

This Day in History... November 28, 1843

Hawaiian Independence Day

On November 28, 1843, France and the United Kingdom officially recognized Hawaii as an independent kingdom. The day has since been celebrated as Hawaiian Independence Day.

After the death of King Kamehameha in 1819, his favorite wife, Ka'ahumanu, became queen regent or kuhina nui. In this position, she asserted greater power than the kings for the remainder of her life. In 1824, she embraced Protestant Christianity and was baptized in 1825. Two years later, she outlawed Catholicism in Hawaii. French Catholic priests were deported and native Hawaiian Catholic converts were arrested. They were later freed once they rejected Catholicism. Ka'ahumanu died in 1832, and Kina'u became kuhina nui. While the king began to reassert his authority, Kina'u still held significant power. Until her death in 1839, she continued the prejudice against Catholics.



Stamp pictures Hawaii's Coat of Arms.



Stamp pictures King Kamehameha III

Shortly after Kina'u's death, the French government sent Captain Cyrille Pierre Théodore Laplace to Hawaii. Laplace was ordered to threaten King Kamehameha III with war if he didn't issue the Edict of Toleration. This decree called for the creation of the Hawaiian Catholic Church and forced the king to pay \$20,000 in compensation to the French government. The Catholic missionaries were then allowed to return to Hawaii and were given land to build a church.

This incident, known as the Laplace Affair, made King Kamehameha III worry about future foreign intrusions. He decided to send diplomats to the US and Europe to get official recognition of Hawaii's independence. The diplomats left in mid-1842 and by December of that year, US President John Tyler assured them that the US would recognize their independence.



1938 stamp from the Prexies Series



The only stamp to read "Republic of Hawaii."

It took a bit longer for the British and French to recognize their independence. The first meeting with the British was unsuccessful, but after the delegation traveled to Belgium, that country's king promised to use his influence to help their cause. In March and April 1843, French and British representatives said their respective leaders would acknowledge Hawaii's independence. However, during this time a British naval captain landed in Hawaii and occupied it for five months in the name of Queen Victoria. On July 31, 1843, King Kamehameha III was restored to power.

On November 28, 1843, British, and French representatives met at the Court of London to sign the Anglo-French Proclamation, formally recognizing Hawaii's independence. Despite President Tyler's earlier assurance, the US didn't sign the proclamation because it needed to be ratified by the US Senate. However, in 1846 Tyler's Secretary of State John C. Calhoun sent Hawaii a formal recognition of its independence.

In the years since, November 28 came to be known as Lā Kū'oko'a, or Hawaiian Independence Day. It is still celebrated today, particularly among native Hawaiians.



Issued on the day Hawaii became a US state in 1959.

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