

# ***The Overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchy***

*Contributed by KS' Ho'okahua Cultural Vibrancy Group*

On January 17, in the year 1893, the Kingdom of Hawai'i was illegally overthrown.

The following remembrance recorded by Johanna Wilcox speaks of the overwhelming sadness felt by the population after the overthrow and annexation of Hawai'i to the United States of America.

*I was born a citizen of the Republic of Hawai'i in this City of Honolulu on February 18, 1898. Six months later, on August 12, 1898, Hawai'i became a Territory of the United States by annexation, at a formal noontime ceremony held in front of 'Iolani Palace. My mother and father and most Hawaiians stayed away from that heart-breaking ceremony.*

*An interesting incident took place shortly before the changeover. Several members of the Royal Hawaiian Band were so disturbed and unhappy that they hurriedly left the scene crying unashamedly when it was time to lower the flag of Hawaii. The sympathetic German bandmaster, Captain Henri Berger, understood their feelings and so did not attempt to stop them. So, only a part of the membership of the Royal Hawaiian Band remained to play the national anthem "Hawai'i Pono'i" when Hawai'i's flag was hauled down. The "Stars and Stripes" were then raised over 'Iolani Palace; a 21-gun salute was fired, while the band from an American warship played "The Star Spangled Banner." An event of this magnitude would ordinarily call for gala celebrations that night. However, there were no celebrations as there was too much sadness, too much bitterness and resentment prevalent in the atmosphere and the authorities were afraid of riots by the unhappy frustrated Hawaiians.*

## **Overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom**

Lili'uokalani became the eighth reigning monarch of the Kingdom of Hawai'i at the age of 52. She was sworn into office on January 29, 1891. Queen Lili'uokalani was well-prepared for the position, being groomed and educated since childhood, having been declared heir apparent by her brother King Kalākaua in 1874, and having served as regent on two occasions during the King's absence.

When Lili'uokalani came to the throne, the tangled politics surrounding who would hold true power in Hawai'i was coming to a head. Locally, citizens and residents, Hawaiians and foreigners, had many conflicting interests. Globally, the great powers of the world were racing to claim new territories in a competitive land grab dubbed Manifest Destiny by the Americans.

In February of 1892, nearly a year into the Queen's reign, the Kingdom of Hawai'i was scheduled for elections. The political landscape of the time was comprised of four main political organizations:

- 1) The Reform Party consisted mostly of members of the Hawaiian League, formed in 1887. Although there were a few part-Hawaiian members, the Hawaiian League was mainly a haole organization that took its direction from an executive committee commonly called the Committee/Council of Thirteen. Most members of the Hawaiian League sought to abolish the monarchy and establish Hawai'i as a republic. The most radical members of the League were proponents of annexation to the U.S. During Kalākaua's reign, the Hawaiian League formed an alliance with the Honolulu Rifles, an all-haole volunteer component of the armed forces of the Kingdom of Hawai'i, and imposed upon the King a new cabinet, called the Reform Cabinet. Their first order of business was to secure a new constitution. It was this group that forced King Kalākaua to revise the constitution of 1864, in turn creating a new "Bayonet Constitution," nicknamed as such because of the manner in which it came into existence.

- 2) The National Reform Party emerged from groups allying with one another mainly to challenge the Reform Party. The Queen supported this party, and for all intents and purposes it served as the “government party.”
- 3) The Hawaiian National Liberal Party was made up of dissatisfied members of the National Reform Party. This party advocated for a new and more liberal constitution. They were strong proponents of keeping Hawai‘i independent, as well as revising existing treaties, particularly with America, to put Hawai‘i in a more advantageous position. Their motto was “Hawai‘i for the Hawaiians.”
- 4) The Native Sons of Hawaii was another party, formed right before the Queen ascended to the throne. Like the previous two parties, they also wanted to preserve Hawai‘i’s independence, but unlike the Liberal Party, they wanted to keep the monarchical institutions intact. They also adopted the slogan “Hawai‘i for the Hawaiians.”

The election took place on February 3, 1892, resulting in none of the four parties holding a majority in the legislature. Discussions about the future of Hawai‘i, its relations to world powers, and possible changes in the Kingdom’s government took center stage. There was also a very public jockeying for power between the Queen and the different factions of legislature regarding the makeup of her cabinet.

Three months after the election, arrest warrants were issued for leaders of the Liberal Party and some members of their secret organization, the Hawaiian Patriotic League (Hui Kālai‘āina), which sought equal rights and a new constitution. Queen Lili‘uokalani documented,

*Petitions poured in from every part of the Islands for a new constitution; these were addressed to myself as the reigning sovereign. They were supported by petitions addressed to the Hui Kalaiaina, who in turn indorsed and forwarded them to me. It was estimated by those in position to know, that out of a possible nine thousand five hundred registered voters, six thousand five hundred, or two-thirds, had signed these petitions. To have ignored or disregarded so general a request I must have been deaf to the voice of the people, which tradition tells us is the voice of God. No true Hawaiian chief would have done other than to promise a consideration of their wishes.*

To avoid potential anarchy, none of the defendants were brought to trial. There was a fear that prosecuting individuals who were trying to protect national sovereignty would incense the Hawaiian people. In the summer of 1897, this same Hawaiian Patriotic League, along with the ‘Ahaui Hawai‘i Aloha ‘Āina (Men and Women’s League), would initiate an island-wide anti-annexation petition. More than 21,200 people would eventually sign these Kū‘ē Petitions.

While the Hui Kālai‘āina was gaining momentum, another organization, the Annexation Club, was secretly being formed by Lorrin A. Thurston. The purpose of this club was to prepare for immediate annexation to the United States, should a situation present itself in which that would be the only means to protect their vested interests in Hawai‘i.

The legislative session of 1892 proved to be a difficult one, and much of it centered on control of the Queen’s cabinet. Seven resolutions for “want of confidence” against the cabinet were introduced during this session. While Lili‘uokalani exercised her constitutional right to appoint her cabinet members, the legislature, determined to have cabinet members of their choosing, kept exercising their right to reject the ministers that the Queen appointed. On January 12, 1893, she introduced to legislature another “want of confidence” resolution against her cabinet and soon after, the Wilcox Cabinet resigned. The following morning, Lili‘uokalani appointed a new cabinet more to her liking. A prorogation of the Legislature was held on January 14 in which the Queen made her wishes known to replace the Bayonet Constitution with one that would restore the powers of the crown.

News of her intended action spread quickly, and groups of people began gathering to discuss what course of action they would take if the Queen continued her endeavor to create a new constitution.

Faced with uncertainty and inspired by Thurston, some of the most prominent business men in Honolulu saw an opportunity to promote the views of the Annexation Club and formed a new Committee of Safety. The committee was chaired by Henry E. Cooper and consisted of thirteen members, all of whom were also members of the Annexation Club and agreed with Thurston's solution to the dilemma. Over the next two days, the committee proclaimed a Provisional Government to establish law and order. The Committee of Safety also received assurance from American Minister John L. Stevens that he would land American troops if necessary to prevent the destruction of American lives and property.

The Committee of Safety scheduled a mass public meeting on January 16 to denounce the Queen and garner support to carry through with their plans. Over a thousand people attended this public meeting, nearly all of them white males. Most business establishments had been closed for the day. Minister Stevens decided to land American troops that same day, and when the Queen's ministers expressed their protest to him, Stevens told them to put any complaints in writing.

That evening, the Committee of Safety met and the Advisory and Executive Councils for the Provisional Government were named, along with a Finance Committee to secure additional arms. Sanford B. Dole was asked to serve as president, and by the next morning he had accepted the offer.

On January 17, while the Queen's ministers were in the police station drafting a letter to Stevens requesting his assistance, the Committee of Safety took over the government building without any resistance. There on the front steps, Henry E. Cooper delivered the reading of a proclamation that abrogated the monarchy, deposed the Queen, ousted her ministers and police marshal, and established a Provisional Government to remain in power until a union with the United States could be affected. The Provisional Government declared martial law, suspended the right of writ of habeas corpus on the island of O'ahu, and demanded the surrender of the police station. By 5 o'clock that afternoon, American Minister Stevens had recognized the Provisional Government as the "de facto Government of the Hawaiian Islands."

The Queen said it was about 2:45 p.m. when she heard that the Provisional Government proclaimed their establishment. Her four ex-cabinet ministers, joined by S. M. Damon and J. O. Carter, had come to tell Lili'uokalani that she had been deposed and to assist her in formulating any protest she should desire to make. The Queen was advised to surrender and yield to superior force. If she wished to do so under protest, her protest would be accepted by the Provisional Government, but her appeal needed to be made to the United States government in Washington for any redress. The following is her protest appeal:

I Lili'uokalani, by the Grace of God, and under the constitution of the Kingdom, Queen, do hereby solemnly protest against any and all acts done against myself and the constitutional Government of the Hawaiian Kingdom by certain persons claiming to have established a provision government of and for this Kingdom.

Then I yield to the superior force of the United States of America, whose minister plenipotentiary, His Excellence John L. Stevens, has caused United States troops to be landed at Honolulu, and declared that he would support the said provisional government.

Now, to avoid any collision of armed forces, and perhaps the loss of life, I do, under this protest and impelled by said force, yield my authority until such time as the Government of the United States shall, upon the facts being presented to it, undo the action of its representative, and reinstate me in the authority which I claim as the constitutional sovereign of the Hawaiian Islands.

Honorable James H. Blount was commissioned by U.S. President Grover Cleveland to investigate the circumstances of the overthrow of the constitutional government of the Hawaiian Kingdom. Arriving in Honolulu on March 29, 1893, Mr. Blount submitted his final report some three months later in July. He concluded that Queen Lili‘uokalani was indeed the constitutional ruler of the Hawaiian Islands and that she should be restored to her rightful position.

Through Mr. Albert Willis, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the Government of the United States, President Cleveland issued a message to the newly appointed President of the Provisional Government of Hawai‘i, Mr. Sanford Dole, to step down and restore to Queen Lili‘uokalani her constitutional authority.

In a letter by Mr. Dole on December 23, 1893 in response to Mr. Willis’ message, Dole writes:

“We do not recognize the right of the President of the United States to interfere in our domestic affairs. Such right could be conferred upon him by the act of this governance, and by that alone, or it could be acquired by conquest.”

Pīpī holo ka‘ao.

*Sources:*

*Queen Lili‘uokalani. Hawaii’s Story By Hawaii’s Queen Lili‘uokalani, Annotated by David Forbes. Honolulu: Hui Hānai, 2013.*  
*Kuykendall, Ralph S. The Hawaiian Kingdom Vol. III 1874-1893, The Kalakaua Dynasty. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1967.*

*“Reminiscences of a Kama‘āina,” February 24, 1964. Submitted by Johanna N. Wilcox, March 31, 1964. Bishop Museum Archives. Audio Collection Supplemental Folder. H-138.*

*Note: When there is much more to be told of a story, but it would come at a later time, Hawaiians would conclude their narration with “Pīpī holo ka‘ao”. “It is sprinkled, the story has fled.”*

HAWAII HOLOMUA

J. G. M. SHELDON, [Kahikina Kelekona], Lunahooponopono.

THOS. K. NAKANAELA, Kakaulelo.

HONOLULU, IAN. 18. 1893

ALOHA

Liliuokalanionamoku.

LAWE IA KA MANA AUPUNI!

Ke Kuahaua Kue a ka Moiwahine!

"Kuu aina hanau—e,  
Nou au e mele nei."

KUKALA KUE A KE ALIIAMOKU.

"O wau, LILIUOKALANI, ma ka lokomaikai o ke Akua, malalo o ke Kumukanawai o ke Aupuni Hawaii, MOIWAHINE, ma keia ke hoike paa nei i Ko'u kue i kekahi hana a mau hana paha a pau i lawelawe ia e kue ana la'u iho a me ke Aupuni Kumukanawai o ke Aupuni Hawaii e kekahi poe e koi ana ua kukulu lakou he Aupuni

Kuikawa no ka manawa no keia Aupuni.

"Ke ae wale nei no Au mamuli o ka mana oi ikaika o Amerika Huipua nona hoi ke Kuhina Elele Nui, ka Meamahaloia John L. Stevens, ua kauoha aku i na koa o Amerika Huipua e hoopae ia mai ma Honolulu, a ua kukala ae e kua no oia i ua Aupuni Kuikawa 'la no ka Manawa i oleloia.

"Nolaila, i mea e kaupale aku ai i na hookuia ana o na puali i hoolawa ia me na lako kuaa, a malis paha o hoopoino ia ke ola; nolaila, malalo o keia Kuahaua Kue a i kauhola ia hoi e ua mana ikaika 'la, ke ae wale nei no Au e paneeaku i Ko'u Mana a hiki i ka manawa a ke Aupuni o Amerika Huipua, mamuli o na mea oiaio e waiho ia aku ai imua ona, e hoololi ai i na hana a kona Luna Aupuni a e hoonoho hou la'u maluna o ka mana A'u e koi nei ma ke ano Aliiaimoku o ka Paesina Hawaii."

"Hanaia ma Honolulu, i keia la 17 o Ianuari, M. H. 1893."

"[Kakaunooia:]

LILIUOKALANI, R.

SAMUEL PARKER,

Kuhina o ko na Aina E.

WM. H. CORNWELL,

Kuhina Waiwai.

JNO. F. COLBURN,

Kuhina Kalaiaina.

A. P. PETERSON,

Loio Kuhina.

"Ia S. B. DOLE a me kekahi poe e ae o ke Aupuni Kuikawa no ka Manawa o ka Paesina Hawaii."

The Queen's protest

The Queen's protest was printed in its entirety the very next day in the Hawaiian Language Newspaper *Hawaii Holomua*. (Hawaii Holomua, 1/18/1893, p. 2)



### **The Committee of Safety**

The Committee of Safety, signatories of the January 16, 1893 proclamation letter that abrogated the monarchy, were:

- Henry Ernest Cooper (American citizen)
- Frederick W. McChesney (American citizen)
- Theodore F. Lansing (American citizen)
- John A. McCandless (American citizen)
- William Owen Smith (HI born with American parents)
- Lorrin A. Thurston (HI born with American parents)
- William Richards Castle (HI born with American parents)
- William C. Wilder (American who became a naturalized citizen)
- Crister Bolte (German who became a naturalized citizen)
- Henry Waterhouse (Tasmanian who became a naturalized citizen)
- Andrew Brown (Scottish citizen)
- Edward Suhr (German citizen)
- John Emmeluth (American citizen)
- Henry F. Glade (German citizen, resigned out of the committee)
- A.S Wilcox (HI born with American parents, resigned out of the committee)



### **USS Boston's Bluejackets**

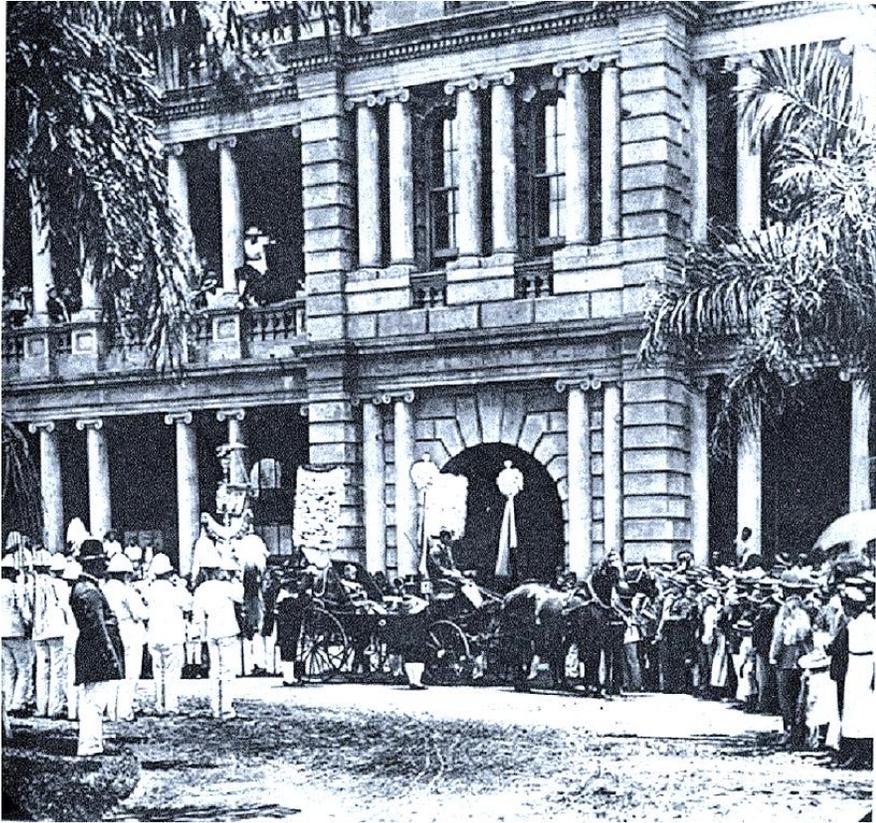
The USS Boston's Bluejackets on duty at the Arlington Hotel, Honolulu, January 17, 1893.

Contrary to erroneous conjecture, Charles Reed Bishop did not “invite” the landed American soldiers to reside at the Arlington Hotel (Haleakalā, Aigupita, Aikupita). The home was completed on the Haleakalā estate in 1851, and it was built and occupied by Pauahi’s biological parents Konia and Pākī until Pākī’s death in 1855. It then became the home to Bernice Pauahi Bishop and her husband Charles Reed Bishop and their ward Lili‘uokalani until the time of Lili‘uokalani’s engagement and marriage to John O. Dominis in 1862.

Mrs. and Mr. Bishop had already made Keōua Hale their home at the time of her death in 1884 and after Pauahi’s passing, the Haleakalā property was used as a boarding house and then became the Arlington Hotel leased and operated by the hotel proprietor, Thomas E. Krouse.

Mr. Bishop gifted to Kamehameha Schools all the lands willed to him in life interest by his wife as well as lands acquired on his own account. Among the properties turned over to his wife’s estate were several of historic importance. These included the home sites of the Bishops (Haleakalā) and Princess Ruth (Keōua Hale). Bishop thus surrendered the rentals on all the parcels, consisting of 29,069 acres of her lands and nearly 76,000 acres of his lands. The transfer of lands returned was recorded in seven deeds beginning from February 1, 1890.

The Arlington Hotel was torn down in September 1900 just prior to Bishop Street being cut through the Diamond Head portion of its garden. Although no longer the owner of the property and no longer a resident of Hawai‘i, Mr. Bishop specially commissioned workers to make sure that when his wife’s tamarind tree was to be cut down, the stump would be taken as a memento to the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum and Memorial Church, which he had built in her honor at the original Kamehameha Schools’ Kaiwi‘ula campus.



**Queen Lili'uokalani leaves Ali'iōlani Hale**

Queen Lili'uokalani leaving Ali'iōlani Hale after the prorogation of the legislature on January 14, 1893, just three days before the overthrow.