

Hawaiian History

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This timeline documents many events surrounding the history of Hawai'i from pre-contact to present.

0 - 300 AD

Polynesian explorers first migrate to the Hawaiian Islands, bringing with them such vital plants as coconut, sugar cane, sweet potato, banana, breadfruit and taro.

300 AD - 1778

Prior to Western contact, Hawaiians develop a vibrant, sophisticated culture and a stable land tenure system that supports an estimated population of 300,000 to 1,000,000 people. Native Hawaiian land tenure built upon a system in which land is held in common for the benefit of all and upon the concept of "renewable resources." They establish a system whereby they can feed over 1,000,000 people without depleting or destroying resources for future generations. Extraordinary advances - many unmatched today - are made in agriculture, aquaculture, engineering, poetry, dance and arts and crafts.

1778

British explorer Captain James Cook "discovers" the Hawaiian Islands. Hawaii's isolation ends.

1810



King Kamehameha the Great unites the Hawaiian Islands into one internationally recognized Kingdom.

1819

King Kamehameha the Great dies. Liholiho ascends the throne as Kamehameha II (1819 - 1824) and abandons many of the ancient kapu (taboos).

1820

First American Protestant missionaries arrive aboard the brig Thaddeus.

Change comes at a rapid pace as Western education and commerce assume a growing importance. The old Hawaiian culture disappears rapidly under the onslaught of new ways and new peoples, and as the Native Hawaiian population declines with the introduction of new diseases. Whaling and the

provisioning of the whaling fleet bring a new focus to the island economy. At times, as many as 500 whaling ships winter in Hawaiian ports, creating the need for Western-styled "towns."

1825

Kauikeaouli, King Kamehameha III (1825 - 1854) ascends the throne.



1826

The United States extends full diplomatic recognition to the Kingdom of Hawaii and enters into treaties and conventions to govern friendship, commerce and navigation. Subsequent treaties are enacted in 1842, 1849, 1875 and 1887.

1835

The first commercial production of sugar cane begins. Laborers from Asia imported to work the plantations.

The new western plantations are built upon the concept of "profit." Millions of acres are deforested and limited water resources, which were formerly allotted by the number of people the land needed to sustain, are diverted to plantations leaving many Native Hawaiian farmers with now barren land.

1840

King Kamehameha III enacts first constitution of the Hawaiian Kingdom in which he affirms and formalizes the trust relationship between the Hawaiian people and their land. A Western governmental structure is adopted with a two-body legislative council consisting of a house of nobles and a house of representatives chosen by the people. A Western judicial system is also established with a supreme court.

1843

British Navy seizes Hawaii for Great Britain, then restores the Kingdom five months later. Great Britain and France officially recognize Hawaii's independence.

Under great pressure from foreigners who wish to privately "own" land and in an attempt to preserve Hawaiian control of Hawaiian lands, King Kamehameha III institutes the Mahele or division. The intent of the Mahele is to divide the land equally among the King, the

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ali'i (nobles) and the maka'ainana (commoners).

The lands set aside for the King become the basis for the "Crown and Government Lands" held in perpetuity to benefit the Hawaiian people. One of the precepts of the Mahele is that all lands - whether they be in the possession of the king, government or chiefs - are still subject to the rights of the native tenants.

Unfortunately, inexperience in dealing with Western property rights, the inability to raise the capital necessary for required surveys, and a sense that the Mahele was a betrayal of their ancient system leads to many maka'ainana's permanent loss of control of their ancestral lands.

1855

Alexander Liholiho, Kamehameha IV takes the throne. Throughout his reign, Kamehameha IV fights to regain control of Hawaiian lands and power.

1863

Prince Lot Kapuuiwa ascends the throne as Kamehameha V. King Kamehameha V refuses to take an oath to maintain the constitution. For one week, Hawaii is without a constitution, until Kamehameha V signs the Constitution of 1864 reasserting the monarch's powers.

1873

Hawaii's first elected king William Lunalilo reigns for one year before his untimely death.

1874

David Kalakaua, known as the "Merrie Monarch," is elected to the throne. King Kalakaua abolishes voter property qualifications. Under his reign,

the Kingdom of Hawaii is counted as the most literate nation in the world.

1882

'Iolani Palace is built, the first royal residence in the world to be electrified and to have modern plumbing, 'Iolani Palace today is the only royal palace ever to stand on American soil.

1887

King Kalakaua yields to Western demands to appoint a new cabinet whose foremost task is to write a new constitution. Vociferously protesting, King Kalakaua signs the constitution, dubbed the "Bayonet Constitution," which reduces the monarchy to ceremonial status, places the executive powers in the hands of the cabinet and makes a seat in the house of nobles an elected office. Additionally, voting rights are extended to American and European males regardless of citizenship. Property and income qualifications for voting are made so high most Native Hawaiians are disenfranchised.

1891

Senator McKinley proposes, and Congress passes, the "McKinley Tariff." This new "tariff" law erases advantages previously



enjoyed by American sugar growers in Hawaii. These businessmen realize the only way to ensure the large profits

previously earned from Hawaiian sugar is for Hawaii to become part of the United States.

1892

Princess Lydia Kamaka'eoha succeeds to the throne as Queen Lili'uokalani upon her brother's death.

1893

Recognizing the 1887 Constitution not only limits the monarch's prerogatives, but places the bulk of power in foreign hands, Lili'uokalani prepares a new constitution limiting the vote to Hawaiian-born or naturalized citizens and making cabinet members subject to removal by the legislature.

A small group of mainly American businessmen who control much of the islands' economy and private property meet to oppose the new constitution and to advocate annexation to the United States.

They call upon U.S. Minister to Hawaii John L. Stevens to order United States Marines to land in Honolulu to aid the annexationists as they take control of the government building, declare the monarchy abolished, and proclaim the existence of a provisional government until annexation with the United States is completed.

Lili'uokalani, realizing the futility of resisting the American military force and to prevent bloodshed, relinquishes her authority with the full expectation that the U.S. government will restore her position.

The U.S. Congress' Special Commissioner to Hawaii finds the United States responsible for the overthrow of the monarchy and President Grover Cleveland withdraws the treaty of annexation declaring the action as "an act of war" on a "feeble, but friendly state."

1894

Members of the provisional government realize annexation will not happen while Cleveland is President. They declare themselves the "Republic of Hawaii" and wait for the political tide to turn.

1895

A failed counter-revolt is launched and the Queen is imprisoned. While under house arrest, Lili'uokalani signs a document formally abdicating her throne for fear her supporters would be condemned to death.

Martial law is declared. Hawaiians are forced to swear opposition to the monarchy and allegiance to the new Republic or forfeit voting rights.



1896

William McKinley wins the Presidency.

1897

The Queen, after one year of imprisonment, travels to Washington, D.C. to plead the Hawaiian case.

Congress again looks at the annexation of Hawaii. A fact-finding mission "failed to find a Native Hawaiian who was not opposed to Annexation." The Pacific Commercial Advertiser reports, "There are hardly 2,000 of us-trying to hold the fort of white civilization here against 80,000 or more who oppose us."

An estimated 95 percent of Native Hawaiian adults sign petitions protesting annexation.

The U.S. Senate rejects the McKinley annexation treaty.

1898

Congressional imperialists seek to

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circumvent 2/3 majority necessary for annexation of new territories by enacting a joint resolution which requires only a simple majority.

In the midst of the Spanish American War, a faction of Congress feels the need for military stations to defend new U.S. territories. Hawaii's position in the middle of the Pacific, provides a perfect strategic launching point for planned territorial acquisitions and military forays.

The Joint Resolution of Annexation passes and President McKinley signs it into law.

The Republic of Hawaii cedes sovereignty of the Islands to the United States. The Joint Resolution recognizes the Hawaiian Government and Crown Lands are impressed with a special trust under the federal government's proprietorship.

1900

Congress passes the Organic Act establishing Hawaii's territorial government. The Organic Act again acknowledges the special trust relationship between the United States and the Hawaiian people.

1919

The Native Hawaiian population declines from an estimated 1,000,000 in 1778 to an alarming 22,600.

1920

Congress enacts the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act affirming the special relationship between the United States and Native Hawaiians. 200,000 acres of land are set aside for Native Hawaiian homesteads. However, as of 1998, only 40,703 acres were under lease to 6,547 homesteaders, with 29,702 applicants still waiting.

1938

The United States Congress again acknowledges the unique status of

the Hawaiian people by including a provision to lease lands within the National Parks Extension to Native Hawaiians and to permit fishing in the area 'only by native Hawaiian residents.'

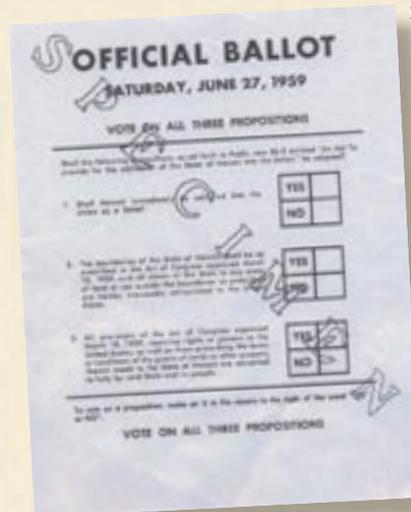
1945

Hawaii is placed under Article 73 of the United Nations Charter as a non-self-governing territory, under the administering authority of the United States.

1959

Hawaii becomes a state.

The United States cedes to the State of Hawaii lands formerly held by the U.S. and mandates that such lands be held by the State 'in



public trust.'

The Admission Act reaffirms the special relationship between the United States by retaining the legal responsibility to enforce the public trust obligation for 'the betterment of conditions of Native Hawaiians.'

1974

In recognition of the special relationship between the United States and the Native Hawaiian people, Congress extends to Native Hawaiians the same rights and privileges accorded to American Indian, Alaska Native, Eskimo and Aleut communities.

This is the first of more than 40 federal legislative acts acknowledging the

special relationship between the United States government and the Native Hawaiian people.

1978

Hawaii voters elect to change their constitution to fulfill statehood requirements established by the federal government.

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs is created as the principal agency for the performance, development and coordination of programs and activities relating to Hawaiians; assessing the policies and practice of other agencies impacting upon Hawaiians; conducting advocacy efforts; receiving and disbursing grants from all sources for Hawaiians; and serving as a receptacle for reparations from the federal government.

The new amendments also reaffirm and protect the unique right of the Native Hawaiian people to practice and perpetuate their culture, religious customs, beliefs, practices and language.

1993

On the centenary anniversary of the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii, the U.S. Congress passes and President Clinton signs into law "Public Law 103-150" apologizing for the United States' role in the overthrow and for the deprivation of the rights of Native Hawaiians to self-determination.

1996

Harold "Freddy" Rice files suit in the United States District Court for the District of Hawaii, contending he has been unconstitutionally denied the right to vote in the special election for Office of Hawaiian Affairs' trustees.

1997

The district court enters summary judgment against Mr. Rice noting the State of Hawaii has a special relationship with

the Native Hawaiian people, that the OHA voting limitations are related to Hawaii's obligation to fulfill its trust responsibilities to the Hawaiian people, and that, as the only beneficiaries of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Native Hawaiians are the only people affected by the outcome of any OHA election.

2000

-Hawaii's Senator's Akaka and Inouye introduce the Native Hawaiian Government Reorganization Act of 2000 to address the long-standing issues of Hawaiian self-determination. -The U.S. Supreme Court rules Hawaiians-only voting in OHA elections is unconstitutional.

- Several lawsuits are filed challenging the constitutionality of OHA, DHHL, and other government programs.

- Non-Hawaiians vote for and are allowed to run for OHA Trustee.

2004

OHA provides funding and support for the formation of the Native Hawaiian Coalition, a broad-based community alliance seeking to agree upon a process for forming a Hawaiian governing entity. As part of this effort, an initiative to enroll Native Hawaiians who wish to participate in the nation-building process begins called Kau Inoa.

2005

A vote on the Native Hawaiian Government Reorganization Act is pending in Congress and hopes to be put to a vote before the senate adjourns.

-The Arakaki lawsuit continues in court, and a new suit is filed against OHA's use of funds to benefit Hawaiians less than 50% blood quantum.

-Kau Inoa has enrolled more than 40,000 Native Hawaiians interested in participating in the formation of a Hawaiian Nation.