

## “Oh, father, dear father, do take me back!”

From 1820 to 1848, 12-Companies of missionaries, under the auspices of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), arrived at the Islands. Every group of missionaries arrived by ship, sailing from New England, around Cape Horn and finally reaching the Hawaiian Islands usually after a five-month sea voyage. (Miller)

The Prudential Committee of the ABCFM in giving instructions 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 Pioneer Company, led by Hiram Bingham, left New England on the “Thaddeus” and arrived in the Islands on April 4, 1820, two centuries after their forebears, the pilgrims, landed from the “Mayflower” in New England.

For the most part, the missionaries were married – typically ‘just married’ a few weeks or months of their departure. In the Pioneer Company, by the middle of the trip, four of the wives were pregnant. (The following is a composite from writers from different Companies describing the trip.)

Travel wasn’t easy.

There were seven American couples sent by the ABCFM to convert the Hawaiians to Christianity in this Pioneer Company. These included two Ordained Preachers, Hiram Bingham and his wife Sybil and Asa Thurston and his wife Lucy.

Joining them were two Teachers, Mr. Samuel Whitney and his wife Mercy and Samuel Ruggles and his wife Mary; a Doctor, Thomas Holman and his wife Lucia; a Printer, Elisha Loomis and his wife Maria; and a Farmer, Daniel Chamberlain, his wife Jerusha and five children (Dexter, Nathan, Mary, Daniel and Nancy.)

On October 23, 1819, the Pioneer Company of American Protestant missionaries set sail on the Thaddeus for the Sandwich Islands (now known as Hawai‘i.) For the most part, the couples were newlyweds; here is a listing of their wedding dates:

Hiram and Sybil Bingham were married October 11, 1819

Asa and Lucy Thurston were married October 12, 1819

Samuel and Mercy Whitney were married October 4, 1819

Samuel and Mary Ruggles were married September 22, 1819

Thomas and Lucia Holman were married September 26, 1819

Elisha and Maria Loomis were married September 27, 1819

(Daniel and Jerusha Chamberlain, with five children, were the only family in the Pioneer Company.)

After 164-days at sea, on April 4, 1820, the Thaddeus arrived and anchored at Kailua-Kona on the Island of Hawai‘i. Hawai‘i’s “Plymouth Rock” is about where the Kailua pier is today.

Starting a few short months after their arrival, the new missionary wives became mothers.

The first child was Levi Loomis, son of the Printer, Elisha and Maria Loomis; he was the first white child born in the Islands. Here is the order of the early missionary births:

July 16, 1820 ... Honolulu (O'ahu) ... Levi Loomis  
October 19, 1820 ... Waimea (Kauai) ... Maria Whitney  
November 9, 1820 ... Honolulu (O'ahu) ... Sophia Bingham  
December 22, 1820 ... Waimea (Kauai) ... Sarah Ruggles  
March 2, 1821 ... Waimea (Kauai) ... Lucia Holman  
September 28, 1821 ... Honolulu (O'ahu) ... Persis Thurston

More missionaries, and more children, came, later.

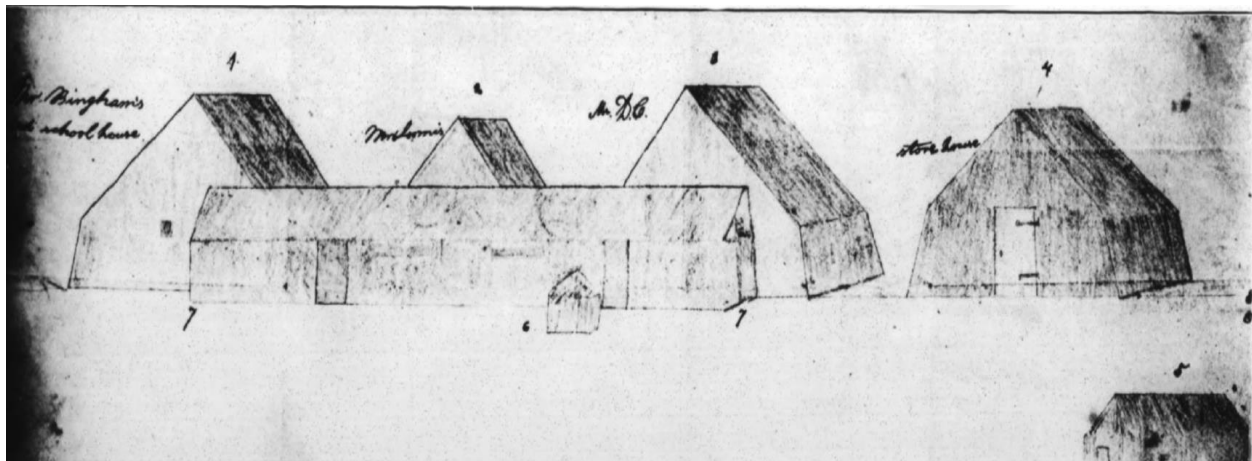
The children of nineteenth-century American missionaries were Hawaiian nationality by birth, white by race and American by parental and educational design. (Schultz)

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.

By the time the Pioneer Company arrived, Kamehameha I had died and the centuries-old kapu system had been abolished; through the actions of King Kamehameha II (Liholiho,) with encouragement by former Queens Ka'ahumanu and Keōpūolani (Liholiho's mother,) the Hawaiian people had already dismantled their heiau and had rejected their religious beliefs.

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.

In the early years, they lived in the traditional hale pili (thatched house) – "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.



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

“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.” (Bishop)

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.

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."

The missionary family’s day began at 4 am (... it continued into the night, with no breaks.) The mission children were up then, too; in the early morning, the parents taught their children. “We had one tin whale-oil lamp between us, with a single wick.... Soon after five we had breakfast.” (Bishop)

By 9 am, after accomplishing all domestic duties and schooling of the children, the wives would begin the instruction of the Hawaiian children – and taught them for six solid hours, occasionally running into the house to see that all was straight.

Interestingly, as the early missionaries learned the Hawaiian language, they then taught their lessons in the mission schools 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.

The missionaries developed an alphabet and started to teach the Hawaiians to read and write – in the Hawaiian language. This marked the beginning of Hawai‘i’s phenomenal rise to literacy. The missionaries established schools associated with their missions across the Islands.

By 1831, in just eleven years from the first arrival of the missionaries, Hawaiians had built over 1,100-schoolhouses. This covered every district throughout the eight major islands and serviced an estimated 53,000-students. (Laimana)

By 1853, nearly three-fourths of the native Hawaiian population over the age of sixteen years was literate in their own language. The short time span within which native Hawaiians achieved literacy is remarkable in light of the overall low literacy rates of the United States at that time. (Lucas)

This was fine for the Hawaiians who were beginning to learn to read and write, but the missionary families were looking for expanded education for their children.

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)

From 1826 until 1842, young missionary parents began to make a decision seemingly at odds with the idealizing of the family so prevalent in the 19th century; they weighed the possibility of sending them back to New England. The trauma mostly affected families of the first two companies, and involving only 19 out of 250 Mission children. (Zwiep)

The parents in the first company demonstrate the range of options available: going home with all the children (as did the Chamberlains and Loomises;) keeping all the children to be educated by the mother (the Thurstons' choice;) or sending some or all of the children home, not knowing when or if they would be reunited (the course taken by the Bingham, Ruggleses and Whitneys.)

“(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)

“Owing to the then lack of advanced schools in Hawaii, the earlier mission children were all ‘sent home’ around Cape Horn, to ‘be educated.’ This was the darkest day in the life history of the mission child.” (Bishop)

“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)

In 1829, Sophia Bingham was sent back to the continent. Mail was so slow that her mother Sybil waited a year and a half for her first letter from Sophia. "This poor, waiting, anxious heart," she confessed, "has been made so glad by your long, crowded pages, that it would not be easy to tell you all its joy." (Zwiep)



In 1840, as the ship carrying the missionaries’ offspring pulled away from the dock, a distraught seven-year-old, Caroline Armstrong, looking at her father on the shore, the distance between them widening every moment ... “Oh, father, dear father, do take me back!” (Judd)

Her plea echoed in the hearts of the community. In June of that year the mission voted to establish a school for the missionary children at Punahou. (Emanuel)

The Missionary Period lasted from 1820 to 1863; during the first 21-years of the Missionary Period, no fewer than 33 children were either taken back to the continent by their parents.

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."

The following report was adopted: "Whereas it has long been the desire of many members of this mission to have a school established for the instruction of their children, and this object received the deliberate sanction of our last General Meeting; and"

"(W)hereas the Providence of God seems to have opened the way for this undertaking, by providing a good location for the school, suitable teachers to take charge of it, and a sufficiency of other means for making a commencement. Therefore,"

"Resolved 1, That the foundation of this institution be laid with faith in God, relying upon his great and precious promises to believing parents, in behalf of their children, commending it to his care and love from its commencement, and looking unto him to build it up, cherish it, and make it a blessing to the church and the world."

"Resolved 2, That the location of the school be at Punahou, in the vicinity of Honolulu."

"Resolved 3, That \$2,000 be appropriated from the funds of the mission, to aid in erecting the necessary buildings, and preparing the premises for the accommodation of the school, as soon as possible; but as this sum is inadequate to the wants of the school, even in its commencement, that it be commended to the private patronage of the brethren of the mission."

"Resolved 4, That a Board of five Trustees be chosen, of whom the teacher shall be one, ex officio, whose duty it shall be to devise a plan for the school, carry it into operation, as soon as possible, watch over its interests, and regulate its affairs generally." (Resolution of the General Meeting of the Sandwich Islands Mission, 1841)

A subsequent Resolution noted "That Mr (Daniel) Dole be located at Punahou, as teacher for the Children of the Mission."

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.)

December 15 of that year, Old School Hall, "the new spacious school house," opened officially to receive its first students. The building is still there and in use by the school.

"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)

The curriculum at Punahou under Dole combined the elements of a classical education with a strong emphasis on manual labor in the school's fields for the boys, and in domestic matters for the girls. The school raised much of its own food. (Burlin)

Some of Punahou's early buildings include, Old School Hall (1852,) music studios; Bingham Hall (1882,) Bishop Hall of Science (1884,) Pauahi Hall (1894,) Charles R. Bishop Hall (1902,) recitation halls; Dole Hall and Rice Hall (1906,) dormitories; Cooke Library (1908) and Castle Hall (1913,) dormitory.



Dole Street, laid out in 1880 and part of the development of the lower Punahou pasture was named after Daniel Dole (other nearby streets were named after other Punahou presidents.)

Today, Punahou is the oldest independent school west of the Mississippi River. With 3,750 students, it is the largest single-campus private school in America. All of its graduates go on to college, with over 90-percent going to the continent for further schooling. (Scott, Punahou)

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 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)