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# Hawaiians Abroad! The 1887 Royal Tour

By Donald Billam-Walker



Queens at Victoria's golden jubilee in 1887 were like oysters on the half shell. They came by the dozen.

One visiting queen, however, stood out from the rest – Kapiolani of Hawaii.

Although on her first trip away from the islands, speaking English very imperfectly and unaccustomed to the more intricate formalities of court life, Kapiolani held her own with the world's royal best. Her regal deportment and grace were remarked upon wherever she went.

Kapiolani's trip was made 51 years ago. But her trip is something more than a tale out of the past to three Honoluluans – Mrs. Mary C. Beckley, Col. Curtis P. Iaukea and James W. L. Maguire [McGuire].

For with her husband, George, Mrs. Beckley accompanied Kapiolani's party as far as Boston. Col. Iaukea was chamberlain of the party and Mr. Maguire a member of the royal entourage.

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The royal party left Honolulu for San Francisco by the steamer *Australia* on April 12, 1887. Principal members in addition to Queen Kapiolani were Princess (later queen) Liliuokalani and her husband, Gen. John Owen Dominis.

As if bearing out the proverb, "A prophet is not without honor save in his own country," the press of Honolulu paid little attention to the royal party compared to the reams of stories published abroad.

Under a one line head, Departure of the Queen, the *Hawaiian Gazette* chronicled:

"Queen Kapiolani and suite are booked for the outgoing steamer today, en route for San Francisco."

The *Gazette* then listed the names of the principal members of the party. Altogether the *Gazette* expended six lines of type on the story, carried no followup account the next day.

This is in sharp contrast to the two columns the *London Daily Telegraph* devoted to the story of the Hawaiian party's arrival at Liverpool.

From San Francisco, Kapiolani and party went to Washington, D.C., there were received by President and Mrs. Grover Cleveland, honored at a state dinner at the White House.

While in Washington, they party received a formal invitation to visit Boston as the guests of the city council. The invitation was accepted.

Both for business and sentimental reasons Boston determined to entertain its Hawaiian guests on a grand scale. Boston merchants for years had enjoyed the top cream of Hawaiian commerce; Boston and environs had sent many a son as missionary, many a son as merchant adventurer to "The Isles of the Gentiles."

For two weeks before the island party arrived in "The Hub," Boston papers fought to outdo each other in ballyhooing Hawaii.

The *Boston Herald* and the *Boston Globe* were the principals in this fight. They ran columns and columns of stories about Hawaii, Kapiolani and members of her party "soon to be visitors in the Athens of America."



The *Globe* took up nearly half a page on day to publish the words and music of *Aloha Oe*, composed by "Her Royal Highness, Princess L. Liliuokalani [Liliuokalani].":

A week before the Hawaiian party was due in Boston, the *Globe* began a campaign to educate Bostonians in the "proper" form of Hawaiian greeting.

Said the *Globe*:

"'Aloha!'

"That's what Her Royal Highness Queen Kapiolani of the Sandwich islands said to her sister in law, Princess Lilino-Kilani [Liliuokalani], when they met in the Baltimore & Potomac railroad depot at Washington yesterday afternoon.

"When the queen said 'Aloha!' the princess politely responded:

"'Aloha Oe!'

"Now it would have been a very serious breach of courtesy indeed had the princess neglected to add on the 'Oe!' for while 'Aloha' is the Sandwich islands expression for 'How do you do?' 'Aloha Oe!' is used only when the sovereign is addressed.

"It would be well, therefore, if every Bostonian who desires to do the 'proper thing' should practice the salutation industriously during the coming week, so that he may fittingly demonstrate the culture of the Hub by welcoming her Hawaiian majesty in a becoming manner."

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The *Globe* at that time was one of the most up and coming newspapers in the country. During the previous nine years it had built its circulation from 10,000 to 130,000 to rank as sixth largest newspaper in the United States.

Its extraordinary growth was attributed to its enterprise, vigorous style and thorough coverage of the news. It never pulled its punches. But at the same time it never hit below the belt.

The *Globe's* coverage of Kapiolani's visit is therefore extremely interesting, particularly to the newsman. The *Globe* turned journalistic handsprings in order to be sure not to miss a trick.

On the day the Hawaiian party arrived in Boston, the *Globe* even went to the extent of printing in Hawaiian an editorial welcoming the visitors. The *Globe* took particularly good care to see that Kapiolani saw this editorial immediately upon arrival in Boston.

The *Globe* took even greater care the next day to pat itself on the back, point out to its readers that "Queen Kapiolani was much surprised and greatly delighted at this novel and unexpected feature of her

reception; that this greeting in her own tongue made her feel at home at once. She asked for some copies of the paper to mail to her husband and friends at home, and spoke in cordial praise of the enterprise which as also so kind and thoughtful."

As the two principal members of the Hawaiian party were women, the *Globe* assigned its "Woman's Hour" editor, Jean Kincaid, to cover the visitors during their week's stay in Boston.

Many a human interest story did Jean give the *Globe* readers. It was Jean who noticed that before the royal party arrived by train in Boston, "a porter deftly dusted a footstool and placed it by the steps at the front of the car where a stalwart conductor teetered up and down on it for a few seconds to see if it was equal to the weight of royalty it was destined to support."

The Boston stationmaster had heard that the royal visitors were inclined to stoutness, so took no chances. He brought out his most substantial footstool, then had it carefully tested.

It was Jean, too, who noticed and recorded the embarrassment at the Massachusetts state house when Queen Kapiolani made a formal call. Unaccustomed to receiving royalty, the speaker and members "seemed at a great loss what to do with her."

There were several awkward pauses, several hurried consultation on the floor of the house between the speaker, sergeant at arms and Kapiolani's escort as to just what should be done. It ended with the speaker throwing himself into the breach with a little speech of welcome, a reply by Gen. Dominis on behalf of the queen, then more awkward pauses, finally bows all around and with that the queen was escorted from the house to the senate, where there was no hitch.

It was Jean, too, who wrote:

"The photographs and woodcuts of the queen are all libels. The queen is a very fine looking woman indeed, of medium height, but stout, with a strong sensible face that is charmingly attractive when she talks, and especially when she smiles. The features are all good, the skin a dark brown, and the hair jet black."

Jean also noticed and recorded in the *Globe* that when Kapiolani was introduced to the Rev. Phillips Brooks, "Her Majesty the Queen shook hands with Mr. Brooks in a shy way, as though half overawed by the actual presence of the great preacher of whom she had heard so much."

It is not too much to say that the Boston papers made a field day of Kapiolani's visit. On the third day of the visit, the Boston Herald carried at least nine, perhaps more, stories about the Hawaiian party.

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The Boston city council provided the visitors with a suite of apartments at the Parker House and gave the city's best know florist carte blanche in arranging the decorations.

The florist transformed the apartments into a bower of flowers, using thousands upon thousands of blooms, principally roses, hydrangeas and lilies.

Most notable of the florist's accomplishments was his arrangement of a banana tree in a corner of the queen's private reception room. A banana tree in Boston was fantastic enough. More astonishing though was that the tree bore a bunch of ripe fruit, so that the queen could eat a banana fresh from the tree merely for the picking.

The Parker House janitor was a very busy man during Kapiolani's visit. While the queen was actually in the Parker House, the janitor had to see that the hostelry flew the Hawaiian royal standard. The instant Kapiolani left the Parker House, even if only for 10 minutes, down came the royal standard, up went the Hawaiian flag.

Boston entertained its Hawaiian guests right royally. There seemed no end to the city's hospitality.

On the second day, the mayor gave a formal breakfast at the Parker House for the visitors. There were more than 70 guests.

The table was a mass of rare flowers, delicate ferns. Hovering over the blossoms, through a deft arrangement by the florist, were stuffed humming birds, bumblebees and butterflies on the wing.

No ham and egg or brown bread and baked beans affair was that breakfast, as can be seen by the menu:

"Fruits: Strawberries and cream; Hamburg grapes; pears.

"Fish: Spanish mackerel a la maitre d'hotel; soft shell crabs a la Tartare; cucumbers; tomatoes; radishes.

"Entrees: Spring lamb cutlets a l'Italienne; potatoes, maitre d'hotel; green peas; spring chicken a la Perigord; string beans; sweetbreads aux Champignons; fresh asparagus; omelette aux truffles; omelette a l'Espagnol.

"Game: Upland plover; Philadelphia squab.

"Coffee."

During breakfast the Boston cadet band played. At the close, Col. Laukeā addressed the company in Hawaiian, thanking the mayor on behalf of the royal guests for his courtesies.

It was perhaps with tongue in cheek that Col. Laukeā spoke in Hawaiian, for few had a better command of English than he.



Col. J. H. Boyd translated the talk into English.

In the afternoon the queen was honored at a reception given by the Boston Hawaiian club at the home of James F. Hunnewell. The club had been founded in 1867 and had about 30 members, all of whom at one time or other had lived in the islands. By 1887 its roster read like a Hawaiian social register – among the island families represented being Peabody, Brewer, Dillingham, Crocker, Bond, Wood, Parke, Pitman, Gilman, Kennedy, Beckley, Parker and Austin.

The next day the Hawaiian party visited Wellesley college in the morning, the American Watch Co. works in Waltham in the afternoon. In honor of the visitors, the Wellesley girls sang the Hawaiian national anthem, a faculty member gave a brief address in Hawaiian. The visit was closed by Queen Kapiolani, assisted by Liliuokalani, planting a tree on the Wellesley campus.

The watch works, however, seemingly impressed Liliuokalani more than Wellesley. In her account of the Boston visit Liliuokalani makes no mention of Wellesley, but goes into rhapsodies about the watch works.

On the last night of their Boston visit, the Hawaiians were honored at a public reception at Mechanics' hall, for which more than 7,000 invitations were issued. Evidently Bostonians of that day were not above gate crashing, for it is recorded that more than 12,000 persons attended.

Wrote Liliuokalani: "The hall was packed with dense masses of people of either sex to its farthest corner. We shook hands with multitudes."

At their last breakfast in Boston, the Hawaiians were presented with flower leis. After breakfast Queen Kapiolani taught the mayor's wife to say: "Ua hiki no," which the *Boston Evening Traveller* described as "an elegant salutation that is now being used at Honolulu and which signifies 'It can be done.'"

From Boston the Hawaiians went to New York, there boarded the *City of Rome*, then one of the world's largest steamships. They had a quick by not overly pleasant voyage across the Atlantic. The weather was murky; "so that the dismal sound of the great fog horn of the City of Rome never ceased by day or night."

Kapiolani stood the trip well; not so Liliuokalani. English newspapers reported that Liliuokalani was "an unhappy victim of mal de mer;" that she "did not appear to be so much at home on the sea."

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While in England, Kapiolani and suite were guests of the nation. Arrangements were handled by the British foreign office, which assigned R. F. Synge, C. B., to attend Kapiolani throughout her visit.

A guard of honor formed by 100 men of the 20<sup>th</sup> Lancashire Fusiliers together with the regiment's band was sent from Manchester to Liverpool to be present when the queen landed.

As the royal party came up the Mersey river, the guns of the Seaforth battery fired a royal salute. Somebody, however, got the signals crossed. The guns were fired half an hour before the party passed the battery and so the visitors did not hear the salute.

From Liverpool the Hawaiians went by train to Norwich where they were the guests for two or three days of Capt. and Mrs. W. J. Steward at their home, Rackheath Hall, then one of the showplaces of England.

Extremely wealthy, the Stewards entertained lavishly. English newspapers reported that the Stewards could not have been more thoughtful, more hospitable, had they been entertaining even Queen Victoria.

An instance of the Stewards' hospitality is shown in this incident: At dinner one evening Queen Kapiolani admired a particular posy, whereupon Mrs. Steward gave Kapiolani the posy together with a magnificent diamond brooch, fashioned as a racehorse, with which to pin the corsage on her dress.

While at Rackheath Hall, Queen Kapiolani planted a tree. The silver spade used in this ceremony was acquired recently by Donald Angus, island born Hawaiiana collector who makes his home in London. Photos of the spade and a description of it appeared recently in the news columns of The Star-Bulletin.

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In London, the visitors from Hawaii stayed at the Alexandra hotel together with members of other royal families, among them Prince Komatsu of Japan, the Prince of Siam, the Prince of Persia and several Indian princes.

On the afternoon of their arrival in London, Kapiolani and Liliuokalani were invited to call on Queen Victoria at Buckingham palace.

Queen Victoria greeted Queen Kapiolani with a kiss on each cheek, saluted Princess Liliuokalani with a kiss on the forehead. The two queens sat together on a sofa and engaged in conversation, which was translated by Col. Laukea.

The Queen Victoria introduced her children to the visitors and the audience was ended.

On jubilee eve the Hawaiian visitors were entertained at a state dinner at the foreign office. Here a slight hitch occurred. While awaiting dinner, Kapiolani noticed that all the men and women were standing, so thinking that standing was the correct procedure Kapiolani did not take a seat.

Soon royal ladies were shifting from one foot to another. Kapiolani did likewise, wondered why the others didn't sit down so she could sit down too. A grand duchess finally comprehended the situation, whispered to Liliuokalani, "Why does not the queen sit down, so that we may all be seated?"

Liliuokalani dropped the necessary hint in Hawaiian to Kapiolani, who immediately took a seat. It seems that Kapiolani as queen was of higher degree than all the others at the dinner and under court rules no one might take a seat while she was standing.

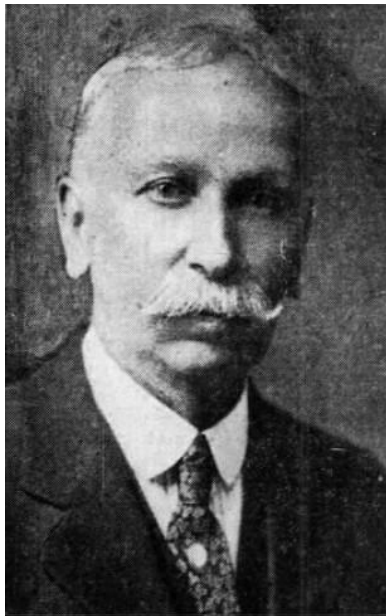
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On Jubilee Day Kapiolani and Liliuokalani were provided with an escort of Life Guards for their drive to the services at Westminster Abbey. Puzzled by this and other unusual honors, Kapiolani asked why. Kapiolani was informed that since she had come such a long distance to do honor to the occasion, Victoria had thought that the least she could do was to provide such special honors.

At the banquet at Buckingham palace after the services, Kapiolani was escorted by the Prince of Wales, who later became King Edward VII. Liliuokalani was escorted by the Duke of Edinburgh. After the banquet the visitors inspected Victoria's jubilee gifts.

Hawaii's gift was a frame, mounted on an easel, in the center of which was an embroidered piece, with the letters "V.R." worked in the rare o-o feathers of Hawaii, while the frame itself was studded with diamonds.

After the jubilee celebration, the Hawaiian party returned home by way of New York and San Francisco, arriving in Honolulu on July 26.



Mr. Maguire published recently a booklet of 136 pages giving an account of Kapiolani's trip to England, based on the diary he kept during the trip.

The booklet is in Hawaiian. Perhaps time will prove it the last major work published in that language.

Mr. Maguire determined to publish the story in Hawaiian for the benefit of those oldtimers to whom reading in Hawaiian is easier than English. He wrote the manuscript in English, had it translated into Hawaiian. The author has had 1,000 copies printed.

Full title of the work is: *He Moolelo Pokole o ka Huakai Hele a ka Moiwahine Kapiolani i Enelani i ka Makahiki 1887 i ka Iubile o ka Moiwahine Vitoria o Beretania Nui.*

Translated, this means: *A Short Account of the Visit by Queen Kapiolani to England in 1887 to the Jubilee of Queen Victoria of Great Britain.*

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Newspaper clippings preserved by Mr. Maguire show that there were Walter Winchells in Victoria's day. Wrote the court columnist for *St. Stephen's Review* (London), June 4, 1887:

"I do not know where the Queen of Hawaii is to be located when she comes to this country, but if Queen Kapiolani's caterer is not forewarned his ingenuity will be somewhat taxed when called upon at odd times to supply refreshments. As an instance of Her Majesty's taste I may mention that her favorite breakfast consists of brown bread and baked beans."

Origins of this canard can be traced to Queen Kapiolani's first breakfast in Boston when in compliment to that city and its traditions she ordered the dish for which Boston is famous – baked bean with steamed brown bread.

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[images: p.1 - Kapi'olani, p.2 - Lili'uokalani, p.4 - Beckley, p.5 - Iaukea, p.6 - McGuire. italics added.]