



Jonathan Thorn's "Tonquin."



EDWIN N. MCCLELLAN

## FIRST AMERICAN NAVAL OFFICER AT WAIKIKI

(In Memory of Navy Day, 27-October-1954)

By EDWIN NORTH MCCLELLAN

Jonathan Thorn of New York, United States Navy Lieutenant, was commanding officer of John Jacob Astor's *Tonquin* (Tonking) when that ship dropped anchor in Waikiki Bay on February 21, 1811, one day before George Washington's birthday. Lieutenant Thorn was on leave of absence from his regular Navy duties to make this cruise, transporting an expedition to establish Astoria in Oregon.

### FIRST U.S. NAVAL OFFICER TO SAIL PACIFIC

The American Pacific Fur Company, headed by Astor, required a strong commanding officer for the *Tonquin*. Lieutenant Thorn "was selected by Astor no less for his courage and habits of discipline, than for the prestige a government officer would give to the adventure," explained H. H. Bancroft. Washington Irving wrote that Thorn "was a man of courage and firmness, who had distinguished himself in our Tripolitan War."

Lieutenant Thorn was the first officer of the United States Navy to visit Hawaii and Waikiki Beach. Indeed, he was the first of Our Navy to sail the Pacific Ocean.

The Harbor Master demanded and received five Spanish dollars for services as pilot at Waikiki Bay.

### THORN ENTERTAINED ASHORE BY KAMEHAMEHA

The week spent at Waikiki and Honolulu was full of interest to Lieutenant Thorn, his officers, crew and passengers. Also to Kamehameha the Great, his

Court and other Hawaiians.

Lieutenant Thorn was entertained on shore at Waikiki by King Kamehameha with a repast consisting of, among other things, yams, taro, coconuts, pork, breadfruit and "orrack."

### KAMEHAMEHA ABOARD THE "TONQUIN"

On Washington's Birthday, Lieutenant Thorn honored the First Kamehameha on board the *Tonquin*. The Royal Party arrived alongside the American ship in a double canoe paddled by Chiefs who remained in the craft during the entire visit.

King Kamehameha, his three Queens (probably Keopuolani, Kaahumanu and one other) and High Chiefs, were received by Thorn with royal honors. The American Flag was displayed and a gun-salute fired. The King was conducted to Lieutenant Thorn's cabin, closely accompanied by his valet who held a spitting-box. This receptacle, called *Ipu Kuha*, was of great importance to the King for if a hostile *kahuna* secured the King's spittle or any other part of his body, it might be used as a basis for praying him to death.

#### NAKED QUEENS SPORT IN WATER

The Queens preferred to remain on deck. While there, they disrobed very unceremoniously and plunged overboard. After swimming and disporting in Waikiki waters, they returned aboard and dressed. Then, they joined the King in the cabin where they did ample justice, even while observing the tabus, to an excellent collation, drank two bottles of wine, all of which they apparently enjoyed.

The Royal Party left the *Tonquin* well pleased with the hospitality of the first American Naval Officer to visit their realm. Royal honors, including a gun-salute, were accorded the King as he passed over the side with his Queens and High Chiefs and entered the double canoe. The Chiefs paddled them back to the Beach at Waikiki.

#### HAWAIIANS ENLISTED BY THORN

A dozen Hawaiians were taken as volunteers aboard the *Tonquin* for the service of the intended commercial establishment of John Jacob Astor at Astoria, Oregon. Their term of engagement was three years during which they were to be fed, clothed and to receive, at the expiration of the term, one hundred dollars in merchandise. Lieutenant Thorn shipped another dozen Islanders as hands for the voyage.

#### ASTORIA FOUNDED

The *Tonquin* weighed anchor on February 28, 1811 and sailed on a direct course to the mouth of the Columbia River, where she arrived March 22, 1811. After several disastrous boating trips in which lives were lost, the ship was anchored. The site of Astoria was selected and the expedition, including the Hawaiians, landed in April of 1811.

On June 1, 1811, the *Tonquin* left Astoria on a cruise for furs. On board were about twenty-nine souls including Lieutenant Thorn and some Hawaiians. She crossed the Columbia River bar on the fifth.

#### INDIANS ATTACK; THORN BLOWS UP "TONQUIN"

When the *Tonquin* anchored off a village which Indians called New-Etta, Newty or Neweatee, trouble started with the Indians. This village probably was lo-

cated on Templar Channel, Clayoquot Sound, Vancouver Island, not far from the old Indian Village of Echatchet. In July or August of 1811 the Indians attacked the *Tonquin*. Seeing all was lost, Lieutenant Thorn, mortally wounded, deliberately blew up his ship with all aboard. The date and information concerning this American Tragedy are unknown today.

#### MOVIE MECCA

With several movies being made in or near our islands, Hawaii has become the mecca for stars, actors, directors, mechanics and producers. Some here to play, others to work, are the following: Lana Turner, Mickey Rooney, Samuel Goldwyn, John Wayne, Pilar Weldy, Van Heflin, John Ford, Tony Curtis, Frank Lovejoy, Arthur Franz, "Steamboat" Mokuahi, William Powell, Henry Fonda, Leland Hayward, Ward Bond, Tab Hunter, Lyle Bettger, Richard Davalos, James Arness, Gypsy Rose Lee, and many others. All have had fine days at Waikiki and many enjoyed surfing and canoeing.



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