctrine were taught to large numbers of people. (Canevali)

Interestingly, these same early missionaries taught their lessons in Hawaiian, rather than English. In part, the mission did not want to create a separate caste and portion of the community as English-speaking Hawaiians. In later years, the instruction, ultimately, was in English.

"Throughout the islands, the schools prospered ... At Lahaina, 922 pupils were present at one examination, of whom 500 could read, and 300 had read all the books in the language. At Honolulu, 600 pupils were examined in April."

"As early as February, about 40 schools were known to be in operation on Hawaii, and the number was greatly increased during the year. In October, 16,000 copies of elementary lessons had been given out, and it was supposed that there were nearly that number of learners on the islands."

"The people were not allowed to wait in ignorance for accomplished teachers. Everywhere the chiefs selected the most forward scholars, and sent them out to teach others. Such of these teachers as were conveniently situated for that purpose, were formed into classes for further instruction." (Tracy, 1840)

By 1831, in just eleven years from the first arrival of the missionaries, Hawaiians had built 1,103 schoolhouses. This covered every district throughout the eight major Islands and serviced an estimated 52,882 students. The proliferation of schoolhouses was augmented by the printing of 140,000 copies of the pī-āpā (elementary Hawaiian spelling book) by 1829 and the staffing of the schools with 1,000-plus Hawaiian teachers. (Laimana)

By 1832, the literacy rate of Hawaiians (at the time was 78 percent) had surpassed that of Americans on the continent. The literacy rate of the adult Hawaiian population skyrocketed from near zero in 1820 to a conservative estimate of 91-percent - and perhaps as high as 95-percent - by 1834. (Laimana)

From 1820 to 1832, in which Hawaiian literacy grew by 91 percent, the literacy rate on the US continent grew by only 6 percent and did not exceed the 90 percent level until 1902 - three hundred years after the first settlers landed in Jamestown. By way of comparison, it is significant that overall European literacy rates in 1850 had not risen much above 50 percent. (Laimana)

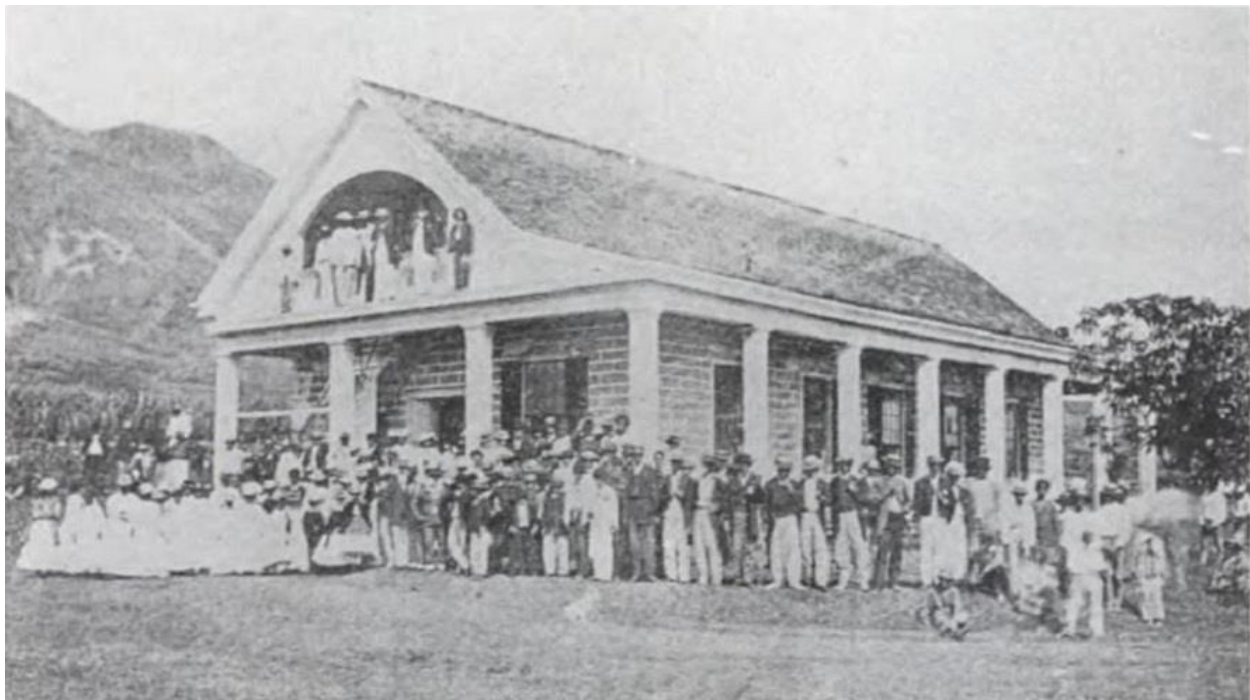
“The Missionaries have been the fathers, the builders and the supporters of education in these Islands”. (Lee, December 2, 1847, Privy Council Minutes)

Chiefs’ Children’s School

O’ahu’s first formal school was called the Chiefs’ Children’s School. The cornerstone of the original school was laid on June 28, 1839, in the area of the old barracks of ‘Iolani Palace (at about the site of the present State Capitol of Hawai’i).

The school was created by King Kamehameha III, and at his request was run by missionaries Mr. and Mrs. Amos S. Cooke; the main goal of this school was to groom the next generation of the highest-ranking chief’s children of the realm and secure their positions for Hawai’i’s Kingdom.

The Chiefs’ Children’s School was unique because for the first time Ali’i children were brought together in a group to be taught, ostensibly, about the ways of governance. The School also acted as another important unifying force among the ruling elite, instilling in their children common principles, attitudes and values, as well as a shared vision.



In this school were educated the Hawai’i sovereigns who reigned over the Hawaiian people from 1855, namely, Alexander Liholiho (King Kamehameha IV), Queen Emma, Lot Kamehameha (King Kamehameha V), King William Lunailo, King David Kalākaua and Queen Lydia Lili’uokalani.

No school in Hawai'i has ever produced so many Hawaiian leaders in one generation. In 1846 the name was officially changed to Royal School; attendance was restricted to descendants of the royal line and heirs of the chiefs. In 1850, a second school was built on the site of the present Royal School; it was opened to the general public in 1851.

For everyone else, Kamehameha III called for a highly-organized educational system; the Constitution of 1840 helped Hawai'i public schools become reorganized. William Richards, a missionary, helped start the reorganization, and was later replaced by missionary Richard Armstrong. Richard Armstrong is known as the "the father of American education in Hawai'i."

"Statute for the Regulation of Schools" passed by the King and chiefs on October 15, 1840. Its preamble stated, "The basis on which the Kingdom rests is wisdom and knowledge. Peace and prosperity cannot prevail in the land, unless the people are taught in letters and in that which constitutes prosperity. If the children are not taught, ignorance must be perpetual, and children of the chiefs cannot prosper, nor any other children".

This legislation mandated compulsory attendance for all children ages four to fourteen. Any village that had fifteen or more school-age children was required to provide a school for their students. The creation of the Common Schools (where the 3-Rs were taught) marks the beginning of the government's involvement in education in Hawai'i.

Armstrong helped bring better textbooks, qualified teachers and better school buildings. Students were taught in Hawaiian how to read, write, math, geography, singing and to be "God-fearing" citizens. (By 1863, three years after Armstrong's death, the missionaries stopped being a part of Hawai'i's education system.)



Kauikeaouli – King Kamehameha III

Missionary Period

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.

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)