

Annexation of Hawaii

In the late 18th century, white men sailed across the Pacific ocean, discovered the majestic Hawaiian Islands, and decided to dig their feet into the sands. Captain James Cook - a European explorer and the first white man on the paradise islands - joined the Polynesians, who had been on the islands for ten centuries before the white traders came to exploit the Hawaiian goods. Kealakekua Bay was a sacred harbor of Lono, the Hawaiian god of fertility. Arriving in the sacred harbor, Captain Cook and his men had been welcomed as Gods the first time they came upon the islands in 1778. One of Cook's men died and exposed the men's mortality, which caused much tension between the white men and the natives. Cook and his men left shortly after the display of mortality. On February 4, 1779, Captain James Cook and his men sailed away from Kealakekua Bay, but rough seas caused damage to their ship. After only a week at sea the expedition was forced to return to Hawaii. When they returned to Hawaii, they did not receive a warm welcome. There was a small dispute between the natives and the white men, and Cook was killed. The Hawaiians made it very clear that they did not want the white men interfering with their islands.

After Cook, white men continued to discover the beautiful islands. In the 19th century - 1820 to be exact - Christian missionaries arrived on the islands to spread religion and culture. Shortly after the missionaries, "[...] Western traders and whalers came to the islands, bringing with them diseases that devastated the native Hawaiian population. Hawaiians had numbered about 300,000 when Cook arrived. By 1853, the native population was down to 70,000" (Hawaii - History and Heritage). The European and American men had made a negative impact on the

population, religion, culture, and life of the native Hawaiians shortly after they discovered the islands. “American missionaries and planters brought about great changes in Hawaiian political, cultural, economic, and religious life, and in 1840 a constitutional monarchy was established, stripping the Hawaiian monarch of much of his authority” (Americans Overthrow Hawaiian Monarchy). In 1840, the American pursuit of the islands began. Fifty-eight years later, the United States of America annexed the Hawaiian islands.

Although the annexation of Hawaii brought about the fall of an independent nation and overtook a culture, America triumphed and gained land in the Pacific Ocean that served as a naval base, exporter of goods, and a major tourist attraction. Hawaii was free before America started to interfere, so they fought and petitioned against the annexation so they could remain free from imperialistic control. Hawaii was no longer their own independent nation, they were simply part of a bigger nation who believed in independence, and Hawaii’s freedom to practice their religion and be a part of their traditional culture remained intact.

Hawaiian Defiance

From the time Polynesians arrived on the islands in the early eighth century to when the white men arrived, the natives had established their own way of life and government. There had always been an established monarchy with one set ruler of Hawaii. When Europeans and Americans arrived, King Kalaniopuu was the ruler of the Hawaiian people. When the Americans decided they would like increased control of the islands, they had to deal with King Kalakaua. In 1887, the United States proposed a constitution to the Hawaiian monarchy that would establish Pearl Harbor - a naval base that is still in use today - and it would limit the power of the Hawaiian rulers. They were not aware of their slight loss of power when they signed the

constitution on July 6, 1887. “During the next four decades, Hawaii entered into a number of political and economic treaties with the United States, and in 1887 a U.S. naval base was established at Pearl Harbor as part of a new Hawaiian constitution” (Americans Overthrow Hawaiian Monarchy). King Kalakaua was the last king of Hawaii. He died in 1891 after a 17-year reign. When his younger sister Liliuokalani succeeded the throne after his death, her people encouraged her to fight the constitution and regain some of the monarchy’s control over their islands. After their prompting, Queen Liliuokalani decided to ignore the American constitution and replace it with one that increased her authority as the queen. She tried to reassert her control, and as a result she was overthrown by a small group of American sugar planters. “When Queen Liliuokalani assumed the throne in 1891 and tried to reassert the power of the throne and the will of Native Hawaiians, she was deposed by a small group of American businessmen, with the support of the American diplomats and the U.S. Navy” (Joint Resolution to Provide for Annexing the Hawaiian Islands to the United States (1898)). The group, led by Sanford B. Dole, overthrew the Hawaiian monarch and established a new government with the approval of the Hawaiian minister, John Stevens. A group of men backed by the U.S. Marines forced Queen Liliuokalani from her throne. This group of men acted “unconstitutionally” according to Dinsmore, the top Democrat on the Committee of Foreign Affairs. The Committee of Safety sought to overthrow the queen and annex Hawaii to the United States (Ka’iulani: Hawaii’s Island Rose).

Annexation was first thought of in the year 1893. After the Committee of Safety took over the Hawaiian government, Stevens proclaimed Hawaii a United States protectorate, and Dole submitted a treaty of annexation to the Senators back home. Hawaiian royalty continued to

retaliate against the new government and annexation. Princess Kaiulani even went as far as traveling to New York and later meeting with President Grover Cleveland. Her speech to the American men went as follows,

Unbidden, stand upon your shores today where I thought so soon to receive a royal welcome on my way to my own kingdom. I come unattended, except by the loving hearts that have come with me over the wintry seas. I hear that commissioners from my land have been for many days asking this great nation to take away my little vineyard. They speak no word to me, and leave me to find out as I can from the rumors of the air that they would leave me without a home, or a name, or a nation. Seventy years ago Christian America sent over Christian men and women to give religion and civilization to Hawaii. They gave us the gospel, they made us a nation and we learned to love and trust America. Today three of the sons of those missionaries are at your capital asking you to undo their fathers' work. Who sent them? Who gave them authority to break the constitution, which they swore they would uphold. Today, I, a poor, weak girl, with not one of my people near me, and all these Hawaiian statesmen against me, have strength to stand up for the rights of my people. Even now I can hear their wail in my heart and it gives me strength and courage and I am strong, strong in the faith of God, strong in the knowledge that I am right, strong in the strength of 70,000,000 people who in this free land will hear my cry and will refuse to let their flag cover dishonor to mine.

The emotional speech made by the Hawaiian Princess prompted President Cleveland to rethink annexation and eventually remove the annexation treaty from the Senate. Although the President sided with the natives and was against the annexation, the coup of white men on the

islands refused to give up on taking over the Hawaiian nation.

On April 25, 1898, the Spanish-American War began, which prompted the Americans to annex Hawaii due to the location of Pearl Harbor. Some Americans were all for annexation.

They stated in the newspaper *The San Francisco Call*, that

[...] the possession of the islands was of great importance, and pointed out that no fleet could come from Asiatic waters to operate against the western coast without touching at Hawaii for supplies and recoaling. The control of the islands would be practically an effectual barrier to attack upon our Western interests.

Other Americans, specifically Democrats, were against the annexation because of the knowledge that the native Hawaiians opposed annexation. Although the Hawaiians and many Americans were against it, the formal annexation of Hawaii was approved by Congress because of the strategic location of the naval base. Two years later, Hawaii was organized into a United States territory, and fifty-eight years after that it became an official state.

A Free State Under a Free Nation

Although Hawaii was no longer a self-governing chain of islands, they did not lose all of their freedoms. See, the United States lives by the Constitution, which protects and upholds the freedoms of all Americans. The people of Hawaii lost their right to self-governance, but they did not lose any other rights. Two years after annexation, Hawaii was organized into a formal U.S. territory. “Once annexed by the United States, the Hawaiian islands remained a U.S. territory until 1959, when they were admitted to statehood as the 50th state” (The 1897 Petition Against the Annexation of Hawaii).

Before annexation was even a thought in the Hawaiian statesmen’s minds, Hawaii had

been benefiting America in many ways with their resources. The sugar industry had been well established since the mid 19th century, and Americans had been exporting Hawaii's sandalwood from the beginning of the 18th century. In 1959, Hawaii moved past the "United States territory" title and became the 50th addition to the United States of America. "In March 1959, the U.S. government approved statehood for Hawaii, and in June the Hawaiian people voted by a wide majority to accept admittance into the United States. Two months later, Hawaii officially became the 50th state" (Hawaii becomes 50th state). Eventually the Hawaiians were no longer against being a part of the United States. So when the government approved Hawaii's statehood, a wide majority of the native Hawaiians were all for being the newest edition of the U.S.A.

All in all, America and Hawaii both benefited from the annexation. America took Hawaii under its wing and gained islands that served as a naval base, an exporter of goods, and a major tourist attraction, but in the process of gaining Hawaii, they overtook a culture and brought about the fall of an independent nation. Hawaii did not lose their freedoms, they only lost their self-governance. America gained more cultural, religious and racial diversity by adding the Hawaiians to their melting pot. The future relationship between the native islanders and the Americans was shining bright through the midst of the Hawaiian's tragic loss. Today, if asked, any of the native Hawaiians would state that they are glad to be a part of the United States of America for countless reasons.

Works Cited

Primary Sources

“Princess Kaiulani.” Houses with History, 11 Apr. 2012,

houseswithhistory.wordpress.com/2012/04/11/princess-kaiulani/.

This source was posted by Nanette Watson, but it does not have a specified author. The information provided in this article will relate to the pathos side of my essay. This source is useful because of its credibility and because its editors are very familiar with the facts about this topic. Princess Kaiulani’s speech to the American men had an emotional appeal and it provides a window into how the Native Hawaiians felt about the annexation, so this will tie into the pathos side of my essay.

“The San Francisco Call. (San Francisco [Calif.]) 1895-1913, June 12, 1898, Page 3, Image 3.”

News about Chronicling America RSS, Roanoke Pub. Co.,

chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85066387/1898-06-12/ed-1/seq-3/.

The Library of Congress has audio recordings, maps, newspapers, periodicals, archived websites, etc. all for your convenience and research. The source that I was looking at did not have one stated author. This primary source provides information and arguments about why America should have Hawaii in its control. People from the late 1900s gave credible information about how Hawaii’s annexation would benefit the United States. This source answered a few of my questions about how Americans felt about the annexation of Hawaii. The paper lies on the Ethos side of the spectrum, seeing as it is a primary source

and it is credible.

Secondary Sources

“Americans Overthrow Hawaiian Monarchy.” History.com, A&E Television Networks,
www.history.com/this-day-in-history/americans-overthrow-hawaiian-monarchy.

There is not one particular author of this segment. This article gave information on what was happening in Hawaii before the white men attempted to overthrow the monarchy and what was happening as they were taking over. The site History.com provided me with the information I needed to answer a few of my essential questions, such as, “when did Hawaii’s monarchy get overthrown?” and, “did the Hawaiian Monarchy eventually give up and cooperate with the United States government?”. I will use this information to build suspense towards the actual annexation of the U.S. Territory.

“Hawaii Becomes 50th State.” History.com, A&E Television Networks,
www.history.com/this-day-in-history/hawaii-becomes-50th-state.

All of the editors for History.com participated in writing this segment. This source provides information about the events leading up to Hawaii’s annexation and eventual statehood, and gives important dates. *History.com* is a credible source, so I will use the information from this site for the ethos side of my argument. This source impacted my claim because of the last sentence, which stated that the Hawaiians voted to be accepted into the United States, and for statehood.

“Hawaii - History and Heritage.” *Smithsonian.com*, Smithsonian Institution, 6 Nov. 2007,
www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/hawaii-history-and-heritage-4164590/.

All of the authors from the Smithsonian Institution participated in writing this article. This site allows people to look at information researched, studied and exhibited by the Smithsonian Institution. This article provides information about Hawaii from the early 18th century - such as who was the first white man to set foot on the islands - to after Pearl Harbor was bombed. This information will tie into the ethos side of my essay because it provides expert information about the impact that white men had on the Hawaiians.

“Joint Resolution to Provide for Annexing the Hawaiian Islands to the United States (1898).”

Our Documents - Interstate Commerce Act (1887),

www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=54.

Our Documents, which is an extension from the National Archives, researched and wrote a short summation about the topic of Hawaiian Annexation. It is only two paragraphs, but the information is credible because it comes straight from the National Archives. As I stated before, the information provided is a two-paragraph summary of the annexation of Hawaii. I will use this information to provide a counter argument for my essay.

“Ka'iulani: Hawaii's Island Rose.” *Smithsonian.com*, Smithsonian Institution, 7 May 2009,

www.smithsonianmag.com/history/kaiulani-hawaiis-island-rose-131796275/.

All of the authors from the Smithsonian Institution participated in writing this article.

This site allows people to look at information researched, studied and exhibited by the Smithsonian Institution. This article provides information about the uncrowned Princess of Hawaii - Kaiulani - and the influence that she had on the American people at the time of Hawaiian annexation. This ties into the logos part of my essay, because the information from this article comes from several credible, logical sources.

“The 1897 Petition Against the Annexation of Hawaii.” *National Archives and Records Administration*, National Archives and Records Administration,
www.archives.gov/education/lessons/hawaii-petition.

The National Archives and Records Administration is an organization that is responsible for the upkeep of the publications of government and historical research. This particular article provides information about the history of Hawaii before the United States intervened, as well as info about what was going during and after the annexation took place. I will use this material in the historical context, event, and impact portions of my essay. There were many things in this article that I plan on using in my essay for various reasons, so the information was extremely useful.