

Explorers and Traders ... the Pacific and Hawai'i

Hawai'i is the world's most-isolated, populated-place, we are about: 2,500-miles from the US mainland, Samoa & Alaska; 4,000-miles from Tokyo, New Zealand & Guam, and 5,000-miles from Australia, the Philippines & Korea.

Research indicates human colonization of Eastern Polynesia took place in Samoa around 800 BC, colonized the central Society Islands between AD 1025 and 1120 and dispersed to New Zealand and Rapa Nui and other locations between AD 1190 and 1290. (Hunt; PVS)

It is believed that initial Polynesian discovery and settlement of the Hawaiian Islands occurred between approximately AD 1000 and 1200. (Kirch) Less than a millennium later, Hawai'i played a role in international commerce in the Pacific.

The Hawaiian Islands first entered the international economic scene in the latter part of the 18th century when its location, ports, climate, and people made the Islands an ideal winter harbor and stopover for merchant ships, whalers, and explorers' vessels. (Duncan)

Spice Trade

The word 'spice' is derived from the Latin 'species', or 'special wares', and refers to an item of special value, as opposed to ordinary articles of trade. Spices were highly valued because, as well as being used in cooking, many had ritual, religious or medical uses.

They were of high value because of their relative geographical scarcity. Spices could only be grown in the tropical East; South Asia served as a major source of spices - in the South of China, Indonesia, as well as in Southern India and Sri Lanka.

Among the most widespread were the spices cinnamon, pepper, clove, nutmeg, and mace. (Hancock) Some spices, such as cloves and nutmeg, grew nowhere else in the world.

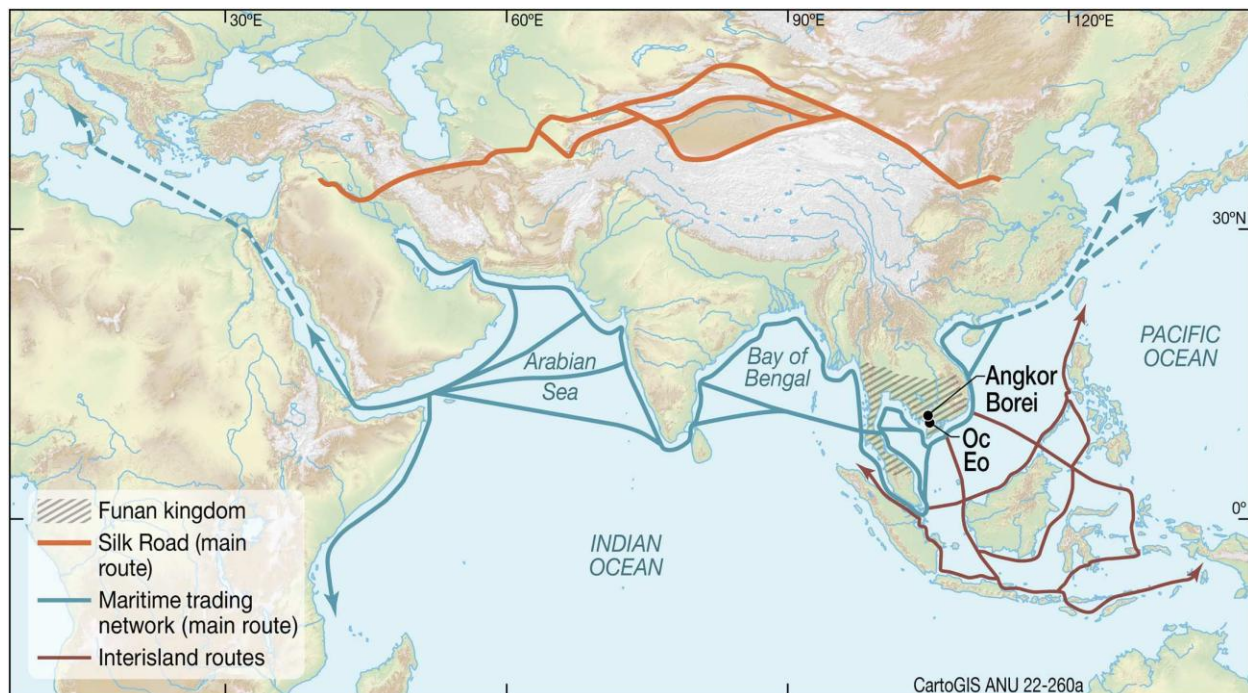
Silk Roads

The spice trade was conducted mostly by camel caravans over land routes (known as the Silk Roads). The Silk Roads were important routes connecting Asia with the Mediterranean world, including North Africa and Europe. (Deepanjana, UNESCO)

Trade on the Silk Roads was a significant factor in the development of the civilizations of China, India, Egypt, Persia, Arabia, and Rome.

From as early as 2000 BC, spices, such as cinnamon from Sri Lanka and cassia from China, were exported along the Silk Road as far west as the Arabian Peninsula and the Iranian Plateau. Other goods were also exchanged/traded - cargoes from China included ivory, silk, porcelain, metals and gemstones. (Deepanjana, UNESCO)

Cinnamon, and perhaps pepper, from India and Indonesia was traded in Egypt. For the next 1000 years, the Arabs served as the sole middlemen of the spice trade. (Hancock)



Spice Routes

Later, Spice Routes were established; these were the name given to the network of sea routes that linked the East with the West.

The journey of the goods between all these links in the chain is called a trade route (the word 'trade' derives from a term meaning a track or course).

By 200 BC the Spice Routes ran from China through the Indian ocean to Arabian and western Countries. These routes were used for networks of commercial and noncommercial transportation. (Ebrahim)

Black pepper was plentiful in India. Sri Lanka was rich in cinnamon. Sandalwood came from Timor. China and Japan were getting spices like cloves, nutmeg, and mace from India, South East Asia, and the Maluku Islands (the Moluccas, in what is today Indonesia – they were nicknamed the Spice Islands).

After Rome's collapse in 250 AD, the epicenter of world trade shifted first to the Byzantine Empire and then to Europe as it emerged from the Dark Ages. Venice became a worldwide trading powerhouse. (Hancock)

Exploration to Find Better Maritime Access to the Spice Markets

One of the major motivating factors in the European Age of Exploration was the search for direct access to the highly lucrative Eastern spice trade. In the 15th century.

Spices were in huge demand both for food dishes and for use in medicines and they came to Europe via the Middle East via land and sea routes. (Cartwright)

Explorers like Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) and Vasco da Gama (c. 1469-1524) (on behalf of Portugal) were sent to find a maritime route from Europe to Asia.

Heading west, Columbus (1492) found a new continent in his way; heading south then east, da Gama (1498) rounded the Cape of Good Hope, sailed up the coast of East Africa, and crossed the Indian Ocean to reach India. (Cartwright)

Balboa Crosses the Panama Isthmus and Sees the Pacific

in 1513, a Spanish captain, Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, went into the interior of Darien (Panama). On September 24, 1513, Balboa sighted a new ocean. He called it the Mar del Sur, or 'sea of the south' (South Sea); later (1520), Ferdinand Magellan called it the Mare Pacificum, or Pacific Ocean.

It was Balboa's discovery of the Pacific that showed that what Columbus had discovered and explored was not Asia or the Indies, but an entirely new world. (Catholic Textbook Project.)

Explorers and Traders

The accounts of the first explorers revealed the potential for high-value commodity exchange, and voyages of exploration were soon followed by those of spice traders. (BOEM)

From 1500 AD onward, first Portugal, and then other European powers, attempted to control the spice trade, the ports which marketed spices, and eventually the territories which grew them. (Cartwright)

The Portuguese established trading posts in China at Macau in 1513, in Timor in 1515, and finally at Nagasaki, Japan in 1543. Within the next decades, Dutch competitors followed the Portuguese across the Indian Ocean and into Southeast Asia. (BOEM)

The Dutch gained a competitive foothold in Indonesia to open their own spice trade, establishing their own fortified trade outpost at Batavia (Jakarta), and then commenced direct trade with the Japanese in competition with the Portuguese.

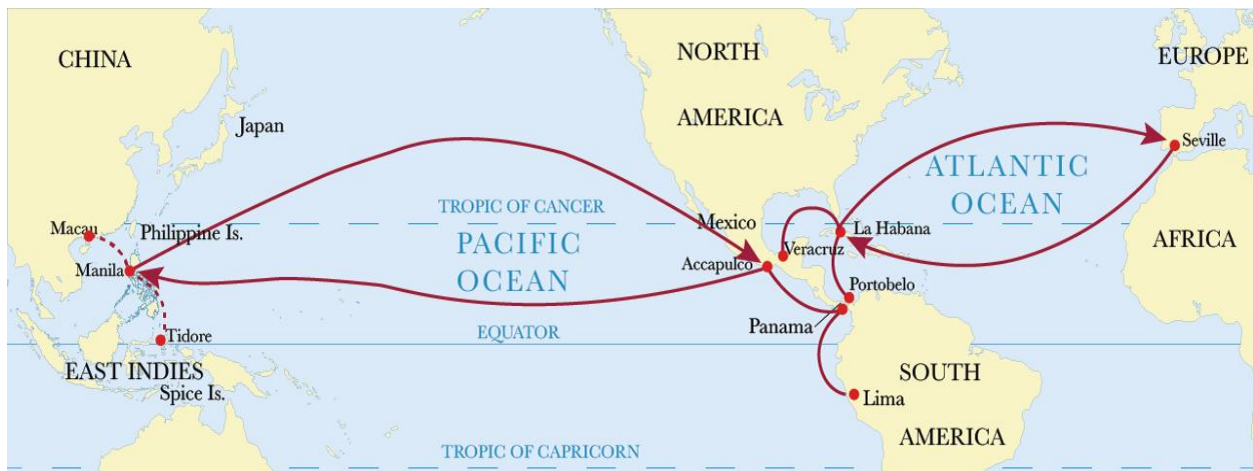
Spanish Manilla Galleons Crossing the Pacific

Then came the Spanish ... on November 28 1520, Spaniard Fernao de Magalhais (Ferdinand Magellan) entered the eastern Pacific from the opposite direction, by way of the tip of South America, discovering the strait that now bears his name, and thereby opened up to Spain the possibility of an alternative route between Europe and the spices of the Orient." (Lloyd)

Magellan crossed the ocean to the Philippines, which he named Las Islas Filipinas in honor of the Spanish king, Felipe. Magellan died on the voyage, but his lieutenant Juan Sebastian Elcano brought his expedition home. (Spate)

Starting in 1565, with the Spanish sailor and friar Andrés de Urdaneta, after discovering the Tornaviaje or return route to Mexico through the Pacific Ocean, Spanish galleons sailed the Pacific Ocean between Acapulco in New Spain (now Mexico) and Manila in the Philippine islands.

The Spanish ultimately prevailed against other European competition in terms of Pacific trade. They did this through the founding of their outpost at Manila (Philippines) in 1571 and the establishment of regular transpacific Manila Galleon voyages.



Once a year, gold and silver were transported west from Acapulco to Manila in exchange spices (pepper, clove and cinnamon), porcelain, ivory, lacquer and elaborate fabrics (silk, velvet, satin), collected from both the Spice Islands (Moluccas, Indonesia) and the Asian Pacific coast.

They also carried Chinese handicrafts, Japanese screens, fans, Japanese swords, Persian carpets, Ming dynasties and a myriad of other products. East Asia traded primarily with a silver standard, and the goods were bought mainly with Mexican silver. (Pascual)

The galleons leaving Manila would make their way back to Acapulco in a four-month long journey. The goods were off-loaded and transported across land to ships on the eastern Mexican coast at Veracruz (on the Gulf), and eventually, sent to European markets and customers eager for these exotic wares. (GuamPedia)

“The Spanish captains normally made their eastbound Pacific crossings between 31° N and 44° N latitude to insure that they would remain in the zone of the westerly winds. They would want to avoid the ‘horse latitudes’ (around 30° N) and they would certainly want to remain well north of the northeast trade winds that would drive their square rigged ships back to the Philippines.”

“This northerly route back to Acapulco would normally keep the galleons at least 1,000 miles north of Hawaii and it would not be surprising if little or no contact with the Hawaiian Island occurred during these difficult eastbound crossings of the North Pacific.”

“The westbound route from Acapulco offers an entirely different set of navigational considerations. Friar Urdaneta’s route involved sailing down to 13° N latitude (or 14° N) and following that parallel all the way to Guam and on to the San Bernardino Strait in the Philippines.”

The Manila Galleon trade lasted for 250 years and ended in 1815 with Mexico’s war of independence. (Lloyd)

Despite the presence of these various European powers in the Pacific, the true economic power was Asia, particularly the vast empire of China. The acquisition and control of the riches of China would dominate the dreams of European monarchs and later European entrepreneurs and capitalists for centuries. (BOEM)

Russians Initiate Pacific Fur Trade (Initially, Land-based, then Maritime)

The Pacific fur trade was pioneered by the Russians, working east from Kamchatka along the Aleutian Islands to the southern coast of Alaska. (ESDAW)

Before the European colonization of the Americas, Russia was a major supplier of fur pelts to Western Europe and parts of Asia. Its trade developed in the Early Middle Ages (500-1000 AD), first through exchanges at posts around the Baltic and Black seas.

“We have encountered a divine marvel ... There are mountains, which slope down to the arm of the sea, and their height reaches to the heavens Within these mountains are heard great cries and the sound of voices and [some people] are struggling to cut their way out of this mountain ...”

“Their language is unintelligible. They point at iron objects and make gestures as if to ask for them. If given a knife or an axe, they supply furs in return.” (Primary Chronicle, Etkind in the year 1096)

“In their quest for fur, the Russians colonized a huge, exotic, and inhospitable space, called “the land of darkness” by early Arabic travelers. Combining barter with coercion, the Russians locked the peoples of the Arctic North into a system of trade that led to the extermination of animals and humans.” (Etkind)

Originally, Russia exported raw furs, consisting in most cases of the pelts of martens, beavers, wolves, foxes, squirrels, and hares. Between the 16th and 18th centuries, Russians began to settle in Siberia, a region rich in many mammal fur species, such as Arctic fox, lynx, sable, sea otter and stoat (ermine).



Hudson's Bay Company Enters Fur Trade

In 1670, King Charles II of England granted a royal charter to create the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), under the governorship of the king's cousin Prince Rupert of the Rhine.

The Royal Charter of 1670 granted “the Governor and Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson Bay” exclusive trading rights over the entire Hudson Bay drainage system.

Native people provided furs and hides as well as food, equipment, interpreters, guides and protection in exchange for European, Asian, and American manufactures. A primary object of the terrestrial fur trade was beaver, the soft underfur of which was turned into expensive and sought-after beaver hats.

In quest of “soft gold” (beaver, otter, and other lightweight and highly valuable fine furs), which created fortunes large and small for lucky entrepreneurs, the fur hunters’ rosters included capable explorers who expanded the fur trade’s theater of operations and also shed light on western geography. (Barbour)

Traders drafted many useful maps and wrote reports meant to help their governments secure geopolitical objectives. Similarly, by providing quarters, protection, and aid to scientists and artists at isolated trading posts, fur traders supported the study of Native Nations and natural history. (Barbour)

18th Century Pacific Explorations

It was the French and British who dominated Pacific exploration in the eighteenth century. Beginning in the mid-1700s, the rival nations began to send out scientific expeditions to explore and chart the islands of the Pacific.

French expeditions in this period include those of Louis Antoine de Bougainville (1766–69), Jean François de la Pérouse (1785–88), Étienne Marchand (1790–92), and Antoine Raymond-Joseph de Bruni d’Entrecasteaux (1791–93).

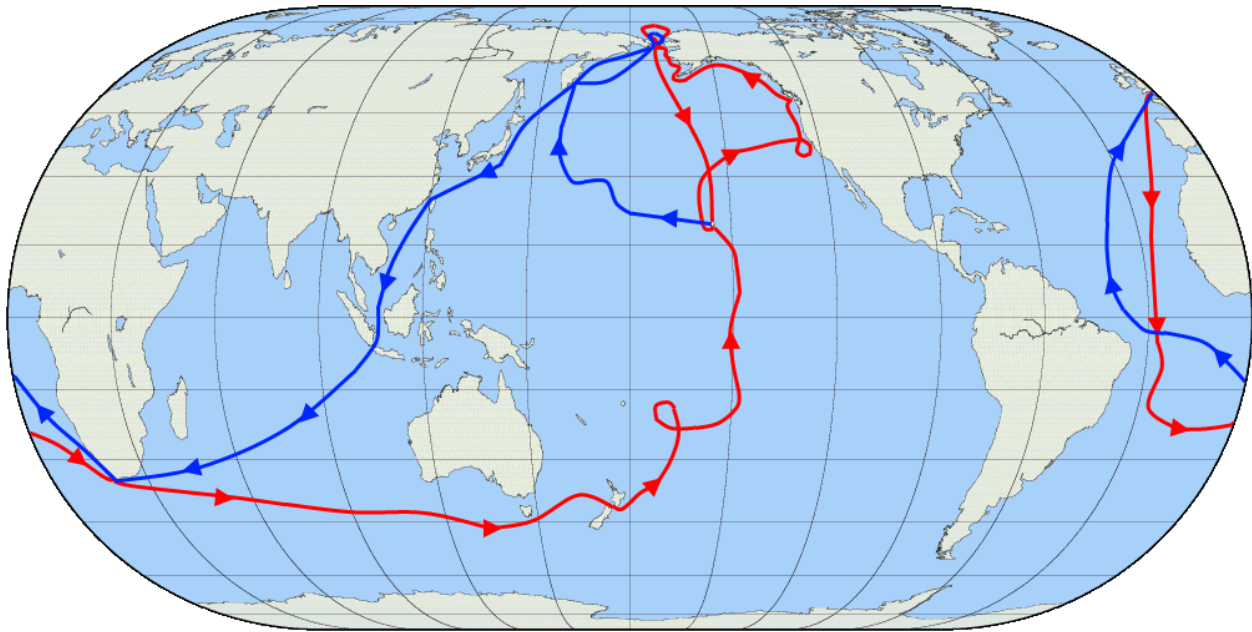
British explorers included Samuel Wallis (1767–68) and Philip Carteret (1767–68). But by far the most wide-ranging and accomplished of the eighteenth-century explorers was the Englishman Captain James Cook, who made three separate voyages to the Pacific in 1768–71, 1772–75, and 1776–80. (Kjellgren, MetMuseum)

Cook’s Voyages (and Subsequent Hawai’i’s Involvement in Pacific Trade)

In 1768, Cook set sail on the first of three voyages to the South Seas, mainly to record the transit of Venus in Tahiti in 1769. After that, the ship sailed around the South Pacific searching for the “Great Southern Land.” (Wall Street Journal)

Cook's second Pacific voyage (1772–75) aboard Resolution and Adventure aimed to establish whether there was an inhabited southern continent, and make astronomical observations.

Cook’s third and final voyage (1776–79) 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)



Captain Cook's 3rd voyage (1776–1779)

'Common Friends to Mankind'

At that same time, recall that back in the Atlantic on the eastern coast of the North America, the American Revolutionary War was still ongoing with the Americans (with support from the French) fighting the British.

On March 10, 1779, Benjamin Franklin issued a directive to the captains of American ships: "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 ..."

"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 ..."

Franklin convinced America's war partners, the French, to do the same ... 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 ..."

"... 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.”

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, they met neither French nor American ships on the way home. (Captain Cook Society)

“All the great remaining voyages of the eighteenth century drew on Cook's officers. Bligh, Portlock, Vancouver, Colnett, Riou, and Hergest all got their commands and served with great distinction. These men then passed on their skills to a second generation of men such as Flinders and Broughton.”

While Cook did not find the Northwest Passage, that would have opened an easier sea route to the Spice trade, his Third Voyage to the Pacific took him to the Pacific Northwest Coast.

After Cook was killed in Hawai'i, one of his officers – and later a Captain - George Vancouver continued to explore and chart the Northwest Coast. Commercial traders soon followed, exchanging copper, weapons, liquor, and varied goods for sea otter pelts. (Barbour)

Following Cook's 'discovery' of the opportunities in the fur trade, the North American maritime fur trade became the earliest global economic enterprise. Cook's 'discovery' resulted in the British and then the Americans participating in the trade.

United States Enters the Maritime Fur Trade

The maritime fur trade focused on acquiring furs of sea otters, seals and other animals from the Pacific Northwest Coast and Alaska. The furs were to be mostly sold in China in exchange for tea, silks, porcelain and other Chinese goods to be sold in Europe and the US.

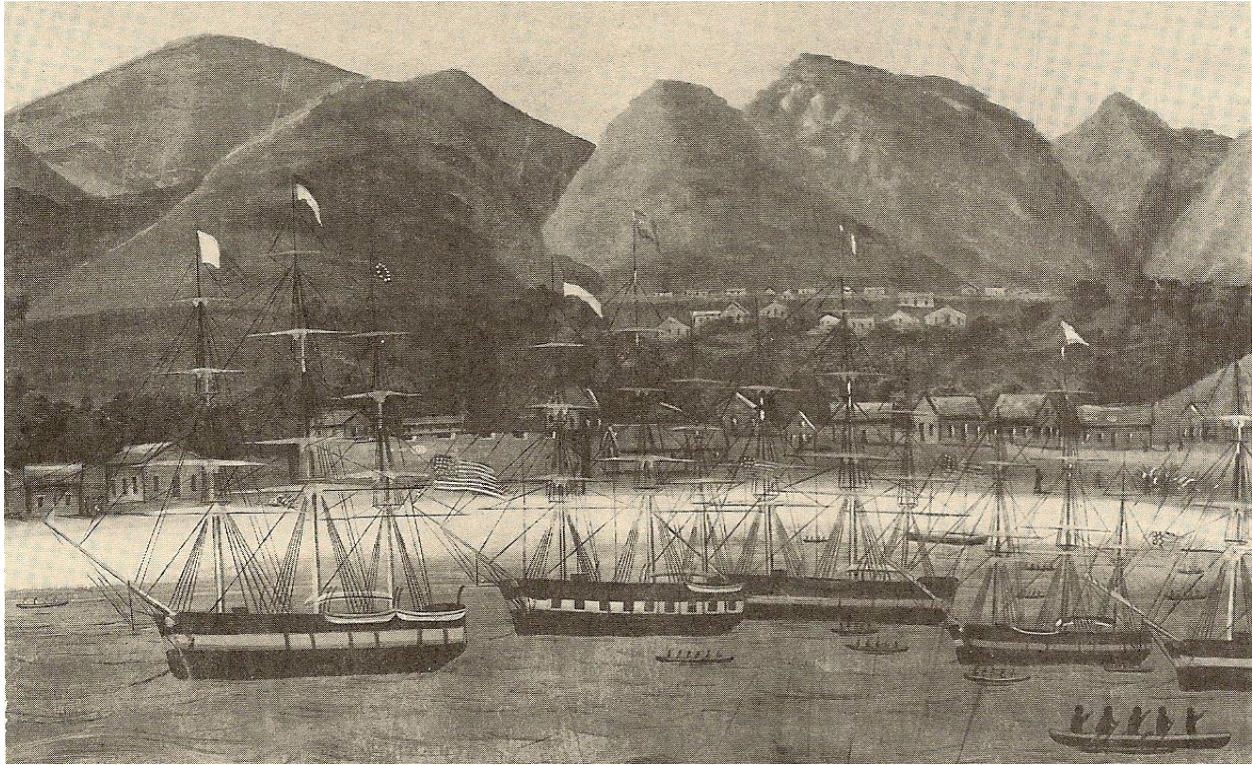
Europe's interest in the North Pacific quickened in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, as Spanish, British, French, Russian, and eventually ships from the United States came into increasing contact with Native people in coastal estuaries. (Robbins)

Following the American Revolution, the new nation needed money and a vital surge in trade. In 1787, two ships (Columbia, captained by John Kendrick, and Lady Washington, captained by Robert Gray) left Boston on a mission around Cape Horn and into the Pacific Ocean. to establish new trade with China, settle an outpost on territory claimed by the Spanish, and find the legendary Northwest Passage.

By the close of the eighteenth century, the Northwest Coast of America had become a place with an emerging global economy. (Robbins) The opening of the China trade was the first and most spectacular result of this enterprise; the establishment of trading relations with Hawai'i followed shortly thereafter.

Within ten years after Captain Cook's 1778 contact with Hawai'i, the islands became a favorite port of call in the trade with China. The fur traders and merchant ships crossing the Pacific needed to replenish food supplies and water.

Needing supplies in their journey, the traders soon realized they could economically barter for provisions in Hawai'i; for instance any type of iron, a common nail, chisel or knife, could fetch far more fresh fruit, meat, and water than a large sum of money would in other ports.



A triangular trade network emerged linking the Pacific Northwest coast, China and the Hawaiian Islands to Britain and the United States (especially New England).

The Hawaiian Islands first entered the international economic scene when its ports and favorable climate made the Islands an ideal winter harbor and stopover for merchant ships, whalers and explorers' vessels who needed to replenish food and water supplies or make necessary repairs. (Duncan)

Practically every vessel that visited the North Pacific in the closing years of the 18th century stopped at Hawai'i for refreshment and recreation.

Fur trading on the coast remained profitable from the 1780s into the 1820s, but the successful trade in furs depended entirely on the locale. Some parts of the coast, such as Nootka Sound and Clayoquot Sound, witnessed a complete collapse of the sea otter population after only a decade of intense hunting. (Iglar)

Panama Canal

As trade and commerce expanded across the Pacific, numerous countries were looking for faster passage and many looked to Nicaragua and Panama in Central America for possible dredging of a canal as a shorter, safer passage between the two Oceans.

Finally, in 1881, France started construction of a canal through the Panama isthmus. By 1899, after thousands of deaths (primarily due to yellow fever) and millions of dollars, they abandoned the project and sold their interest to the United States.

After Panamanian independence from Columbia in 1903, the US restarted construction of the canal in 1905. Finally, the first complete Panama Canal passage by a self-propelled, oceangoing vessel took place on January 7, 1914.

The Panama Canal is a 51-mile ship canal in Panama that connects the Atlantic Ocean (via the Caribbean Sea) to the Pacific Ocean. The canal cuts across the Isthmus of Panama and is a key conduit for international maritime trade. The American Society of Civil Engineers named the Panama Canal one of the seven wonders of the modern world.

The first cargo ship passing westward through the Panama Canal to call at Honolulu was the American Hawaiian Steamship Company's SS Missouriian commanded by Captain Wm. Lyons, on September 16, 1914.

In 1893, the Rev. Sereno Bishop of Hawai'i spoke of the commercial relationship between Hawai'i and the future isthmian canal: "Honolulu is directly in the route of a future part of heavy traffic from the Atlantic to the Pacific which is waiting for the creation of a canal. Trade to and from China and Japan will use the canal route."

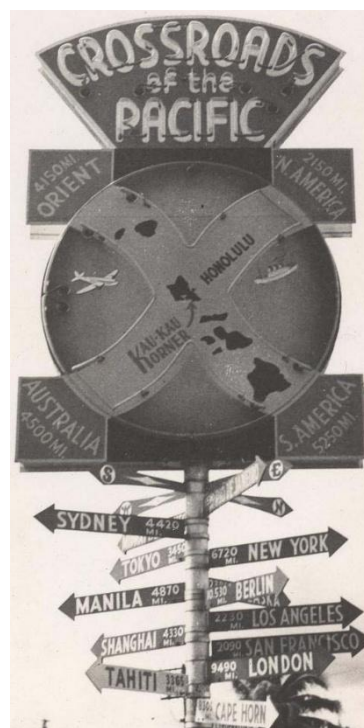
"Impending commerce using the future canal will have serious importance to the political relations of the Hawaiian Kingdom. Honolulu will be a convenient port of call for China-bound California steamers."

"The opening of the canal will increase Hawaii's importance as a coaling and general calling station. Tremendous new cargoes of supplies that will cross the Pacific, because of the canal, will need shelter and protection at a common port of supply - Honolulu." (Historic Hawaii Review)

In 1912, this strategy and declaration was claimed in an article in 'Paradise of the Pacific' that Hawai'i was truly deserving of the name, "Crossroads of the Pacific".

The Chamber of Commerce of Hawai'i promoted the idea, naming its early-1900s official publication "Honolulu at the Crossroads of the Pacific."

Before the Panama Canal was 'officially' opened for commerce, "The first commercial business handled by the canal was a shipload of sugar from Hawaii."



Testimony in Washington, DC, in 1915, noted that the opening of the canal would affect Hawai'i in two ways: traffic to and from the Orient would use Hawai'i as a way-station for supplies and instructions; and Hawai'i would also be a destination for freight, passengers and tourists.

Aviation, Into the Future ...

Later, when Navy Commander John Rodgers and his crew arrived in Hawai'i on September 10, 1925 on the first trans-Pacific air flight, they fueled the imaginations of Honolulu businessmen and government officials who dreamed of making Hawai'i the economic Crossroads of the Pacific, and saw commercial aviation as another road to that goal.

Two years later on March 21, 1927, Hawaii's first airport was established in Honolulu and dedicated to Rodgers. 1959 brought two significant actions that shaped the present day make-up of Hawai'i, (1) Statehood and (2) jet-liner service between the mainland US and Honolulu (Pan Am's Boeing 707.)