

The British capital has ties to Hawaii, both old and modern.

ALOHA, LONDON

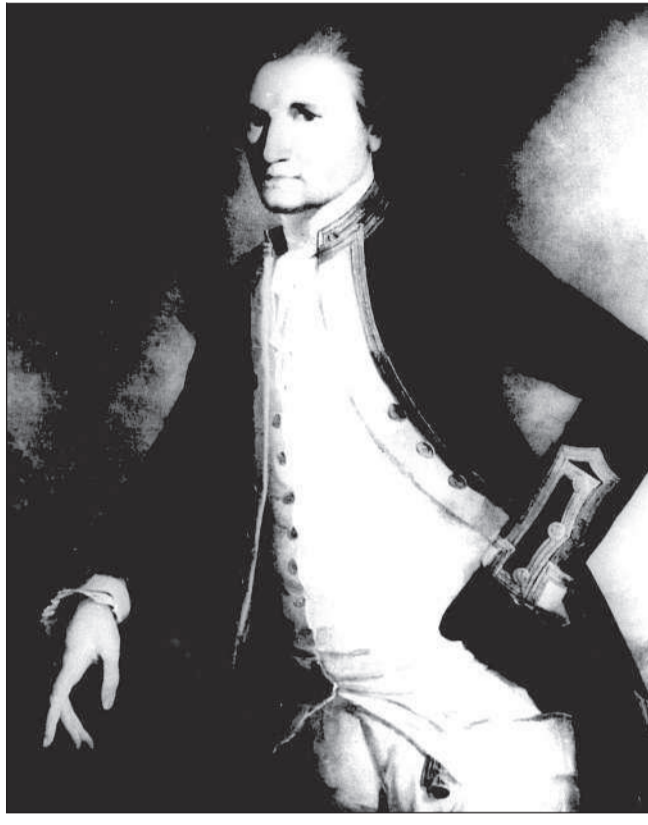
By SCOTT SNOWDEN
FOR THE REGISTER

To think of Hawaii is to imagine white sandy beaches, emerald cliffs and umbrella-shaded cocktails. Yet this delicate lei of volcanic flowers floating in the Pacific Ocean has some unlikely links to London. It's a story of murder, mutiny, mistaken regicide, hamburgers on Carnaby Street and those fruity-flavored rum floats with the funny paper umbrellas served beside Hyde Park.

THE MURDER AND THE MUTINY

It was Royal Navy Capt. James Cook who "discovered" Hawaii in 1778 and returned in 1779 to the Big Island of Hawaii. There was a disagreement over the ownership of a small boat and he was killed by angry Hawaiians. The British Empire League erected a statue to Cook in 1914 on the Mall between Admiralty Arch and Spring Gardens. No mention of Hawaii is made in the inscription.

Among the witnesses was a young officer, William Bligh, who would go on to infamy as the captain of the HMS Bounty during its mutiny by officers and men. Bligh was buried at St. Mary-at-Lambeth, a church now deconsecrated and used as a gardening history museum. Bligh's tomb, topped perhaps fittingly for the location with a breadfruit, is near the rear.



Royal Navy Capt. James Cook, who "discovered" Hawaii in 1778, is depicted in this portrait by John Webber.



A gardener cleans up the tomb of Capt. William Bligh in the graveyard of St. Mary-at-Lambeth Church.

A single doorway with minimal signage marks the entrance, and this is immediately on the left as you slowly step through the hotel's giant revolving doors. It's likely you'll miss it on the first few attempts. A short descending staircase opens to reveal a sizable bar and dining area deliciously decorated in Polynesian-style patterns, bamboo and ti leaf thatch.

Trader Vic's is also the home of the Mai Tai. According to legend, the rum-based cocktail was invented at the Trader Vic's restaurant in Oakland in 1944.

Founder Victor J. Bergeron created it one afternoon for some friends who were visiting from Tahiti.

One of those friends tasted it and cried out: "Maita'i roa ae!" the literal translation of which is "Very good!" or "Out of this world!" Hence the name.

The bar is made up like a beach hut, giant tiki masks hang from the walls and wooden canoes hang from the ceiling.

In one corner, through two windows, you can see the two enormous, custom-made, wood-fired ovens that burn only oak to deliver Trader Vic's trademark taste.

The London Trader Vic's opened in 1963, four years after Hawaii became the 50th state. Celebrating its 50th anniversary on Oct. 1, the bar capitalized on the nostalgia of servicemen and women who passed through Hawaii during World War II and the general fascination heightened by the popularity of James Michener's "Tales of the South Pacific." That became the hit West End show and later a movie, its title shortened to "South Pacific."

The London Trader Vic's coveted guest book includes the signatures of Sophia Loren, Frank Sinatra, David Niven and Marlon Brando.

According to manager Dusan Sofranac, Roger Moore and Stirling Moss are still regulars here.

"Oh, yes, they even have their favorite tables in the restaurant," he said.

It's hard to believe, but the London outlet is the oldest and best preserved of what was once a worldwide chain. It also predates the high-rise hotel near Hyde Park that it's part of. "It opened two weeks before the Hilton did," Sofranac said.

There are no windows down here, just the soft, low-level lighting and flickering candles. Honestly, you could pass out at the bar, wake up and wonder what city was outside.

"You can't hear the traffic, you can't see outside, and that's crucial in creating our unique escape. Plus, of course, many of our guests appreciate the privacy," Sofranac said. "That's one of the attractions, I think - you come down here and you feel like you're somewhere else."

Perhaps Hawaii.

THE ACCIDENTAL REGICIDE

Around 1797, the second king of Hawaii was born. Kamehameha II asked to visit Britain after King George IV gave him the gift of a schooner in 1823. The King and favorite of his five wives, Kamamalu, arrived in Portsmouth on May 17, 1824, and the next day were staying at the Caledonian Hotel in London. Kamamalu was more than 6 feet tall and Native Hawaiians were an unfamiliar site to Londoners in general.

A week later, a reception with more than 200 guests, including many dukes, was held in the couple's honor. They toured London, visiting Westminster Abbey and attending opera and ballet at Royal Opera House in Covent Garden and the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane. A meeting was arranged with King George for June 21. But the meeting of kings was called off after it was found the Hawaiians had contracted measles, for which they had no immunity. It most likely was contracted during a visit to the Royal Military Asylum - now the Duke of York's Royal Military School. Kamamalu died July 8, 1824, and Kamehameha II died six days later, age 27.

Vast crowds lined up when Kamehameha II was laid in state at the Caledonian Hotel. The bodies were then stored in the crypt of St. Martin-in-the-Fields church, in Trafalgar Square, where they awaited transportation home. In September, the bodies finally returned to Hawaii on a Royal Navy frigate and Kamehameha II was succeeded by his younger brother Kamehameha III.

In the end, it was the United States, not Britain, that annexed Hawaii after a coup d'etat against the royal family by wealthy American planters. Many were the sons of missionaries who had come to save Hawaiian souls, only to have their children steal their flock's land and freedom. Britain's role in the islands is recalled by the presence of the Union Jack in the upper corner of the state flag.

A PRESIDENTIAL BURGER

Tucked away down a cobble lane next to Carnaby



The home of the Mai Tai is the popular Hawaiian-style haunt Trader Vic's in the Park Lane Hilton hotel.

Kua 'Aina restaurant near Carnaby Street brings burgers and a Hawaiian surf vibe to central London.



GARY A. WARNER, ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Street (the onetime Beatles haunt) in the heart of Soho is a veritable hidden Hawaiian gem, the Kua 'Aina burger restaurant.

The original was opened by Terry Thompson in 1975 in Haleiwa on the North Shore of Oahu. The burgers are a favorite of Hawaii's native son Barack Obama. When running for president in 2008, Obama dropped into Kua 'Aina and ordered 28 hamburgers for his Secret Service detail.

Thompson also owns two more shops in Hawaii and there are 20 licensed in Japan.

"Somebody once described us as 'surfing the wave between cool and kitsch,'" co-owner and manager Ed Bardos said.

The surf shack-style diner takes great pride in its culinary techniques and recipes, cooking mouth-watering burgers on lava-rock grills. These bad boys are among the best in London.

The décor inside transports you back to the halcyon days of the surfing '70s, with wooden floors and paneling, bamboo roof, retro surfer prints, tropical ceiling fans and wall-mounted surfboards. Even

Hawaii's ties

The state of Hawaii has multiple ties to areas in and around London:



- 1 Trader Vic's Bar, Park Lane Hilton
- 2 Kua 'Aina
- 3 Royal Opera House
- 4 Theatre Royal
- 5 St. Martin-in-the-Fields
- 6 Former Caledonian Hotel site
- 7 James Cook statue
- 8 Westminster Abbey
- 9 William Bligh burial site, at Lambeth Palace Gardens

The Register

POSH POLYNESIA

Probably the other well-known Hawaiian-style haunt in London is the venerable Trader Vic's bar in the Park Lane Hilton hotel.

the music is from that era. Space is at a premium, but that's nothing new in London, especially Soho. The intimacy just adds to the atmosphere. Bardos hopes to add a second shop soon.

Bardos said that in London they still honor what's called the kama'aina discount.

"It has traditional roots," he said. "Because there are so many tourists in Hawaii, the locals often give each other a 10 percent discount. So when someone comes in here and pulls out a Hawaii driver's license, we give them the discount, too."

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