

## THE PRIDE OF HAWAII

by Serge Kahili King

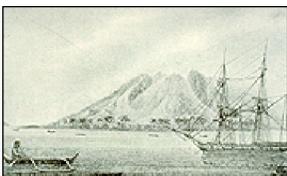


The very first ocean-going yacht ever built in America also became the very first yacht to sail Hawaiian waters.

In 1816 George Crowninshield, Jr., wealthy son of a former privateer, commissioned one of Salem, Massachusetts' most prominent shipbuilders to construct an outrageously luxurious yacht for his personal pleasure. Inspired by some lines in a play by William Shakespeare it was christened *Cleopatra's Barge*, and it cost \$100,000 to build and outfit at a time when the cost of a similar merchant ship was only a tenth of that.

The owner had every intention of creating a sensation and many thousands of people came to watch it's construction and to see it enter its ports of call. Designed as a modified brig, she measured twenty-three feet in her beam, one hundred feet along her deck, and she displaced just over one hundred ninety-two tons. Her starboard side was painted in a bright herringbone pattern and her port side in horizontal stripes. Gold-leaf accents were everywhere and the interior was a wonder of comfort and beauty. Bulkhead panels bore carvings of Grecian goddesses and meals were served with custom-made dish- and tableware.

Crowninshield took his expensive toy on a six-month cruise of the Mediterranean and was planning another cruise when he died in 1817. The next year the ship was auctioned off to China traders from Boston for about \$15,000.



During this time the Hawaiian monarchy was heavily involved in providing sandalwood for the China trade. The new owners sent the yacht, stripped of all its fine furnishings, to Lahaina under the command of Captain John Suter with the intention of bartering it to Kamemeha II (Liholiho) in exchange for a cargo of sandalwood.



Liholiho fell in love with it immediately and paid the equivalent in sandalwood of \$80,000. The king renamed her *Ha'aheo O Hawai'i* (*Pride of Hawaii*), and for the next three years it served as his royal yacht.

On July 21, 1821 Liholiho was making a tour of western Oahu in a different ship when he suddenly decided to visit King Kaumuali'i of Kauai. When Liholiho landed at Waimea the king of Kauai acknowledged him as the king of all the islands and declared himself a vassal, but Liholiho generously told him to keep the island and do with it as he willed. During this visit, which lasted well over a month, *The Pride of Hawaii* arrived with Liholiho's five wives.

It was on September 16, 1821, that the two kings each went sailing in their own brigs and met that evening at Waimea. Liholiho invited Kaumuali'i aboard his yacht for dinner, and then kidnapped him as a prisoner of state and sailed back to Honolulu.

While Liholiho was on a voyage to visit King George IV of England, some members of his court got drunk and sailed *The Pride of Hawaii* to Kauai and grounded it on a reef in Hanalei Bay. All attempts to raise it failed and it was declared a total loss. Except for a few pieces that later washed ashore and were used in building a house, *The Pride of Hawaii* was abandoned.

With the help of historical documents and modern technology the wreck of Liholiho's yacht was located in 1995 by Paul Johnston, curator of maritime history at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. So far divers have recovered stone poi pounders, early western navigational instruments, a shell trumpet, a fork, and a folding pen knife. Archeological research on the site continues to this day.