*Annexation of Hawaii*

In the words of Mark Twain, “….No alien land in all the world has any deep strong charm for me but that one, no other land could so longingly and so beseechingly haunt me, sleeping and waking, through half a lifetime, as that one has done. Other things leave me, but it abides, other things change, but it remains the same”[[1]](#footnote-1) and “the loveliest fleet of islands that lies anchored to any ocean.”[[2]](#footnote-2) What islands could inspire such eloquence and longing? The Hawaiian Islands, a chain of eight large islands located in the South Pacific Ocean.

The Annexation of Hawaii was a major turning point, not only in the history of Hawaii, but also in the history of the United States. Hawaii lost its independence, unwillingly became a United States territory, gained a larger population of foreigners than native Hawaiians, and lost much of its culture. The United States, on the other hand, secured military advantage, economic enrichment, and the first territory outside of its boundaries. America’s annexation of Hawaii extended its territory into the Pacific, resulting in economic integration and leading to its rise as a Pacific power.

Many events led to the eventual annexation of Hawaii in 1898, but the beginning of the end of this independent Polynesian nation came about with the arrival of the first European explorer, James Cook, in 1778. At that time, Hawaii was a thriving civilization with an estimated population between 400,000 to 800,000 natives. However, Cook’s “discovery” brought the islands to the attention of three major world powers: Great Britain, France and the United States. The beauty, rich soil and strategic Pacific location of Hawaii were all desirable features for possession. After many attempts at takeover by Great Britain and France, Hawaii turned to the Americans for aid.

As more people came to the Hawaiian Islands, they brought with them contagious diseases such as measles, cholera and gonorrhea which wiped out tens of thousands of native Hawaiians over the next hundred years.[[3]](#footnote-3) Along with a dwindling native population, the influences of incoming cultures changed many of the Hawaiian ways but the monarchy remained in power. In 1825, King Kamehameha III was appointed the new king of Hawaii. He was an exceptional leader, earning the title of “most wise and beloved of all Hawaiian Monarchs.” [[4]](#footnote-4) Under his rule, Hawaii prospered and saw the establishment of new laws. In 1845, he proclaimed the “Great Mahele”, division of land, which allowed foreigners to purchase land in Hawaii. Forests were ruthlessly cleared for the establishment of private sugar estates and plantation owners saw a great increase in their wealth and power. Unfortunately, this also led to a significant increase in the white or “haole” population. Afraid of a takeover by Great Britain or France, King Kamehameha III signed a secret treaty with the United States in 1851 to ensure the islands’ protection if the French tried to attack. A few years later, fearing that his kingdom would be overthrown, the king further requested steps leading to the annexation of Hawaii. He insisted that annexation should allow Hawaii to become a full state and that he and his chiefs be paid $300,000 annually.[[5]](#footnote-5) The American government took its time in considering Kamehameha’s request and the king died before annexation could be achieved; Hawaii’s first attempt at annexation ended in failure.

The next king, Lunalilo, didn’t help Hawaii’s future when he created a cabinet consisting of Americans and signed a treaty to reduce taxes on imports and exports, thereby making it cheaper and easier to trade. American influence in Hawaii was becoming stronger. After Lunalilo’s death came another major turning point in Hawaiian history. David Kalakaua, a descendant of one of the minor chiefs of the island, won the throne in 1874 with the help of United States forces. Under his rule, commercial relations between Hawaii and the United States grew stronger and became more important but this caused resentment by Great Britain and France.[[6]](#footnote-6) Kalakaua turned to the United States for help in retaining Hawaii’s independence as both these countries recognized the need for a trade treaty of reciprocity between them. The treaty, signed in 1875, removed tariffs on sugar entering the United States and made Hawaii an economic colony. By 1886, nine-tenths of Hawaii’s imports came from the United States; they were becoming dependent on the United States.[[7]](#footnote-7) This led to rapid expansion in the sugar industry and an increased need for workers. Contract workers were brought from China and Japan leading to a spike in the foreigner population and causing the native Hawaiian population to significantly decrease.

King Kalakaua, a proud Hawaiian, wanted to see an increase in the native population which had dwindled to 48,000 by the time he gained the throne. His motto was “Hooulu Lahui”[[8]](#footnote-8) or “Let the Hawaiian race flourish.” He tried to increase the power of the Hawaiian monarchy which infuriated the many foreigners. In 1887, King Kalakaua was forced to sign the “Bayonet Constitution”, reducing his power to that of a figurehead. Part of this constitution stated that only rich landowners were able to vote thereby preventing many poor Hawaiians from voting; the rich plantation owners had the majority vote. It also offered the United States exclusive use of Pearl Harbor in return for continued duty-free entry of Hawaiian sugar into the United States.

With the election of President Harrison in 1888, the Republicans argued that increased tariffs were a necessary means of protecting domestic industries from foreign competition. This led to the passing of the McKinley Tariff on October 1, 1890, which took away the advantages gained in the reciprocity treaty. As the sugar planters saw a drastic decline in their profits, they began planning for the annexation of Hawaii as a permanent solution to their problems. The idea of an annexation was becoming more of a reality.

In January of 1891, King Kalakaua died; his fifty-two year old sister, Lili’uokalani, became queen of Hawaii. Lili'u, as she was nicknamed, strongly disliked American influence and proposed to declare a new constitution to restore voting rights to the natives and the power of the Hawaiian monarchy.  On January 17, 1893 a group of plantation owners, with the help of United States Minister, John Stevens, and troops from a United States Warship, overthrew Queen Lili'u.  They proclaimed that the Kingdom of Hawaii was ended and established a provisional government until annexation took place. Lili’u, under protest, peacefully gave up her throne in order to prevent bloodshed among her people but also hoped the United States would intervene and restore her power.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Minister John Stevens officially proclaimed the provisional government of Hawaii and President Benjamin Harrison signed a treaty of annexation with the new government. Before the treaty could be approved by Senate, President Cleveland was re-elected; he discovered that Minister Stevens had acted improperly and ordered that the American flag be lowered and Queen Lili'u be restored to power.  Stanford Dole, president of the Provisional Government of Hawaii, refused to turn over power and argued that the United States had no right to interfere in the affairs of Hawaii and the Provisional Government. Realizing that annexation would not occur, the Provisional Government renamed itself the Republic of Hawaii. The new Republic passed laws making English the official language taught in all schools, thereby restricting the Hawaiian language; even the hula was banned. Again, Hawaiian history was being changed as the natives lost their land and culture.

Native Hawaiians, unhappy with the events taking place in their nation, protested the overthrow of Queen Lili'u and formed groups to protest in Washington. The men’s group was called the *Hui Hawaii Aloha Aina* or *Hawaiian Patriotic League* while thewomen named their group the *Hui Hawaii Aloha Aina o Na Wahine* group. On January 5, 1895, the protestors made armed attempts to “derail the annexation”[[10]](#footnote-10) but unfortunately the Republic forces stopped them. The leaders of this little revolution were imprisoned and few attempts were made after that. On June 16, 1897, annexation became a reality; President McKinley and three representatives from the Republic of Hawaii, Lorrin Thurston, Francis Hatch, and William Kinney, signed the treaty and sent it to the United States Senate to be ratified.

Realizing that annexation was now a reality, the native Hawaiian groups organized mass rallies and sent out petitions against annexation. They hoped that the United States would stop the proceedings if they realized that a majority of the native Hawaiians were against it. On September 11 and October 2, 1897, the Hui Hawaii Aloha Aina and the Hui Hawaii Aloha Aina o Na Wahine held public meetings and collected 21,269 signatures out of the 39,000 native Hawaiians and mixed blood citizens. The “*Petition Against Annexation*”, was written in both Hawaiian and English. On December 6, 1897, four Hawaiian delegates took the 556 page petition to Washington D.C., where they met Queen Lili’u who was already there petitioning against annexation. The group met with Senator George Hoar, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, and their petition was read to the United States Senate on December 9. The next day, the delegates met with John Sherman, Secretary of State, and submitted a protest against the annexation. In the following days, the delegates continued to meet with many senators as they proudly presented the Hawaiians’ opposition to the annexation.

Hoping they had made a change, the delegates left Washington D.C. for Hawaii on February 27, 1898. The delegates had made a lasting impression on the senators. Only forty six senators, less than two-thirds of the majority, were willing to vote for annexation. The treaty was defeated in the Senate; independence was now possible for the Hawaiians. Sadly, this victory was short-lived. On February 15, 1898, while the Hawaiian delegates had been petitioning Senate, the United States Battleship, *Maine,* was blown up in Havana Harbor, Cuba; Hawaii was now seen as an essential location for the United States naval base. Pearl Harbor would provide an advantageous fueling station and base for the American navy. The demands of the navy and pressure from Congress weakened President McKinley’s opposition to the annexation of Hawaii. Congress submitted a proposal to annex Hawaii via a joint resolution which needed only a simple majority vote instead of the two-thirds required to pass a treaty; the resolution was passed.

The annexation treaty was signed into law by President McKinley on July 7, 1898. The Hawaiian Islands were officially annexed on July 12, 1898 and the Republic of Hawaii ceded to the United States 1.8 million acres of Hawaiian land which had once belonged to the monarchy. On August 2, 1898, the formal annexation ceremony took place at Iolani Palace, the Queen’s house, which would become the home of the new governor. As the changing of flags took place, many *haoles* joined the native Hawaiians in loudly mourning the loss of the independent nation of Hawaii. To give the Hawaiians a false sense of near statehood, the United States raised a flag over Hawaii which had forty-five stars, representing the states at the time, but a forty-sixth star had been hand-sewn on to the flag.[[11]](#footnote-11) Hawaii did not actually achieve statehood until 1959 when it was named the fiftieth state.

What were the effects of annexation on Hawaii? With the removal of tariffs on goods, sugar production soared and grew from 289,500 tons in 1900 to 939,300 tons in 1930. James Dole, cousin of Stanford Dole, established and dominated the pineapple industry on Hawaii. Pineapple production grew from 2,000 cases of canned fruit in 1903 to 12,808,000 cases in 1931.[[12]](#footnote-12) The sugar planters and the Hawaiian government recruited workers from Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Spain, Portugal, Puerto Rico, England, Germany, and Russia causing the population to more than double in the next 15 years. American workers lost their premium wages as cheaper labor was brought into the islands. The great inflow of immigrants further declined the Native Hawaiian population and welfare causing them to demand that the government set aside lands for them to return to their customary farming lifestyles. In 1921, the government provided land for a new Hawaiian Home Program[[13]](#footnote-13) but this program was poorly managed and only benefited a small percentage of the Hawaiians.

The Hawaiian Organic Act was passed on June 14, 1890 to provide a government for the Territory of Hawaii. Stanford Dole, president of the five-year Republic of Hawaii, was appointed the first governor of the United States Territory of Hawaii. Although it created a government similar to that of the other states, the Organic Act only granted limited self-government to the territory. The president was responsible for appointing a governor with the consent of Congress. All citizens of Hawaii before the annexation became citizens of the United States and all male citizens were allowed to vote. Other legislation made it impossible for Oriental immigrants to Hawaii to become citizens so they were excluded from voting.

As a result of the 1898 annexation, Hawaii gained protection from other countries and the recognition of being an American territory. It also benefited greatly from the economic boom which followed the removal of tariffs on exports of sugar and other goods to the United States. In return for these benefits, the natives had given up their land and culture. The United States, on the other hand, saw a rise in its economy from the abundant resources of the Hawaiian Islands. The strategic military location of the Hawaiian Islands also provided great advantages to the United States in warfare and the acquisition of Hawaii extended the power of the United States into the Pacific.

Hawaii's path from sovereign and independent nation, to annexed territory, to state, was achieved in violation of laws and treaties then in effect and with total disregard for the wishes of the Hawaiian people.[[14]](#footnote-14) On November 23, 1993, a Joint Apology Resolution regarding the overthrow was passed by Congress and signed by President Clinton to apologize for overthrowing the legitimate government of an independent nation. Today, Hawaiians on the islands are striving to rebuild a lost culture.

The annexation of Hawaii occurred despite all odds and was a major turning point in the history of Hawaii and the United States. The 1897 Petition by the Hawaiian Patriotic League was undoubted evidence of how strongly native Hawaiians opposed annexation and how much they wanted to protect their cultural heritage and maintain a national identity. In spite of all their efforts, the Hawaiians unwillingly lost their independence, much of their culture and became a minority in their own country. The respected, sovereign nation of Hawaii no longer existed. This was the first time that America had taken an independent, sovereign nation which had been recognized and respected by great world-wide powers and forcibly annexed it into a territory, then a state, of the United States.[[15]](#footnote-15) But it was a great win for the United States which gained military advantage by extending its territory into the Pacific, and achieved economic integration leading to its rise as a Pacific power.

**Annotated Bibliography**

***Primary Sources:***

1. "A Revolution In Hawaii." *The New York Times* 28 Jan. 1893: 1. *The New York Times on the Web Learning Network*. Web. 31 Dec. 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/big/0117.html>.

*The**New York Times* is an American daily [newspaper](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newspaper) which was founded in New York City in 1851 and has been in publication since. It has won [108 Pulitzer Prizes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Pulitzer_Prizes_awarded_to_The_New_York_Times), more than any other news organization. This article was written to document the events immediately surrounding the Hawaiian Revolution. It was very biased against Queen Liliuokalani and blamed her for the revolution. Although, I didn’t agree with the opinions of the author, I was able to find some useful historical information for my paper.

1. Bingham, Harry. *The Annexation of Hawaii: A Right and a Duty. An Address*. Concord: Rumford, 1898. Print.

The Honorable Harry Bingham was a lawyer, legislator and author who lived in Vermont and he was a member of the local bar association. He wrote this address to convey his views on the annexation of Hawaii and was vocal in stating that the natives were a bunch of “savages” who couldn’t rule a nation. He said they needed to have the United States take over the country so that it would be run more efficiently and the natives would become civilized. Although most of his information was historically correct, I did not agree with his description of the Hawaiians.

1. Carpenter, Edmund J. *America in Hawaii; a History of United States Influence in the Hawaiian Islands,*. Boston: Small, Maynard &, 1899. Print.

Edmund Janes Carpenter was born in 1845 and died in 1924. He was a journalist, author and historian who took an interest in the Annexation of Hawaii and attempted to write an accurate and unbiased account of the events leading to the annexation. In his introduction, Mr. Carpenter stated that his sympathies lay with the Hawaiian people but he would not allow his feelings to affect what he wrote. I gained a lot of information from this book which was historically correct and it helped me to better understand the events leading to annexation.

1. Carter, Charles L. "The Hawaiian Question, an Open Letter to Secretary Gresham." Letter to Hon. W. Q. Gresham. 30 Nov. 1893. MS. Washington, D.C.

Charles Carter was a naturalized Hawaiian citizen and was involved in the overthrow of Queen Lili’u. He was also a member of the Committee of Safety. Although, the letter was biased against Queen Lili’u it contained helpful information.

1. Cullom Moore, Shelby. The Report of the Hawaiian Commission, Appointed in Pursuance of the *“Joint Resolution to Provide for Annexing the Hawaiian Islands to the United States”.* United States Government Printing Office, 1898. Print.

Shelby Moore Cullom was the eighteenth governor of Illinois. He was a member of the commission appointed to prepare a system of laws for the Hawaiian Islands. This primary source was very clear in helping me understand the Joint Resolution between the United States and Hawaii.

1. Liliuokalani. *Hawaii's Story*. Rutland, VT: C.E. Tuttle, 1964. Print.

Lili’uokalani was the first queen and last monarch of Hawaii. She wrote this book, her autobiography, during the last stages of the annexation. I gathered a lot of information from this book and it was interesting to see the events of the annexation from the Queen’s point of view.

1. United States. House of Representatives. Washington, U.S. Govt. Print. Off. *Affairs in Hawaii*. By James H. Blount. Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1895. *University of Hawaii at Manoa Library*. Web. 14 Dec. 2012. <http://libweb.hawaii.edu/digicoll/annexation/annexation.html>.

U.S. Commissioner, James H. Blount, was appointed by U.S. President [Grover Cleveland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grover_Cleveland) to investigate the events surrounding the January 1893 [overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Overthrow_of_the_Kingdom_of_Hawaii). He was sent to Hawaii to investigate and obtained testimony from interviews, letters, affidavits and other documents. This document is historically correct and offers a lot of information on the events leading up to the annexation. The information was organized in chronological order so it made it easier for me to obtain the facts I needed for my paper.

1. United States. 56th Congress. *Congressional Debates on Hawaii Organic Act, Together with Debates and Congressional Action on Other Matters concerning the Hawaiian Islands.* Washington: n.p., 1890-1900. *University of Hawaii at Manoa Library*. Web. 31 Dec. 2012. <http://libweb.hawaii.edu/digicoll/annexation/annexation.html>.

This article contains excerpts from the first session of the 56th Congress which took place from December 4, 1899 to June 7th, 1900 and gives details of the debates which took place regarding the Organic Act. This document was difficult to read but I was able to get some important information from it.

***Secondary Sources:***

1. "Economic History of Hawai'i." *Economic History Services*. Feb. 1, 2010. Web. 22 Dec. 2012.

The [Economic History Association](http://eh.net/eha) owns and operates the EH.net website and mailing lists to provide resources and promote communication among scholars in economic history and related fields. This website had well organized information on the history of Hawaii from its beginning to the present time. I was able to get a lot of information about Hawaii after the annexation and it greatly contributed to my paper.

1. Goldberg, Jake. *Hawaii*. New York: Benchmark, 1998. Print.

Jake Goldberg is a published author of children’s and young adult books. His book on Hawaii was very clear and informative. Surprisingly, I gathered some essential information from this book that helped me greatly in my report.

1. Gordon, John S., and John Lukacs. "The Meaning of '98 (1898 in US History)." *American Heritage* May-June 1998: 72. Print.

*American Heritage* is the oldest, most widely known and respected United States magazine on history. This article was brimming with information that was clear and concise. I acquired a great deal of information that was very accurate and explanatory.

1. "Hawaiian Annexation." *Hawaiian Annexation*. Web. 19 Nov. 2012. <http://www.ushistory.org/us/44b.asp>.

This website was founded by the Independence Hall Association in Philadelphia. It was a short, but very informative article and helped me to better understand the chain of events leading to the annexation.

1. "Hawaiian History." *A Brief History of Hawaii 300AD ~ 1900*. 2000. Web. 7 Dec. 2012.

This website gave historical facts according the year in which it happened. It was a simple arrangement of facts which made it easy to check information gained from other websites.

1. "How Sugar Brought An End to Hawaii's Nationhood." *NPR*. Web. 17 Nov. 2012. <http://m.npr.org/story/147345715>.

NPR, National Public Radio, delivers breaking national world news. This article was a transcript of an interview with the author, Julia Flynn Siler, who wrote a book on Queen Lili”u and the annexation of Hawaii.

1. Kreiser, Christine M. "Royal Visit." *American History* Feb. 2012: 19. Print.

*American History* is a leading popular magazine that looks at American history. It contained information on the Hawaiian history and was a valuable resource in my research.

1. Kuykendall, Ralph S., and A. Grove Day. *Hawaii: A History*. New York: Prentice-Hall, 1948. Print.

Ralph S. Kuykendall was an American historian who served as the trustee and secretary of the Hawaiian Historical Society. A. Grove Day was a professor at the University of Hawaii-Manoa in the English department. The two men came together and wrote an exhilarating account of Hawaiian history. I gained a lot of useful information from this book.

1. Lusted, Marcia Amidon. "Pear Harbor Through Time." *Cobblestone* Nov.-Dec. 2011: 8-9. Print.

*Cobblestone* is an educational magazine for children on United States history. The information was presented in the form of a timeline and focused on the reasons why America needed Pearl Harbor. This article was a great source of information for my article.

1. McGregor, Davianna P., Dr. "Hawaiians And Sugar: Plantations in the 1800's." *Picture Bride*. Web. 09 May 2013. <http://www.picturebridemovie.com/sugar.html>.

Dr. Davianna McGregor was the former Vice Chairsperson of the Hawaiian Sovereignty Elections Council. This essay offered a lot of good information, especially about the Reciprocity Treaty of 1875.

1. Nearing, Scott. "The American Empire: The Beginnings of World Dominion." *The American Empire: The Beginnings of World Dominion*. Web. 25 Nov. 2012. <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article5155.htm>.

Scott Nearing was a leading critic of imperialism throughout most of his long life. This article offered a great amount of information about the annexation of Hawaii. I enjoyed reading it because it is written in a very intriguing way; I also gained a lot of information.

1. Perrottet, Tony. "Into the Volcano." *Smithsonian* Dec. 2011: 40-51. Print.

*Smithsonian* is a magazine that explores history, science, and technology. This article talked about present day Hawaii and then explained how it became what it is today. I found it very helpful to my project.

1. "Princess Kaiulani." *Discover Hawaii Tours*. Web. 18 Nov. 2012. <http://www.discoverhawaiitours.com/travel-guide/princess-kaiulani.html>.

This website offers tours for Hawaii. Surprisingly, it contained a lot of information about the annexation and I learned a lot. It helped in the fine-tuning of my project.

1. Stanley, Fay, and Diane Stanley. *The Last Princess: The Story of Princess Kaʻiulani of Hawaii*. New York: Four Winds, 1991. Print.

Fay Stanley wrote this book along with her daughter, Diane, who was also the illustrator. Although this book focused on Princess Ka’iulani, it also contained valuable information on the annexation.

1. Tabrah, Ruth M. *Hawaii: A Bicentennial History*. 1st ed. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1980. Print.

Ruth M. Tabrah, 1921-2004, was the author of many books on Buddhism and Hawaii. Her information was well presented and I was able to get some good information from this book to add to my project.

1. "Teaching With Documents: The 1897 Petition Against the Annexation of Hawaii." *National Archives*. 15 Dec. 2012. The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. 2 January, 2013. <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/hawaii-petition/index.html>.

This article was written for middle-schoolers and presents a concise and well-organized history of the series of the events leading to Hawaiian annexation. It was a good article but a few of the events listed contained inaccurate information. Together with my other sources, I was able to check the accuracy of my information and used that which was correct.

1. A. Grove Day, Mark Twain’s Letters From Hawaii. New York: Appleton-Century, 1966. Print. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Goldberg, Jake. *Hawaii*. New York: Benchmark, 1998. Print. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A Brief History of Hawaii 300AD ~ 1900. *Hawaiian History*. 2000. Web. 7 Dec. 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Kuykendall, Ralph S., and A. Grove Day. *Hawaii: A History*. New York: Prentice-Hall, 1948. Print. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Kuykendall, Ralph S., and A. Grove Day. *Hawaii: A History*. New York: Prentice-Hall, 1948. Print. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
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8. Fry, Kathie. “Hawaii Travel Guide”. *Hawaii for Visitors.* Hawaii Travel. 7th January, 2013.

   < http://www.hawaiiforvisitors.com/monarchy/king-david-kalakaua.htm>. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
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15. Bingham, Harry. *The Annexation of Hawaii: A Right and a Duty. An Address*. Concord: Rumford, 1898. Print. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)