

Charles Reed Bishop: Builder of the State – Friend of Youth – Benefactor of Hawaii

January 25 marks the 185th anniversary of the birth of Charles Reed Bishop, beloved husband of Princess Bernice Pauahi, and co-founder of Kamehameha Schools. The two married in 1850, and through their 34 years of marriage and up until his death in 1915, he steadfastly advanced their shared vision resulting in him being remembered as a “Builder of the State—Friend of Youth—Benefactor of Hawaii.”

The following is an adapted biography from the Charles Reed Bishop Trust. Visit charlesreedbishop.org to learn more about this benevolent man and the numerous legacies of aloha he has left for the Hawaiian people and the people of Hawai‘i.

Charles Reed Bishop was a prominent and well-respected citizen of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i.

Born January 25, 1822 in Glens Falls, New York, Bishop arrived in Hawai‘i in 1846 with his friend William Little Lee; Lee was a lawyer and also became a loyal citizen in the kingdom. Bishop easily found work, first at Ladd and Company, a mercantile and trading establishment, then at the U.S. Consulate in Honolulu. Bishop was appointed collector general of Customs in 1849.

His industrious nature and good counsel in many fields were highly valued by Hawai‘i residents and foreigners alike. Bishop served on the Privy Council for five Hawaiian monarchs from 1859–1891, and was appointed to the House of Nobles 1859–1886 by King Kamehameha IV (Alexander Liholiho).

He helped establish the Royal Hawaiian Agricultural Society and the Honolulu Chamber of Congress. He served the monarchs in a variety of appointed positions such as: foreign minister; president of the Board of Education; and chairman of the Legislative Finance Committee. He was chosen by Ruth Ke‘elikōlani to be the executor of her estate and devoted 65 of his 93 years to honoring the lifelong works and aspirations of his wife Pauahi.

Soon after their marriage, the Bishops became the guardians of the future Queen Lili‘uokalani. In “Hawai‘i’s Story by Hawai‘i’s Queen,” Lili‘uokalani writes of her aloha for both her kahu:

He (Mr. Gilman) knew me when I was with Mrs. Bernice Pauahi Bishop, where I was ever under the kind care of her husband, Hon. Charles R. Bishop, a couple whose principles of exalted piety, whose love for all that is good, honorable, and pure, are too well known to need at this moment the least praise from me, and whose protection was ever and always surrounding my earlier life. Such were the lives of those with whom my own life has been passed...



Charles and Pauahi were married in 1850. Through their 34 years of marriage and up until his death in 1915, he steadfastly advanced their shared vision of nurturing the well-being of Native Hawaiians.

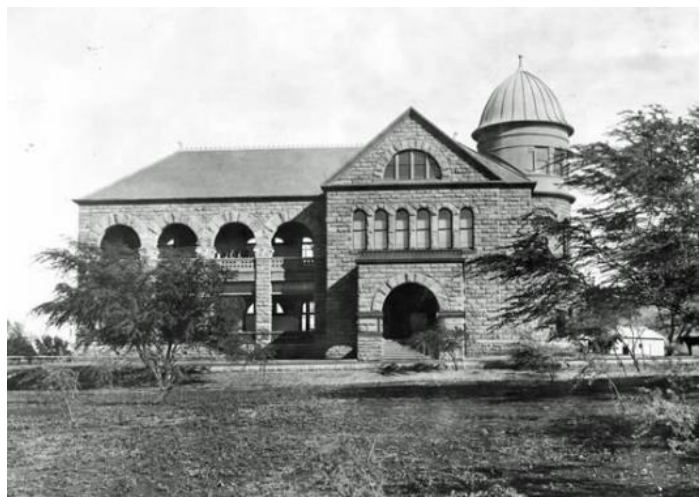
Charles Reed Bishop founded Bishop and Company in 1858, the forerunner of First Hawaiian Bank. An astute banker and financial businessman, he was looked upon to integrate financially prudent systems of banking, agriculture, real estate and investments for the kingdom. Soon after leaving Hawai'i, his business partner, Samuel M. Damon, acquired all his shares and interest of Bishop's bank.

Kamehameha Schools

Bishop is best known for his generous contributions to his wife's legacy, the Kamehameha Schools, and the founding of the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum.

Immediately after Pauahi's death in 1884, Bishop, as one of five trustees she appointed to manage her vast estate, set in motion the process that established the Kamehameha Schools in 1887. In December 1885, Bishop had been elected president of the Board of Trustees by the other trustees. Because Pauahi's estate was basically land rich and cash poor, Bishop contributed his own funds for the construction of several of the schools' initial buildings on the original Kaiwi'ula campus on O'ahu: the Principal's House (1887), the Preparatory Department (1888), Bishop Hall (1891), part of the Girls School (1894) and the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Memorial Chapel (1897) were all constructed with these contributions.

Bishop gifted to Kamehameha Schools all the lands willed to him in life interest by his wife, as well as lands acquired by him 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 Pauahi's lands and 64,619 acres of his own lands. The transfers of lands returned were recorded in seven deeds, beginning on February 1, 1890.



The Kamehameha School for Boys welcomed its first students on November 4, 1887. The site for the school's iconic Bishop Hall was selected in 1887 and the classroom structure was dedicated in 1891. It is the only building from the original campus still standing today.

There would be no Kamehameha Schools today if not for Bishop's own financial support and the enormous aloha he held for his wife, her family, and her people.

Bishop returned to Honolulu from San Francisco due to the political upheaval and instability in Hawai'i in late 1892 and early 1893. His feelings towards the political events of the time and the future of Kamehameha Schools were recorded in the minutes of the Kamehameha Schools and Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum's trustee meeting on May 6, 1893:

The President (C.R.B.) said there was one matter upon which he would like to express his views, whatever was the outcome of the present state of political affairs he hoped the Hawaiian flag would always be the flag of the Kamehameha Schools. It was always to be remembered that these were the Kamehameha Schools; the Hawaiian flag was the flag of the Kamehamehas...

In a letter written on September 25, 1894 by Bishop to Theodore Richards, (a principal of Kamehameha Schools from 1893–1898) a little more than a year from the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom, Bishop makes clear his course and writes:

Whatever form the Government may take, our duty toward the boys and girls is the same. They will need Kamehameha Schools, and the schools will be valuable to them and to the community. We need to cultivate our patience and forbearance in all teaching, and more especially in working with and for Hawaiians.

Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum

Bishop founded the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum in 1889 as an enduring memorial to his wife. Pauahi had inherited many irreplaceable heirlooms from her parents and her cousin Ruth Ke'elikōlani, including feather lei and capes, kāhili, niho palaoa, kapa, lau hala mats, stone and bone implements and calabashes. Queen Emma also willed her priceless antiquities to Bishop, who turned her collection over to the museum.



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Bishop himself added many more collections from all around the world. He contributed a splendid collection of shells, 1500 specimens for a herbarium, and a stamp collection called Hawaiian Postage and Revenue Stamps. He made special effort to look for feather work to acquire and purchased items like the Lady Franklincape. Today, the Bishop Museum has the largest and finest collection of Hawaiian feather work in the world.

Bishop also began the museum's first recording archive. He wished that the mele and stories be captured before becoming lost in antiquity. In a letter addressed to Bishop Museum Trustee C. M. Hyde dated June 14, 1898, Bishop wrote:

A number of years ago I attended a feast given by Lili'uokalani, then Princess, at which two old natives, male and female, recited with excellent effect some old mele, one of which was said to have belonged to A. Pākī [Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop's father]. It occurred to me that those chants and others could and should be preserved by aid of phonograph. It seems to me worthwhile for the Museum to own a good phonograph and to secure a considerable number of native mele (ancient and modern) songs, speeches, etc. for preservation. What do you say to it?

Bishop had always intended that the museum would remain a permanent monument to the connection between Kamehameha Schools and its founder and that it would benefit students in the generations to come.

Health Care and Education

Health care and education were always at the heart of Pauahi's desires to better her people's lives, and they became important to Bishop as well. For example, the Bishops were one of Queen Emma and King Kamehameha IV's most loyal supporters in establishing The Queen's Hospital.

Bishop served on the Board of Trustees from the hospital's inception until his departure from Hawai'i in 1893. Through his trusteeship, which spanned 34 years, he served as treasurer, member and chairman of the Executive Committee, and vice president. Bishop gave more than \$100,000 in financial gifts to Queen's Hospital, making him the hospital's chief benefactor.



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Bishop also sat on the boards of many charities and donated generously to more than 30 Hawai'i schools, hospitals, churches and social welfare organizations.

In 1876, King Kalākaua appointed Bishop and four others as commissioners to a special committee "to devise ways and means by which to arrest the decrease and decay of the Original Hawaiian Race." Bishop's appointment to the "Ho'oulu Lāhui," or "Increase the race program," likewise influenced Bishop to support the Kapi'olani Maternity Home. He also established the Bishop Home for Girls at Kalaupapa to house young girl patients and sponsored the Sisters of St. Francis to staff the home. Lē'ahi Hospital on O'ahu, Kauikeolani Children's Center on Kaua'i, the Salvation Army, and the Young Men's Christian Association were just a few more beneficiaries aided by his generosity.

Bishop believed in the transformative power of education and supported a number of schools and colleges. O'ahu College and Punahou School, Mills Institute (now known as Mid-Pacific Institute), St. Andrew's Priory and Sacred Hearts Academy, Makawao Female Seminary (Mauna'olu), Kohala Girls' School (Waikupanaha), Hilo Boys' Boarding School, and the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Virginia all received very generous support from Bishop. He not only contributed money to his causes, but he also provided sound advice and financial expertise.

Mauna'ala

Mauna'ala, the Royal Mausoleum in Nu'uuanu, was completed in 1865 to shelter the remains of Hawaiian royalty. The building that is now used as a chapel was intended for the storage of the caskets. By the time Pauahi died in 1884, the mausoleum was crowded with caskets. Bishop built an underground vault for Pauahi and about 23 members of her royal 'ohana, the Kamehameha dynasty.

In 1887 their coffins were ceremonially transferred from the mausoleum to the new underground vault. Along with Pauahi and her parents, Pākī and Kōnia, four kings and four queens were laid to eternal rest. A kahu position and caretaker's home was provided for by Bishop's trust. Bishop's hānai son, William Edward Bishop Kaihe'ekai Taylor, born in 1882, was the first kahu of Mauna'ala under the Charles Reed Bishop Trust.



Charles Reed Bishop was laid to rest alongside Pauahi in 1915. A stone monument was later placed next to the Kamehameha tomb to honor Bishop. It was inscribed: "Builder of the State – Friend of Youth – Benefactor of Hawaii."

Charles Reed Bishop passed away on June 7, 1915 in San Francisco. He was 93 years old.

His ashes were returned to Hawai'i on June 22, and the next day memorial services were held at Kawaiaha'o Church. It was written that:

The kāhili ceremony was observed for the first time in the case of a white man connected with the Kamehameha dynasty since the lying in state of the body of John Young, Kamehameha the Great's trusted friend and adviser, nearly a hundred years prior. The Queen's automobile was the only one allowed to enter Mauna'ala, the rest of the memorial attendees followed in on foot. Here Bishop was reunited with his beloved wife on June 23, 1915 in the vault of the Kamehamehas and the vault was forever sealed.

A year later, a stone monument was erected adjacent to the Kamehameha tomb to honor the life and memory of Charles R. Bishop. It was inscribed: "Builder of the State—Friend of Youth—Benefactor of Hawaii."