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(Cover Photo)
Sol Kalama, Charles Ahia, Jacob Haili and Harold Chin Lum on Jarvis, 1937.
Photo courtesy of Bishop Museum Archives.

Hawaiian Colonists - American Citizens
Kamehameha School Graduates
Jarvis Group 1937

This exhibit is dedicated to the men of Hui Panalā'au and to the many contributions and sacrifices they made throughout their seven-year occupation of remote islands in the Equatorial Pacific.

Introduction: Hui Panalā'au

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In 1935, the United States government began a secret operation to "colonize" the Line Islands of Baker, Howland, and Jarvis in the equatorial region of the Pacific. These islands, virtually forgotten since the end of guano mining in the late 1800s, were now valued for American commercial and military expansion in the Pacific. The potential for developing airways between California and Australia made it imperative that the U.S. claim islands along these routes. The Bureau of Air Commerce (Department of Commerce) began to actively recruit groups of Native Hawaiians and other young men to continually occupy the islands of Baker, Howland, and Jarvis. On May 13, 1936, the veil of "secrecy" (which had been virtually transparent since the return of the first party) was officially lifted when President Roosevelt claimed these islands and placed them under the control and jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior for administrative purposes.[1] Soon plans were put into place to build airfields on the islands, and permanent structures were built. In 1938, the U.S. co-colonized the islands of Canton and Enderbury (in the Phoenix Group) with the British. Hawaiian "colonists" were stationed on the islands (with the exception of Canton) up until the outbreak and the beginning months of U.S. participation in World War II.[2]

From 1935 to 1942 there were 26 expeditions by U. S. Coast Guard cutters to the equatorial region to station, supply, and rotate colonists on the different islands. Initially, organizers targeted Hawaiian men who were single, physically fit, cooperative, and disciplined. At the time, Kamehameha School students and graduates seemed to embody these qualities and were actively recruited for the operation. In later years, the recruiting pool expanded to include Hawaiian boys from other high schools such as Roosevelt and McKinley. One commonality was that all the men shared an ROTC background, which allowed them to adapt to the military protocol and procedures of the program. There were a number of local Asian men (several Chinese and one Korean) who were hired as radiomen and student aerologists for the project. While a number of other non-Hawaiians were also involved in different phases of the project, the bulk of the participants were Native Hawaiian or local boys.

Once on the islands, the various groups carried out their duties superbly. Most of the boys were quite happy to be getting paid $3.00 a day to go on an adventure, and in the middle of the economic Depression that was a considerable salary. In addition to their basic duties of collecting meteorological data for the government, the colonists kept busy by building and improving their camps, clearing land, growing vegetables, attempting reforestation, and collecting scientific data for the Bishop Museum. In their free time, they would fish, dive, swim, surf/bodysurf, lift weights, box, play football, hunt rats, experiment with bird recipes, play music, sing, and find other ways of occupying themselves. Although these young men lived in relative isolation for months at a time with very little contact with the outside

Albert Akana, Gabriel Victor, Eugene Burke, and Paul Yat Lum rest on supplies that would last them for three months.
Photo courtesy of Bishop Museum Archives.

world, they were usually able to maintain excellent health and high morale. The colonists were highly commended by the officials of the project and earned praise from others who were periodically on the islands with them.

While the young men met with much success and grew tremendously from the experience, there were also times of great sadness. In October of 1938, Carl Kahalewai, a graduate of McKinley High School, died of appendicitis while he was being rushed home for an emergency operation. Tragedy struck again on December 8, 1941 when the islands of Howland and Baker were bombed and shelled by the Japanese. On Howland Island, Joseph Keliihananui and Richard Whaley were killed. The remaining six boys on the two islands were forced to hide during the day and scavenge for food and water at night until they were finally rescued on January 31, 1942. As colonists had already been withdrawn from Canton in October 1940 when Pan American Airways took over, the rescue of those stationed on Jarvis and Enderbury in February 1942 signaled the end of the equatorial colonization project.

Both the good times and the hardships forged strong bonds between the men. As early as 1939, members of previous trips formed a club to "perpetuate the fellowship of Hawaiian youths who have served as colonists on American equatorial islands."[3] Initially they were called the "Hui Kupu 'Aina," which suggests the idea of sprouting, growing, and increasing land. By 1946 the group's name had changed to "Hui Panalā'au," which has been variously translated as "club of settlers of the southern islands," "Holders of the Land Society," and "society of colonists."[4] In 1954, Hui Panalā'au succeeded in bringing the bodies of Joseph Keliihananui and Richard Whaley from the island of Howland and giving the two men a proper burial at Schofield.[5] In July 1956, the group was given a charter of incorporation by the Territory of Hawai'i. In addition to the preservation of the group's fellowship, other purposes were to "foster and maintain in themselves...the desirable traits of character constituent to the racial makeup of the members," to "honor and esteem those who died...as colonists of the Equatorial Islands," and to "establish and provide scholarship assistance at the University of Hawai'i for deserving graduates of Hawaii's high schools."[6] Minutes from a May 1959 meeting of the scholarship committee indicates their "policy has been primarily to help Hawaiian boys who needed help."[7] At the time of the meeting, three boys had already received scholarships and were all doing well.

Over the years the meetings became fewer and the scholarship program was eventually discontinued. Today many of the members of Hui Panalā'au have passed on, but a number of them are still strong in their 80s. Although the islands themselves have once again slipped into obscurity, the contributions of Hui Panalā'au and the sacrifices of Kahalewai, Keliihananui, and Whaley will be remembered and honored for years to come.

William Stewart Markham, Kini Pea, Killarney Opiopio, James Kamakaiwi, and two military personnel on Howland in June of 1936.
Photo courtesy of Bishop Museum Archives.

1. Executive Order No. 7368.
2. A more detailed overview of the project is found in E. H. Bryan, Jr., Panalā'au Memoirs, Pacific Scientific Information Center, Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, Honolulu, 1974.
3. "Line Island Pioneers Form Colonists' Club," Honolulu Star-Bulletin, Feb 16, 1939, Pg 1.
4. "Colonizers of Jarvis, Baker and Howland Islands," Honolulu Star-Bulletin, Jul 2, 1946, Pg. 9; "2 Howland Isle Dead Home After 12 Years," Honolulu Advertiser, Apr 4, 1954, A6:4; E. H. Bryan, "Ka Hui Panalā'au: American colonists of Pacific have society incorporated here," Hawaiian Holiday Section, Honolulu Advertiser, May 18, 1958, Pg. 23.
5. "2 Howland Isle Dead Home After 12 Years," op cit.
6. Bryan, "Ka Hui Panalā'au," op cit.
7. E. H Bryan, Jr., Minutes of Hui Panalā'au meeting, May 11, 1959.

Colonizing the Equatorial Islands: The Bigger Picture

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Various intentions, both open and secret, influenced the Panalā'au expeditions. The factor considered most significant by the public at that time—and which served as the justification for the entire project's existence—was the growth of aviation. Many Americans in the 1930s followed the rapid evolution of airplane technology and the amazing growth of commercial aviation with excitement. Adding to the romance of air travel were the brave aviators who pioneered new routes, often in daring solo flights under dangerous conditions. Among the most famous of these aviation heroes was Amelia Earhart, whose accomplishments included a solitary journey from Hawai'i to the west coast in 1935.

The crowning achievement in the aviation field was the start of Pan America Airways' passenger flights across the Pacific Ocean in 1936. That this immense expanse could be covered in just a few days by air was astonishing at the time, even though the trip from the west coast required stops at Hawai'i, Midway, Wake, and Guam before finally reaching Asia.

With flying as newsworthy and popular as it was, the United States' stated need to claim Baker, Howland, and Jarvis Islands as potential landing sites seemed reasonable. Supporting this rationalization was Amelia Earhart's around-the-world flight in 1937.

Amelia Earhart began by traveling to Hawai'i in March of that year, with her next goal being Howland Island. Both colonists and military men there had labored to build a crude landing field to receive her, along with accommodations for her use, including a shower. But her plane crashed on takeoff from O'ahu and the entire flight was postponed; when it resumed, she traveled around the globe in the other direction, eventually coming to New Guinea. From there, she attempted again to reach Howland. But on this second try Amelia, her navigator, and the plane all tragically vanished.

It is entirely plausible that with the U.S. government and military actively assisting the well-publicized flight, Earhart's planned landing on one of the colonized islands may well have been intended to bolster the USA's justification for taking them in the first place. There was perhaps an increased need to do so, since the established Pan America Airways' routes had bypassed these particular islands, lessening their value for commercial aviation. Conspiracy buffs continue to speculate on hidden reasons for Amelia's trip, often conjecturing in later years that she was spying for the United States against the growing Japanese presence in the Pacific.

Amelia Earhart readies to cross the Pacific, Honolulu, 1937.
N.R. Farbman, Bishop Museum Archives.

These theories are frequently farfetched, but the competition was real between the U.S. and other nations' interests in this part of the world in the 1930s. There was a small amount of friction between America and Britain, primarily regarding the jurisdictions over Canton and Enderbury Islands, but it was the USA and Japan which were most at odds. By then, the nation of Japan had been openly building its self-described empire for years, emulating the Europeans and Americans who had already colonized much of Asia. This increasing expansion caused an understandable international tension, aggravated by Japanese secrecy regarding its actions on the various Pacific islands it controlled. In this climate of mutual distrust,

America's colonizing of the equatorial islands (thus substantially enlarging its Pacific territory) can easily be seen as a counteraction to the perceived Japanese threat. This motive, of course, was never openly discussed at the time. The aforementioned aviation requirements, along with the lesser activities of the colonists in gathering scientific specimens and keeping weather records, were the only goals the USA claimed to have.

The United States' intentions were not always so disguised in the 1930s. America's military presence in Hawai'i was widely publicized in those years as a counterpoint to the islands' hugely popular romantic image that was known throughout the world. In particular, Hawaiian music was played and sung in countries as diverse as England, Indonesia, and Japan, and its fame firmly established this idealized tropical paradise in the minds of millions of people.

Military review at Schofield Barracks, ca. 1935.
N.R. Farbman, Bishop Museum Archives.

These same fans of Hawaiian music, however, were increasingly confronted with newspaper photos and film newsreels showing America's military might as it was displayed in the real world of the Hawaiian Islands. At Schofield Barracks, the nation's largest Army base, regularly scheduled reviews showed off amazing amounts of men and equipment. While the public watched from bleachers, marching bands, ambulances, wheeled artillery and even mule-drawn wagons paraded past. Images of these reviews joined similar ones from other, increasingly militaristic countries from around the world; while the public at home marveled at such heroic depictions, the secondary intent was to impress foreign governments as well.

The Panalā'au colonizing project served the same aim as the Schofield military reviews, albeit in a less openly aggressive way. Both proved to outsiders the strength and autonomy of the United States.

When this escalating intimidation between the two countries finally came to its perhaps inevitable conclusion with Japan's attack on Hawai'i on Dec. 7, 1941, it was a terrible shock that America's perceived military strength was not as impregnable as everyone had thought. The faraway colonists on Baker, Howland, and Jarvis Islands came under attack as well, brutally ending the Panalā'au project that had been a semi-concealed element of Japan and America's prewar Pacific competition.

Ironically, World War II finally brought aviation to one of the tiny equatorial islands. Baker Island was the site of a full-fledged airfield, although it was used only for a comparatively short time as America's battles against Japanese-held territory moved increasingly closer to Japan itself as the war progressed. In the years since the war ended, the USA has no longer needed to show its presence in this area so strongly. But the islands remain American territory, a legacy of the Hawaiian colonists who occupied them over sixty years ago.

The colonists who participated in the Panalā'au project rightfully received the greatest attention in the contemporary publicity that covered it. Interest in their firsthand accounts has continued to the present day. This is as it should be, but what is not as well known is that these young men were actually small, but important, players in a much larger scenario that was international in scope.

Kamehameha Schools and the Panalā'au Colonists

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Archivist
Kamehameha Schools

The Hawaiian Panalā'au participants credited their experiences at Kamehameha Schools as having a major role in their outstanding success as American colonists on Jarvis, Howland, and Baker Islands. In the 1930s, Kamehameha Schools was a boarding school where faculty, staff, and students all knew each other.

The Kamehameha School for Boys had military uniforms and military discipline almost from the opening day and the students had many opportunities to practice self-discipline, to learn to respect orders, and to learn how to be leaders. Faculty member Donald Kilolani Mitchell formed

Proud cadets.
Photo courtesy of Kamehameha Schools Archives.

Hui 'Oiwi in the early 1930s on the boys' campus. This group was for those students interested in learning about Hawaiian culture. From constructing a pili grass hale to learning fishing methods to practicing Hawaiian games, it was an honoring of who they were that the students highly appreciated. Most of the Kamehameha boys who participated in the colonizing project were members of this hui.

From its beginning in 1887, the Kamehameha School for Boys' curriculum included academic and vocational training so that graduates would have a job skill and be immediately employable; the Kamehameha School for Girls opened in 1894. Both schools were established through the will of High Chiefess Bernice Pauahi Bishop (1831-1884), the last descendent of high genealogical status of the Kamehameha line. Pauahi intended that preference be given to Hawaiian children to attend these schools so they would have sufficient education to successfully cope with the drastic economic and cultural changes that were taking place in Hawai'i. Grade 9 was the highest grade offered until the class of 1924 graduated with Grade 12 diplomas. Kamehameha Schools became college preparatory after that, but vocational training still continued.

Early 'Oiwi students.
Photo courtesy of Kamehameha Schools Archives.

Kamehameha Schools and its students became involved in the colonization project on Jarvis, Howland, and Baker Islands in 1935 when William T. Miller of the Bureau of Air Commerce and Lieutenant Harold A. Meyer made an appointment to talk to Albert Judd. Mr. Judd was a trustee of the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Estate, which supported Kamehameha Schools and Bishop Museum; at the time, the Estate and the Museum shared trustees. In addition, Mr. Judd's father had been in charge of recruiting Hawaiian laborers for American guano mining operations on the same islands in the late 1800s.

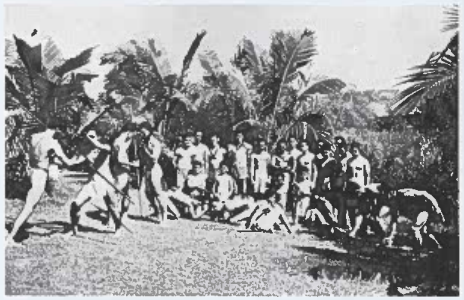
When Mr. Judd was asked about securing Hawaiian boys as participants for the colonization project, he said he would have Homer Barnes, principal of Kamehameha Schools, select six suitable young

men, all alumni, for their consideration. They were Henry Ahia, Daniel Toomey, James Kamakaiwi, Killarney Opiopio, William Kaina, and Abraham Piianaia. Mr. Judd also offered the services of Edwin H. Bryan, Curator of the Museum Collections, to accompany the expedition. Dr. Bryan was to begin collecting information about the islands as well as natural history specimens for the Museum.

Six Kamehameha Schools alumni and 12 soldiers were aboard the Coast Guard cutter *Itasca* when it left Honolulu for the islands March 20, 1935. Two Kamehameha alumni and three soldiers were left on each island with supplies and the promise that the *Itasca* would return in three months with personnel replacements and fresh supplies.

Donald Kilolani Mitchell, the Kamehameha Schools faculty member assigned by Dr. Barnes to monitor the Kamehameha students who would be participating in these expeditions, was on the *Itasca's* return trip. His written report to Dr. Barnes contains the following description of their arrival at Jarvis Island: "At Jarvis Island we were most cordially received by Henry Ahia and Dan Toomey. These lads were suntanned, happy, and in perfect physical condition. Henry was called the 'aide to His Highness, Austin Collins, the Governor General of Jarvis Island.' [Collins was one of the three military personnel.] As aide he helped Sgt. Collins survey and map the air field, build a house from timbers of an old wrecked vessel, keep weather reports, collect museum specimens, and during the last month serve as camp cook. We brought all the Army men back on the *Itasca* and Sgt. Collins spent the next two weeks singing Henry Ahia's praises . . . And Dan Toomey came in for his share of the praise too. He knew the name of every fish in the waters, how to catch them, and how best to prepare them for the table. He knew the lobster caves and provided this delicacy often as it was wanted. He taught the army men to fish, to swim, and to feel at home in the sea."

In a letter dated October 12, 1936, written to trustee Albert Judd, Captain Henry Meyer said of these six Kamehameha graduates and the replacement undergraduates: "The duties performed by these men are severe. Isolated from the world for months at a time with few companions on a desert island consisting of only a few acres is, per se, a strain. Under such conditions, to be faithful in recording weather observations, keeping detailed daily logs, collecting scientific specimens, clearing landing fields, establishing effective camps, preserving food supplies and keeping up morale are real accomplishments. The Kamehameha students did all this . . . I have been intimately associated with eleven classes at the U.S. Military Academy and feel that the representatives of your school measure up to the standard of selection insisted upon there . . . Finally, I wish to pass on the comment of Sergeant Austin Collins, 19th Infantry, who has been in charge of supplies and equipment, and who lived for three months on Jarvis Island, 'In my twenty-one years of service in all parts of the world I have never been associated with a finer group of men.' "



'Oiwi students practicing lua.
Photo courtesy of Kamehameha Schools Archives.

This recognition and praise for the several dozen Kamehameha students who took part in securing these equatorial islands as United States possessions was consistent through the seven years of this extraordinary governmental project. The participants themselves credited their educational experiences as aiding in preparing them not only to survive, but also to thrive, as members of close, cooperative, and capable groups while occupying the desert islands of Jarvis, Howland, and Baker.

As James Carroll, one of the Kamehameha School colonists commented, "People use to say that Kamehameha students could do anything and they were right. We could."

Bishop Museum's Scientific Role in the "South Seas Panalā'au Expedition"

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The "South Seas Panalā'au Expedition" began in 1935 at a time when the Bishop Museum actively sought to document the cultural and natural history of the Pacific before traditional cultures and native environments were forever changed. Many scientists feared that indigenous Pacific peoples and their cultures were disappearing.

In the fifteen years proceeding the expedition, Bishop Museum undertook more than 30 cultural and/or natural history surveys of Polynesia. They gathered information about ancient sites, living cultural groups, and about geography, geology, oceanography, plants, insects, birds, and land and marine life, including mammals, snails and mollusks, reptiles, fish, and corals. Expeditions were sent to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, Austral Islands, Marquesas Islands, Tonga, Fiji and the Society Islands, Niue, Samoa, Cook Islands and the Tuamotu Archipelago, the Line Islands, and New Zealand, among others.

The Panalā'au expedition began when the Bureau of Air Commerce sought to establish air routes between Australia and California and to assert jurisdictional control over three of the Line Islands—Jarvis, Howland, and Baker. The Bureau was assisted by the U.S. Treasury Department, the U.S. Army and the U.S. Navy, Bishop Museum and Kamehameha Schools. Governmental departments and agencies provided transportation, equipment and supplies, fuel, water, housing facilities, and military personnel. Bishop Museum supplied scientific expertise and Kamehameha Schools recruited young Native Hawaiian male students and alumni to occupy the islands and gather scientific data.

Bishop Museum assisted in preparing the young student colonists to collect scientific data during the expedition. The high school and college-aged men were instructed to gather scientific data for the Museum as part of their daily routine and to record their findings in a daily log. They were required to map the islands, to record weather conditions, to cultivate seeds and plantings, to study bird life, and to collect fish, insects, plants, and other natural and cultural history specimens. The Museum provided them equipment for collecting, recording, and preparing study specimens.

Two Museum representatives intimately involved in the project visited the islands during the expedition colonization—Mr. Albert Judd (trustee for both Bishop Museum and Kamehameha Schools) in 1935 and Dr. Edwin H. Bryan, Jr. (collections curator) in 1935 and 1938. They were interested in visiting the Kamehameha colonists, observing how the project was progressing, and assisting in scientific efforts.

Cultural artifacts aboard the *Itasca*, 1936.
Photo courtesy of Bishop Museum Archives.

Donald Kilolani Mitchell, science teacher at Kamehameha Schools, traveled with Mr. Judd on the Coast Guard Cutter *Itasca* in 1935. He returned again in 1937. He assisted in collecting specimens for the Museum from Howland, Baker, Jarvis, Palmyra, and Johnston Islands. Mr. Judd described Mr. Mitchell as an "energetic collector" who "took from my shoulders the task of drying plants and caring for the other specimens collected by us and by the others of the expedition." Mr. Judd wrote Dr. H. E. Gregory (Director of Bishop Museum) asking

him to recognize Mr. Mitchell's role in the project. Expeditions led by scientists from other institutions or agencies assisted the scientific efforts of the Bishop Museum and the colonists. Among them was Dr. Dana Coman of Johns Hopkins University. In 1936, he led a scientific expedition to the islands. Among his assistants on the schooner *Kinkajou* were Kamehameha students who helped collect weather data and natural history specimens on Howland, Jarvis, and Baker Islands.

While aboard the *Kinkajou*, Dr. Coman wrote Dr. Bryan at Bishop Museum to express his gratitude to the Museum and the excellent scientific assistance provided by the Kamehameha colonists. He stated that "The value of the collections which were brought back from Jarvis, Howland, and Baker Islands by our expedition has depended so much on the conscientious collecting of the Kamehameha boys and especially on the personal help of you and the other members of the museum staff . . ." In a second letter to Mr. Judd (President of the Board), Dr. Coman wrote "I don't have to tell you how pleased I was with the spirit and competence of the Kamehameha boys you selected for me as island observers, for they more than measured to the standards I expected. In many ways I shall always feel indebted to you for detailed suggestions and advice which meant all the difference between success and disaster."

Mr. Judd requested the daily log books kept by the Kamehameha colonists be sent to Bishop Museum. He wanted them to become part of the Museum's archival holdings, documenting the expedition's scientific findings. The log books were sent to Bishop Museum by the Bureau of Air Committee, Department of Commerce. They are available in the Bishop Museum Archives, along with numerous photographs and papers compiled by Dr. Edwin H. Bryan, Jr.

The natural and cultural history specimens collected for Bishop Museum by the Kamehameha colonists and visiting scientists include lizard, rat, mouse, crab, fish, bird, duck, insect, and plant specimens. In their logs, the Kamehameha boys reported collecting lumber, a cannon, and a wheel from a shipwreck, which they packed and sent to Bishop Museum. They also spent entire days "sorting shells, and packing them for the Museum" or "swimming about the channels spearing fishes of different species and other marine specimens for the museum." On other occasions they went out on the reefs for marine specimens, including shells, crabs, and eels.

WWII survival training at Bishop Museum, early 1940s.
Photo courtesy of Bishop Museum Archives.

Before the expedition ended, Bishop Museum began a "survival training" program for U.S. military personnel destined for deployment in the Pacific during World War II. The program was taught on the Museum grounds and was designed to teach traditional Polynesian skills such as tool making, fishing, preparing and cooking foods in an imu, and building shelters out of palm fronds. The knowledge the Museum staff learned from the colonists and from Mr. Don Mitchell at Kamehameha Schools proved invaluable to the "survival training" program.

Identifying With Islands: Life on Baker in the Summer of 1936

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In the Baker Island logbook of June 18—August 4, 1936, Abraham Piianaia describes in great detail the daily life of the Hawaiian boys occupying the island (Kenneth Bell, William Kaina, Edward Young, and himself, all recent graduates of Kamehameha School). He provides especially vivid and thorough accounts of their conversations and recreational activities, offering the reader a glimpse into the characters and minds of four young Hawaiian men living under unique circumstances. By looking carefully at the thoughts laid down in this journal, we will find that the experiences of the "colonists" shed important light on the ways that Hawaiians have historically been engaged in the modern world while also maintaining specifically Hawaiian sensibilities, values, practices and beliefs.

As modern Hawaiians, these boys are familiar with American values, places, and tastes. On June 21, Piianaia and Young discuss their travels as "shipmates on the *S.S. Maunalei*, a freighter plying between Honolulu, San Francisco and Seattle." Piianaia later lists each boy's literary preferences. Kaina "likes Doc Savage and the American Magazine." Young "favors Adventure and Liberty, after he has read all the funnies two or three times." Piianaia enjoys "Cosmopolitan, American Magazine, and Literary or Readers Digest." Bell has "a stack of Western Stories" under his bed that he finishes by July 24, acquiring "a flashy new vocabulary of Spanish words." On July 10, Kaina plays music on a broken phonograph by "spinning it with his fingers;" their favorite songs are "The Last Roundup" and "The Wrong Man and The Wrong Woman."

While the boys are all very American in ways, this does not mean they have forgotten their indigenous heritage. They often sing "native Hawaiian songs...softly and harmoniously." On July 2, Piianaia comments, "It sort of tears at ones heart but still we continue to sing." Other nights are more festive, sometimes including Samoan songs and dances. The Hawaiian and Polynesian ties are also reaffirmed through the connection to the environment. On June 23, the boys gaze at the stars and discuss "their Hawaiian names, and their necessity to early Polynesians as means of navigating between islands." Young tells of an "old note book that his grandfather had left to him, containing the native names of the stars and the

The boys of summer: Abe Piianaia, Kenneth Bell, William Kaina, and Ed Young.
Photo courtesy of Bishop Museum Archives.

names of the different phases of the moon." Piianaia notes that Young "spent the early days of his life in Kona, one of the few spots left that is typical of early Hawaii," and "is quite adept at narrating native stories and customs." Young, like the others, revels in the superb fishing that Baker Island provides, and on June 29 he states that "he could stay down here for five or ten years." At the same time, Piianaia agrees "that with all the fish we have here, this place is no comparison to Kawaihae on the Kona coast of Hawai'i."

In addition to fishing and diving for lobsters, much of the time is spent weight lifting, boxing, tumbling, swimming, and body surfing. Much more time, though, is devoted to putting down and "razzing" one another. On July 13, Kaina is voted "the champion goldbrick cook of Baker Island." He serves food straight "from the can to plate without heating" and "usually waits until dinner time before

he washes the dishes from breakfast—what a man." After a spirited exchange on July 24 between Bell and Kaina (the topic again being the cooking of the "champion"), Piianaia remarks, "That's how it is at every one of our meals. Every wisecrack has a flashy answer in someone else's mind. Certainly makes life more fun and endurable."

While humor is an important element of life on the island, it does not preclude the young men from having deeper philosophical conversations. On June 28, the topic of religion is raised. Kaina does not like to go to church "because he had been forced to attend when we was a boy," and he believes that the minister used the people's contributions to buy a new car. Though he is a Christian, he believes Buddhism and other religions are more sincere than certain Christian denominations, which he likens to "money making corporations." Young on the other hand finds church enjoyable, especially since he attends churches that "hold their services, discussion, and sermons in Hawaiian." Piianaia hardly goes to church, but when he does he enjoys it, especially when his "granddad falls asleep."

The four also talk about their future and the options available to them as Hawaiian men. On July 22 they discuss going to college. Piianaia contends that although it seems as if only the smart ones get into college, the most important quality to have is determination. In terms of "mental capacity...all of us here have it—it's been proven time after time." On July 30, they contemplate "the possibilities of finding work" back home. "It's easy enough to find work on the road but such jobs offer no chance for advancement." Piianaia speculates, "Young and I will probably go back to our old jobs as stevedores and maybe become leaders of a real first class strike—who knows?"

Though he never organizes a strike, Abraham Piianaia later goes on to become a prominent leader in the Hawaiian community, like so many other participants in the colonization project. In a 1988 article, he notes the importance of that chapter in his life: "I think that at a young age, before your mind and future are settled in a specific direction, the opportunity to be left in nature is something youngsters don't have anymore...All we had was the four of us and nothing else." From his journal entries, we catch a glimpse of the many ways in which these four boys actively discuss, reflect on, and shape their identities as young Hawaiian men. For them, there is no conflict in being both American and Hawaiian; likewise, being modern does not mean that they must forget all of their traditions. Just like all other Hawaiians at the time, and all other Hawaiians before them, they adapt to and thrive in new island environments that are at once strange and familiar, combining the foreign with the indigenous to create new Hawaiian practices, identities, and communities.

1. Knaster, Mirka. 1988. The Panalā'au: Colonists on the Equator. Honolulu: The Paradise of the Pacific Vol. XXIII No. 5. Nov, Pg.167.

Hawaiian Colonists, American Citizens: Their Representations in the Media in the 1930s and 1940s

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The South Seas Equatorial Islands colonization project in 1935 fascinated many people who watched as Native Hawaiian colonists volunteered to undertake a modern day "South Seas Adventure." Through the years of 1935 to 1942, these participants gained wide publicity in the local and national media for living Crusoe-type lives in these remote islands.


The DAILY PINION

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Carl Kahalewai

C. KAHALEWAI DIES ABOARD THE TANEY

Football Stickers On Sale At Gov. Office

Dr. N. Larsen Delivers Social Hygiene Talk

ABSENTEE POLICY WILL BE STRICTLY ENFORCED THIS YEAR

McKinley's *Pinion* carried news of Carl Kahalewai's death

Left to the romantic imagination of the press, the government mission became transformed into a thrilling adventure, with Hawaiian lads as celebrity-like characters, growing bushy beards on tropic islands in the South Pacific. The reality of this, however, was often less romantic than the media portrayal. The atolls were quite barren and impoverished and the sun beat down relentlessly. The boys endured these hardships for months on end, living with limited contact with the outside world, unaware of the spotlight that was on them. Through descriptive narratives and striking images, the local and national media actively created representations of theses boys as Hawaiian Colonists and American Citizens, masking the real life consequences and dangers that came with these roles.

Numerous articles about the colonization project and colonists were published in local Hawai'i newspapers and magazines, including the *Honolulu Advertiser, the Star-Bulletin,* and *Paradise of the Pacific.* The boys received national exposure in the *New York Times,* a Washington D. C. paper called the *Sunday Starr* (1935), the *San Jose Mercury Herald* (1936), *Literary Digest* (1937), the *Columbian Missourian* (1938), *Pacific Island Monthly,* and later in *Life* (1942), and *Christian Science Monitor* (1946). The imagery of a "South Seas Adventure" was so appealing that one colonist got a letter from a fascinated New York reader requesting snapshots and personal information on their experiences.

On the local level, the *Honolulu Advertiser* and *Star-Bulletin* newspapers ran over 50 articles on the colonization project from 1935 to 1942. While it was undoubtedly an adventure of sorts, these articles focused on the competency and capability of these "sun-browned youths" in carrying out their assigned tasks. The Hawaiian boys were often characterized as "efficient," as being of a "very high order of intelligence," as "conscientious," and of a "very fine type." The fact that this was a government mission and these boys were left with the responsibility of continually occupying these islands was often underplayed.

Likewise, articles in the local magazine, *Paradise of the Pacific,* pursued a similar agenda. More than 23 articles about the colonization project and the boys appeared in this magazine from 1935 to 1942. These articles were part of a propaganda campaign explicitly aimed at proving that Hawai'i was as much a part of the United States as any other state. In the *Paradise of the Pacific* articles, the Hawaiian colonists became "poster boys" for Hawai'i's movement towards statehood. As such,

the boys were often portrayed as disciplined, standing shirtless in "parade rest" positions. They also created vivid images of the boys as resourceful individuals ready to "fend for themselves" and represent the United States.

Despite the romantic images displayed by the local and national media, the young colonists faced real and serious dangers during the occupation of these islands. The need for cooperation, organization, and physical and intellectual acuity was vital to overcome the hardships posed by isolation, unpredictable conditions, and the dangers of being within a war zone.

Elvin Mattson, Richard Whaley, and Joe Keliihananui relaxing on Howland, in 1941, months before the island's attack.
Photo courtesy of Elvin Mattson.

In a series of articles called "Travel with Tradewind Sam" (*The Bee,* 1974), colonist Samuel Kahalewai gave a very different impression of life on Howland Island in late 1938. He wrote of the trials of living on a deserted island and the immediacy of danger when someone was injured or when food, water, or other provisions were low and the supply ship had not arrived as scheduled. Kahalewai described the urgency the colonist felt when they were faced with life threatening situations, as in one instance when dehydration became so severe that they developed sores on their bodies and had difficulty swallowing. The situation became so dire that they dug shallow depressions in the sand and lay down beside them. Their hope was that if one died, the others would roll them into the depression and cover their shallow grave with sand.

Although help did come in this case, this was one example of the severity and consequences of being on a barren island in the middle of the Pacific with limited contact with the outside world. One seemingly minor predicament proved to be fatal. In 1938, Carl Kahalewai, brother of Samuel Kahalewai, became the first fatality of the program, as he died at sea while being evacuated from Jarvis Island for a ruptured appendix. Despite his death, the project continued, as the U. S. needed these Hawaiian boys to occupy the islands and eliminate possible counter claims to this territory.

In 1942, the project came to a tragic end, as Japanese bombers and submarines shelled and bombed these islands. Two colonists, Richard Whaley and Joseph Keliihananui, were killed. The surviving colonists buried them and were forced to wait more than a month to be rescued.

While it has been over 60 years since the project came to a distressing end, the memories of this "South Seas Adventure" remain etched in the mind of these Hawaiian men. Whereas the media coverage of the 1930s and 1940s presented romanticized or politicized perspectives of the project or colonists, recent stories provide more personalized perspectives. Some of these stories are told in Burl Burlingame's book *Advance Force – Pearl Harbor* (1992), while others, some of which are excerpts from Burl's book, are recounted in recent articles in the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin,* including "Boys of Panalā'au" (April 28-29, 2002) and "Secrecy Shrouded Mission to Secure Equatorial Atolls" (March 10, 2002). These recent stories highlight the strengths, contributions, and courage of these young Hawaiian "colonists" who participated in this important episode of Hawaiian and United States history.

Enduring Legacies of the Panalā'au Expeditions

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Sixty years have passed since the last Panalā'au colonists were removed from the remote islands of Jarvis and Enderbury in the months following America's entry into World War II. Between 1935 and 1942, over 130 young men had been recruited, some spending months, others years, on rat-infested, sun-blasted, barren "heaps of guano," hundreds of miles from civilization. Their successful pioneering efforts enabled President Roosevelt to claim U.S. jurisdiction over the islands of Jarvis, Howland and Baker in 1936, yet these claims would not come without cost as three young Hawaiians would ultimately lose their lives. As we reflect on this dramatic, but nearly forgotten, chapter in Hawaii's history, we cannot help but ask, what are the enduring legacies? What has been left behind in the wake of the federal government's efforts to colonize a trio of remote Pacific equatorial islands?

National Legacies

The advancement of commercial aviation was the initial justification for the colonization project, with the Department of Commerce asserting that federal intervention was required to clarify the legal status of key islands in the air route between Australia and California. Amelia Earhart's ill-fated second attempt to land on Howland in 1937 affirmed the importance of these islands, but it would be Canton that would prove to be the most significant stopping point. During 1938 and 1939, Pan American Airways initiated flights to New Zealand, using Canton as one of its ports of call.

As the years progressed, and despite clear ownership by the U.S., colonization efforts continued, taking on increasingly military undertones. Each island was staffed with a radio-operator charged with transmitting daily reports, and young men once trained to take detailed weather readings and chart weather patterns were now trained to identify aircraft. The outbreak of the war and subsequent attacks on the islands of Jarvis, Baker, and Howland unfortunately confirmed their military significance.

Two of the islands continued to be of military significance during the war. A base was established on Baker in 1943 to defend the central Pacific islands against enemy installations in the nearby Gilbert Islands. The base, whose forces numbered 120 officers and 2,000 men, participated in the Tarawa-Makin operation. On Canton, a major airstrip was developed, and Canton became the hub of central Pacific air movement, with all plane traffic stopping there. At its peak, 30,000 American troops were stationed on the atoll. Following the end of the war, Canton continued to serve as a stopping point for airplanes between Hawai'i and Fiji, but aviation advancements soon meant more direct flights, and Canton was ultimately bypassed.

Longtime Howland leader James Kamakaiwi with Joe Anakalea, Folinga Faufata and Killarney Opiopio in 1935.
Photo courtesy of Bishop Museum Archives.

From a federal standpoint, the occupation of these islands and the weather readings taken by the young colonists appear to have had a direct bearing on wartime military operations in the Pacific. Their efforts also enabled trans-Pacific air commerce to become safer and more viable. And the islands today remain a part of the U.S., with the exception of Canton and Enderbury, both of which are a part of the Republic of Kiribati. Howland, Baker, and Jarvis serve as individual National Wildlife Refuges,

and have been returned to their original inhabitants–hundreds of thousands of sea birds.

Institutional Legacies

There was irony to be found in the early years of the Panalā'au expeditions. Young Hawaiian men, vilified in the national press three years earlier during the notorious Massie case[1], were now being secretly recruited to colonize remote islands as quintessential "Americans." For three dollars a day, these "pioneering" Hawaiians lived on the edge of America's frontier, their very presence serving to confirm America's claim. This de facto Native Hawaiian hiring preference, first instituted by the Department of Commerce and later continued by the Department of Interior, was based largely on a stereotypical notion that Hawaiians could "stand the rigors" of a South Seas island existence.

Two Hawaiian institutions, Bishop Museum and Kamehameha Schools, actively promoted this notion and offered their assistance in the recruitment process. Both institutions saw themselves as furthering their own goals: the Museum was gaining scientific material, cultural insight, and confirming its prominence in the Pacific; the school was actively employing its young graduates and students at a time when good jobs were scarce. Nonetheless, these institutional benefits were secondary to their primary function of identifying and recruiting Hawaiian youths on behalf of the United States. Neither institution appeared to question their federal role or view their activities as potentially placing their students in peril.[2]

Kamehameha Schools in particular took personal interest in advocating for employment opportunities for Native Hawaiians. Up to 1940, Homer Barnes, supervising principal of the Kamehameha Boys School and key recruiter in the early years, advocated for a continued Native Hawaiian hiring preference to the Civil Aeronautics Authority. "The local people have become apprehensive lest this one of the few remaining outside employment channels open to native Hawaiians will be closed...it was indicated that [Kamehameha Schools] might be willing to go to the expense of teaching code if it would materially enhance the chance of their students (or possibly present colonists) getting the positions."[3]

Kamehameha students and alumni thus served as an ideal pool of applicants, and at least 52 of the over 130 colonists had Kamehameha ties. By the second year of the project, numerous articles began appearing in the local news and the alumni newsletters celebrating the accomplishments of the young men. Both institutions took pride in their role and contributions, although the roles of both

Kamehameha students and alumni on board the *Itasca*, heading out on the 4th expedition, January 1936.
Photo courtesy of George Kahanu, Sr.

would recede as the colonization project progressed. What endures sixty years later is somewhat more ambiguous. Bishop Museum continues to preserve specimens, data, and information collected by the colonists. The dogged determination and interest of Bishop Museum collections manager E. H. Bryan in the Panalā'au expeditions resulted in his 1974 Pacific Scientific Information Center publication, "Panala`au Memoirs." Kamehameha Schools, perhaps due to the Panalā'au project ending in relative wartime obscurity, rarely again featured the accomplishments of their former students and alumni. In some respects, the Panalā'au exhibit, developed by Bishop Museum and assisted by the Kamehameha Schools Archives, is both a recognition of their respective institutional legacies, and more importantly, a long overdue tribute to those young men who, but for the cooperation and advocacy of these institutions, might never have embarked on their South Seas adventures.

Personal legacies

Beyond national and institutional legacies, there are the personal legacies to consider — the legacies of those young men who participated in the expeditions. The early colonists were proud to be chosen and to serve successfully. They were representing their school, the Hawaiian community, and above all, America. These young men proved that they could excel equally in their multiple roles as Kamehameha alumni, as Hawaiians, and as Americans. Being a "worthy Kamehamehan" meant having cultural pride and being grounded, with a strong cultural foundation. Their ROTC training taught them discipline, resourcefulness, and respect for authority.[4] And perhaps, most importantly, being school boarders — learning, living, eating, playing together — taught them the skills necessary to live for months, if not years at a time, in small, intimate groupings.

Although the recruiters relied increasingly less and less on Kamehameha School students, they continued to recruit predominantly Hawaiian and local boys. One after another, these colonists note how this chapter in their lives helped prepare them for what lay ahead. It made them better decision-makers, better able to socialize, to minimize conflict and focus on positive group dynamics. It also provided them an opportunity to live in a natural setting, months away from civilization, to adjust themselves "to a different outlook on life." Many of these colonists would go on to become pillars of the community, like Abraham Piianaia and Hartwell Blake.

More than half a century later, this dramatic chapter in Hawaii's history has been nearly forgotten, except by those families whose lives became intricately intertwined. For Kamehameha Schools, precious few know of the key role their alumni played, and at Bishop Museum, the lingering scientific benefits are somewhat uncertain. The political, commercial, and military contributions are, however, undeniable. Islands were claimed, air commerce crossed the Pacific, and the military was better prepared for its encounters in the Pacific. Their national legacy endures, in spite of the lack of recognition by the federal government for the ultimate price paid by three of the young colonists, or contributions made by the over 130 others.[5]

But for those of us today who reflect upon these long gone expeditions, perhaps the most enduring legacy of all resides within the colonists themselves and what we can learn from their experiences — a better understanding of the importance of cultural pride and self-identity. These young men found comfort, support, strength, and inspiration in each other, in themselves, and in their environment. They had a profound ability to thrive under adverse conditions with humor, grace and humility. Their foundational cornerstones were the common values instilled in them through school, family, and community – values which remained with them no matter how far from home they happened to find themselves. Perhaps, in spite of the dramatic social, political and technological changes which have occurred over the last half century, what ultimately defines us are basic human relationships: our relationships with one another, with our environment, and with ourselves, and the common values underlying each of these interactions.

1. The Massie case concerned five young local men who were falsely accused of raping the young wife of a Naval officer. In the firestorm following the hung jury, one defendant was beaten and another murdered. The subsequent murder trial was among the biggest criminal cases in the U.S. in 1932, with over two hundred articles appearing in the *New York Times*, many which contained racially inflammatory remarks.

2. It took 3-5 days for a ship to reach a colonist in need of emergency medical attention. At least four such emergencies took place prior to the outbreak of the war. Two colonists suffered from appendicitis attacks, Carl Kahalewai in 1938 and Manny Pires in 1939: Pires made it to the hospital in time, but Kahalewai died en route to Honolulu. In 1941, Dominic Zagara and Henry Knell sustained severe burns when the hydrogen from their observation balloon ignited. Both returned to Honolulu badly in need of medical attention.

3. Memorandum, dated April 8, 1940, from W. F. McBride, Chief Radio Engineering Section, to Civil Aeronautics Authority, Washington, D.C.

4. While ROTC training helped to reinforce certain principles, these same tenets could also be found in traditional Hawaiian society: listen to your elders; learn from those who know; respect leadership and authority; and place group and communal needs before individual needs.

5. Talk has resumed among surviving colonists about pursuing some form of federal recognition or restitution for those families who lost loved ones during the Panalā'au expeditions. Such resolution would require official federal administrative or Congressional action.