

MARK TWAIN AND WAIKIKI

By Edwin North McClellan



Mark Twain arrived at Honolulu aboard the *Ajax* (Captain Godfrey) on March 18, 1866. Kamehameha V was King and David Kalakaua was the King's Chamberlain.

It was Sunday, wrote Mark Twain, when "we came in sight of two of this Group of Islands—Oahu and Molokai (pronounced O-waw-hoo and Mollo-ki), on the morning of the 18th" of March, 1866. "Oahu loomed high, rugged, treeless, barren, black and dreary, out of the sea, and in the distance Molokai lay like a lonely swaybacked whale on the water.

"As we rounded the promontory of Diamond Head, bringing into view a Grove of Coconut Trees (the first ocular proof that we were in the tropics), we ran up the *Stars-and-Stripes* at the main-spencer-gaff, and the Hawaiian Flag at the fore.

"As we came in sight we fired a gun and a good part of Honolulu turned out to welcome the steamer. It was Sunday morning, and about church-time, and we steamed through the narrow channel to the music of six different church bells.

"By the time we had worked our slow way up to the wharf, under the guidance of McIntyre the pilot, a mixed crowd of four or five hundred people had assembled—Chinamen in the costume of their country; foreigners and the better class of natives and 'half-whites' in carriages." There were "other native men on foot." The "native women clad in a single garment." Mark Twain was soon ashore. The "farther I travelled through the town the better I liked it."

VISITS WAIKIKI

Mark Twain visited Waikiki. "An excursion to Diamond Head and the King's Coconut Grove was planned today at 4:30 p.m., the Party to consist of half a dozen gentlemen and three ladies," wrote Mark Twain on a day in March of 1866. "They all started at the appointed hour except myself. I was at

the Government Prison, and got so interested in the examination that I did not notice how quickly the time was passing. Somebody remarked that it was twenty minutes past five o'clock and that woke me up. It was a fortunate circumstance that Captain Phillips was there with his 'turn-out,' as he called his top-buggy that Captain Cook brought here in 1778, and a horse that was here when Captain Cook came." (Mark Twain's humor in this instance was un-historical for Cook did not visit Oahu and horses did not arrive in Hawaii until 1803.) Mark Twain quickly rode from the Prison to the American Hotel. The Party had started for Waikiki and Diamond Head.

HIS HORSE "OAHU"

The landlord provided Mark Twain with a horse which he named *Oahu* (pronounced "O-wa-hoo," explained the visitor). Mark Twain started on "Oahu" to overtake the party that had over an hour's start on him.

About "a mile and a half from town, I came to a grove of tall coconut trees, with clean, branchless stems, reaching straight up sixty or seventy feet and topped with a spray of green foliage sheltering clusters of coconuts—not more picturesque than a forest of ragged parasols, with bunches of magnified grapes under them, would be," wrote Mark Twain. "About a dozen cottages, some

frame and others of native grass, nestled sleepily in the shade here and there. The grass cabins are of a grayish color, are shaped much like our own cottages, only with higher and steeper roofs usually, and are made of some kind of a weed strongly bound together in bundles." The roofs are very thick and so are the walls which have square holes in them for windows. "At a little distance these cabins have a furry appearance, as if they might be made of bearskins. They are very cool and pleasant inside. The King's Flag was flying from the roof of one of the cottages, and His Majesty was probably within. He owns the whole concern thereabouts, and passes his time there frequently, on sultry days, 'laying off.' The spot is called 'The King's Grove'.

"The little collection of cottages (of which I was speaking a while ago) under the coconut trees is an historical point," continued the humorist. "It is the village of Waikiki (usually pronounced Wy-kee-ky), once the capital of the Kingdom and the abode of the Great Kamehameha I." Mark Twain referred to the bathing-place of Waikiki as "this little bathing-tub of smooth water."

MARK TWAIN'S CLUB OF FEMININE NUDISTS

Mark Twain is quoted in the *Mid-Pacific Magazine*, January, 1911, in these words, while he was at Waikiki Beach: "I observed a bevy of nude native young ladies bathing in the sea, and went and sat down on their clothes to keep them from being stolen. I begged them to come out for the sea was rising and I was satisfied they were running some risk, but they were not afraid, and presently went on with their sport." This incident possibly may have occurred at the site of the present Outrigger Canoe Club. At any rate it was a sort of a Uluniu Club of years ago.

AN ANCIENT HEIAU OR TEMPLE

Nearby (Waikiki) "is an interesting ruin, the meagre remains of an ancient heathen temple," continued Mark Twain. It was built of "rough blocks of lava, and was simply a roofless enclosure—a hundred and thirty feet long and

seventy wide—nothing but naked walls, very thick, but not much higher than a man's head. They will last for ages, no doubt, if left unmolested. Its three altars and other sacred appurtenances have crumbled and passed away years ago." About this time Mark Twain wrote that Hawaii was pronounced, "Hah-wy-ya."

LEAHI OR DIAMOND HEAD

"I wandered along the sea-beach on my steed *Oahu* around the base of extinct crater of Leahi, or Diamond Head, and a quarter of a mile beyond the Point I overtook the Party. . . . We went on-on-on a great deal too far I thought for people who were unaccustomed to riding on horseback." A "full tide and the sea had closed in on the shore," and Harry Macfarlane led the Party safely over a hill by a short route. Mark Twain described a song he heard, at this time, by "dark-skinned savages." They "have the tune to perfection," said Mark Twain. "Otherwise I never would have suspected that '*Waikiki lantani oe Kaa hooly hooly Wawhoo*' meant 'When we were marching through Georgia'."

THE "KING'S COCONUT GROVE" AT WAIKIKI

Probably the most distinctive feature of Waikiki in this period was the Coconut Grove, mentioned by Mark Twain, and about which a writer in *The Friend*, November, 1864, wrote: "The Coconut Grove is one of the charms of Waikiki. We believe it is the largest cluster in the Sandwich Islands. We never counted them (although we once tried) but suppose there are two or three thousand of these, although they are now diminishing in number." Mark Twain wrote that a coconut tree "looked like a feather-duster struck by lightning."

MARK TWAIN'S SECOND VISIT TO "PARADISE"

Mark Twain arrived at Honolulu on the *Warrimoo* in 1895 on a lecture tour of the world. However, cholera had broken out in Honolulu and he could not go ashore. He had sailed for Hawaii in September of 1895.

"On the seventh day out we saw a dim vast bulk standing up out of the wastes

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of the Pacific and knew that spectral promontory was Diamond Head, a piece of this world which I had not seen before for twenty-nine years," wrote Mark Twain. "So, we were nearing Honolulu, the capital city of the Sandwich Islands—those Islands which to me were Paradise; a Paradise which I had been longing all these years to see again. Not any other thing in the world could have stirred me as the sight of that Great Rock did. In the night we anchored a mile from shore." Despite his great desire to go ashore, Mark Twain had to remain aboard the *Warrimoo*. In a speech about 1877 he had expressed this love of Hawaii, in these words:

Hawaii "the land that I have tried to tell you about lies out there in the midst of the watery wilderness, in the very heart of the limitless solitude of the Pacific. It is a dreamy, beautiful, charming land. . . . It is a land that seems ever so vague and fairy-like when one reads about it in books. It is a Sunday-Land, the Land of Indolence and Dreams, where the air is drowsy and lulls the spirit to repose and peace, and a forgetfulness of the labor and turmoil and anxiety of life."