Hawai'i
the Aloha State

BY EDWARD F. KLEIN

August 21, 2009, marks the 50th anniversary of the entry of the 50th state into the United States of America. All the states have their stories, but as a string of islands in the vast Pacific Ocean, more than 2,000 miles from any other land mass, Hawai'i has a story that is unique in many ways.

Consider, for example, that Hawai'i has two official languages, English and Hawaiian. In this article Hawaiian words are spelled following the accepted method of including the *'okina* (a backwards apostrophe indicating a glottal stop) and the *kahakō* (a macron over the vowel indicating that it is lengthened). Perhaps more importantly, we call Hawai'i the "Aloha State" for good reason. Although the word *aloha* is used to say "hello" as well as "good-bye," its basic meaning is "love, affection, kindness"—something people in Hawai'i earnestly try to show to each other and extend to Hawai'i's many visitors.

© Shutterstock

The Hawaiian islands were formed million of years ago when lava erupted from below the Pacific Ocean. Today lava still spews from the Kilauea Volcano.

Geography of Hawai'i

Hawai'i's geological history began 25 million years ago as hot lava spewed forth from an opening in the earth's crust almost four miles deep in the Pacific. Each Hawaiian island, in its turn, grew as a new volcano over the "Hawaiian Hotspot." Tectonic plates gradually moved older islands toward the northwest, allowing for the emergence of still another new island. Over time, the islands were eroded by wind, rain, and waves. Even today, an infant pre-island, named Lō'ihi, is building over the hotspot and may break the ocean surface in several thousand years.

The state stretches for 1,600 miles in a northwest-to-southeast line. The oldest part is the Northwest Hawaiian Islands—small, uninhabited islands, atolls, and shoals. With incredible biodiversity both above and below sea level—plants, birds, sea mammals, turtles, fish, sea plants, and corals—this area was proclaimed Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument in 2006. Almost the size of California, it is the world's largest wildlife reserve (139,000 square miles) and has been set aside for very careful protection.

The better known Hawai'i is to the southeast and consists of eight primary islands.

Ni'ihau

The small island of Ni'ihau (69.5 square miles), called "The Forbidden Isle," is privately owned and was maintained as a ranch until 1999. The population (only 160) now sustains itself through subsistence farming and small home-based industry such as the crafting of shell jewelry and bee keeping. Almost all the residents are native Hawaiians, and they continue to use Hawaiian as their main language.

Kaua'i

Kaua'i (552.3 square miles), called "The Garden Isle" because of its lushness, is the oldest of the main islands. The population (60,747) lives in towns along the highway that almost, but not quite, circles the island. Mount Wai'ale'ale (5148 ft.) dominates the center of the island. The summit is said to be the second wettest spot in the world with an annual rainfall of about 460 inches.

Kaua'i is home to some breathtaking geography. Waimea Canyon, a spectacular splash of red, yellow, and orange along the walls of a magnificent gorge, is often referred to as the Grand Canyon of the Pacific. Above the canyon are the 'Alakai Swamp, home to many endemic plants, birds, and insects, and beautifully forested Kōke'e State Park. The Nā Pali Coast is a series of valleys and cliffs of stunning beauty that fall directly to the ocean below—and prevent that road from circling the island.

Waimea Canyon, often referred to as the Grand Canyon of the Pacific, is a spectacular splash of red, yellow, and orange on the island of Kaua'i.

Honolulu, the state capital, stretches along the south shore of Oʻahu with its landmark volcanic crater, Diamond Head, in the background on the left.

Oʻahu

Oʻahu (600 square miles) is called "The Gathering Place," and with a population of 902,704 it is home to about 80 percent of the state's population. Oʻahu encompasses the County and City of Honolulu, the state's capital. Two mountain ranges, the Waiʻanae on the west (the highest point, Mount Kaʻala at 4,025 ft.) and the Koʻolau on the east (the highest point, Mount Kōnāhuanui at 3,150 ft.) are remnants of volcanoes. The island is also dotted with several smaller craters, called spatter cones, including Diamond Head, the most identifiable landmark of Oʻahu. Most people live along the south shore in urban Honolulu. World famous Pearl Harbor is also situated along the south shore.

Molokaʻi

Molokaʻi, (260 square miles) is called "The Friendly Isle" and has a population of 7,404. From the northern coast juts the peninsula of Kalaupapa, site of a former leper colony. The sea cliffs sheltering Kalaupapa are some of the highest in the world. Mountains on the eastern side of the island rise to nearly 5,000 feet with deeply cut valleys, but the western side is dry and windblown. Molokaʻi remains very rural and protective of the quiet lifestyle of old Hawaiʻi.

Lānaʻi

Lānaʻi, "The Private Island," is 140 square miles with a population of 3,164. It is a small,

relatively dry island (with an annual rainfall of about 37 inches) that rises from the sea to a grassy, somewhat level plain where the only town, Lānaʻi City, and the airport are located. The island was formed by a single volcano that last erupted perhaps 1.3 million years ago. Although for years Lānaʻi was known as the world's largest pineapple plantation, in the 1990s the economy was completely transformed to luxury tourism.

Maui

Maui, "The Valley Isle," is the second largest of the Hawaiian Islands (728 square miles) and has a population of 135,734. It was formed by two volcanoes, the smaller in the West Maui Mountains 1.3 million years ago and the much larger dormant volcano of Haleakalā about 750,000 years ago. Located on the isthmus between the two mountains are important agricultural lands and the two largest towns of Wailuku and Kahului.

Kahoʻolawe

In the lee of Haleakalā lies the arid island of Kahoʻolawe (just 45 miles square and presently uninhabited). It was inhabited before Western contact and later used as a penal colony and for grazing cattle and sheep. With the loss of most vegetation, the island lost its topsoil and so was abandoned. The U.S. government used it for bombing practice from 1942 until 1990. Since then, slow progress has been made to remove dangerous unexploded ordnance and to reforest the island.

Hawaiʻi

The Big Island of Hawaiʻi (4,028 square miles) is also known as "The Orchid Isle" and is home to a population of 158,423. As the youngest island, it is more than twice the size of all the other Hawaiian islands put together. The oldest of its five volcanoes is "only" 430,000 years old. The youngest, Kīlauea,

Maui's dormant volcano, Haleakalā, is a favorite destination of tourists. Many gather at the summit of the volcano to watch the sunrise.

The Big Island of Hawai'i, more than twice the size of all other Hawaiian islands put together, has few protective reefs and thus few good beaches.

is the most active volcano in the world and continues even today to erupt and create new land. Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa are both over 13,000 feet above sea level, but measured from the floor of the ocean, Mauna Kea is actually taller than Mount Everest. Both mountains are often covered with snow in the Hawaiian "winter." As a "young" island, Hawai'i has few protective reefs and therefore few good beaches. In addition, the Big Island is prone to earthquakes because of its proximity to the hotspot and the general instability of the tectonic plates.

Climate

Hawai'i's geography explains much about its wonderful weather. The islands lie north of the equator but straddle the Tropic of Cancer. Thus, Hawai'i is pleasantly warm year-round but not stiflingly hot or humid. About 90 percent of the time, the trade winds blow from the northeast, keeping the Islands comfortable and often bringing gentle showers. The other ten percent of the time the winds may shift, bringing humid weather with harder rain.

At sea level, average temperatures vary only 9°F from the coolest month to the warmest month. In towns near the shore, the temperature rarely goes above 89°F on the hottest summer day nor below 57°F on the coldest winter night. However, the temperature drops about 3.6°F per 1,000 feet of elevation. Thus, from the beach to the top of a tall mountain, there occur many "life zones," which differ not only in temperature but also in rainfall, humidity, fauna, and flora. A dry zone at sea level gives way to lush rainforest on the lower slopes and to an alpine bog still higher and finally to an almost desert-like alpine zone on the summit.

A Brief History of Hawai'i

Human history in Hawai'i may have begun with two migrations of Polynesian voyagers from islands far to the south. The first wave arrived from the Marquesas Islands perhaps between 300 and 800 A.D. These people probably brought dogs, pigs, chickens, rats, and many plants, including banana, sugar, coconut, taro, and the candlenut tree. We know little about them except that they navigated using the stars. The "second migration" was from Tahiti, according to linguistic data, oral tradition, and botanical evidence. After about 1200 A.D., travel between Hawai'i and those distant islands ended.

For centuries the Polynesians in Hawai'i lived in complete isolation, though some argue that the Spanish might have made contact on their many trips from South America to China beginning in the 16th century.

The first historically verifiable contact between Hawaiians and the outside world was the arrival of Captain James Cook's expedition in January, 1778. This famous British explorer was looking for the rumored "Northwest Passage," an economically valuable shortcut between Europe and Asia. Cook first made contact near the village of Waimea on Kaua'i. His men bargained for water, food, and supplies and found the natives to be friendly and peaceful. Cook's journal tells of men riding boards on the waves, no doubt the world's first report about the sport of surfing.

Cook soon sailed off in his two ships to continue his futile search for the Northwest Passage. A year later he returned to Hawai'i for the winter, finally dropping anchor along the west coast of the Big Island. This time, Cook arrived during a season called *makahiki*, when Hawaiians celebrated the return of one of their gods, Lono. At first, Cook may have been mistaken as a manifestation of Lono, for the expedition was treated very well. After a time, Cook set sail again, but returned shortly thereafter because one ship had suffered damage. Suspicious that "Lono" had returned too soon, the Hawaiians were less hospitable and even stole a small boat. A skirmish followed during which Cook was stabbed and killed. His crew managed to escape to their ships, but when they sought the remains of their beloved captain, they were given only his hands, some bones, and other body parts that had clearly been burned. Stories like this, told back home in England, temporarily cooled public interest in the Islands.

Nevertheless, gradual contact between Hawai'i and the outside world continued. The discovery of sandalwood trees in the 1790s led to a booming trade with China, where this fragrant wood was highly valued. However, human suffering in harvesting the wood, duplicity in the trade, and eventual depletion of the resource resulted in this industry's demise by 1830. Hawai'i also became an important center for whaling in the first half of the 19th century, whale oil being used for heating, lighting, and machine lubrication in America. But the 1859 discovery of a much cheaper source of oil in Pennsylvania and the rise of the sugar industry in Hawai'i supplanted whaling by the 1860s.

The Monarchy

Politically, pre-contact Hawai'i was ruled by warring *ali'i*, or chiefs, who usually held power over part of an island but never over a large part of the archipelago. Ironically, within the group of Hawaiians present at the time of

This statue of King Kamehameha the Great, first monarch of a united Hawai'i, stands in front of the building that today houses the state Supreme Court.

Captain Cook's death was a strong and charismatic *ali'i* named Kamehameha. With the help of his followers and Western weaponry, Kamehameha extended his power over all of the islands by 1810 and ruled as king until his death in 1819. So began the Hawaiian monarchy, which continued until 1893 through seven kings and one queen. Increasingly, these benevolent monarchs fashioned their rule after the European model. In 1820, Protestant missionaries arrived, followed by Catholics in 1827. They brought not only Christianity, but also literacy, creating a written language for Hawaiian so that all could read the Bible.

Thus Hawai'i became a literate kingdom in a remarkably short time.

In the mid-1800s, the Hawaiian monarchy witnessed a decline in the population, influence, and language of the indigenous people and an increase in the population, power, and language of outsiders, especially Americans and Europeans. For example, although the indigenous Hawaiians had cultivated sugar for a thousand years for individual home use, it was entrepreneurial Americans who began sugar plantations, creating an extremely profitable industry. Hawai'i's lack of an extensive labor force led to the importation of large numbers of workers from China, Puerto Rico, Portugal, Micronesia, Japan, Korea, and the Philippines. The population still reflects this diversity of peoples today.

In 1891 Queen Lili'uokalani took the throne, but she abdicated under protest in 1893 because of a revolution led by a group of American and European businessmen who wished to see royal power restricted. These new leaders wanted the United States to annex the Islands, but President Grover Cleveland refused because he believed most Hawaiians were opposed to annexation. The businessmen established the Republic of Hawai'i, which lasted until 1898, when the U.S. Congress did annex the Islands because of their economic ties and the militarily strategic location of Pearl Harbor. In 1900 the Islands became the Territory of Hawai'i.

The Territory

In the early 20th century, Hawai'i was dominated by the "Big Five"—five corporations that controlled vast stretches of sugar and pineapple land as well as banking, transportation, and other businesses. In 1941, Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor engulfed Hawai'i (and all of the United States) in World War II and burned the Islands into the consciousness of Americans.

After the war ended in 1945, many returning veterans, most of Asian descent, became politically active and won control of the local government. The Territory sought to become part of the United States many times and finally succeeded in 1959 when Congress voted to make it the 50th state and the people of Hawai'i accepted statehood by a 94 percent "yes" vote.

Hawai'i at Work

Hawai'i's subsistence farming of 200 years ago has morphed today into a modern economy based on agriculture, technology, defense, and tourism.

Hawai'i's longest lasting and most dominant agricultural industry has been sugar. It was often said, "Sugar is King!" At the industry's peak in the late 1960s, Hawai'i produced 10 to 11 million tons of sugar cane from harvests of over 110,000 acres on the islands of Kaua'i, O'ahu, Maui, and Hawai'i. Tens of thousands of immigrant laborers were recruited, and camp towns, schools, roads, water systems, and even railroads were built to support the planting, growing, and harvesting of sugar. Today, only about 20,000 acres of sugarcane remain on Kaua'i and Maui, and much of it is used for ethanol.

The second largest agricultural crop historically was pineapple. Beginning in 1900, James Dole advanced the industry with large plantings on O'ahu, Maui, and Moloka'i. In 1922 Dole bought the entire island of Lāna'i,

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE *HONOLULU STAR-BULLETIN*

Machines load freshly cut sugar cane onto railroad cars on a Hawaiian plantation in the early 1900s.

Hawai'i attracts tourists with its beautiful beaches, such as Maui's distinctive Big Beach, pictured here.

dedicating it to pineapple—20,000 acres and over 1,000 workers and their families. By the mid-20th century, eight companies grew 80 percent of the world's pineapple in Hawai'i. Today, pineapple production has increased in countries like Thailand, the Philippines, and Brazil, leaving Hawai'i producing only about two percent of the world's crop.

With the decline of sugar and pineapple, the agriculture industry has sought other profitable crops. Recently more land has been planted with coffee. Other important agricultural commodities are seed crops, macadamia nuts, papaya, nursery plants and flowers, and vegetables.

Many technology companies in Hawai'i seek to improve agriculture through genetic engineering. Other research and development enterprises are involved in aquaculture, energy (solar, wind, thermal, wave), information science, and the defense industry. Hawai'i is world-renowned for its astronomical research thanks to its excellent telescopes on the peaks of Haleakalā and Mauna Kea, whose altitude and location give scientists an incomparable view of the cosmos.

Another mainstay of the Hawaiian economy is the U.S. military, which has major installations on O'ahu, Kaua'i, and the Big Island. All branches of the military train and maintain active duty personnel and their families in the Islands.

In the same year as Hawai'i gained statehood, it also welcomed the first flights of commercial jet airliners—the classic Boeing 707—reducing the trip from the mainland from about eight hours to about five hours. This revolutionized tourism in Hawai'i, and annual visitors increased from less than one million per year to between six and seven million per year by 1990.

Tourism in Hawai'i

Hawai'i is best known around the world for its most important industry—tourism. The activities of the seven million visitors per year tend to be centered on the south and west

sides of the primary islands because the kona side (leeward side) has the best weather and often the best beaches.

The original focus of Hawaiian tourism was (and still is) Waikīkī, a two-mile stretch of beautiful beach and level land along the southeastern shore of Oʻahu. The dramatic crater of Diamond Head dominates the view to the east, while the verdant Koʻolau Mountains provide a backdrop to the north. Waikīkī is expensive real estate, tightly developed with hotels, condominiums, shops, and restaurants. Still, some openness has been preserved with the spacious Kapiʻolani Park, the Ala Wai Golf Course, and the military post-turned-park, Fort Ruger.

A half century of statehood has resulted in many visitors making return visits, seeking new adventures. With the exception of Kahoʻolawe and Molokaʻi, all major islands now have extensive visitor facilities. Each island has capitalized on its unique visitor attractions, but some recreational activities—swimming, surfing, wind surfing, golfing, boating, canoeing, fishing, hiking—are relevant for all islands.

On the island of Kauaʻi, visitors flock to the many hotels at Poʻipū on the South Shore. In addition to numerous championship golf courses, attractions on Kauaʻi include the spectacular views and hiking possibilities at Waimea Canyon, Kōkeʻe State Park, and the beautiful Kalalau Trail and Valley.

Maui is noted for its facilities at Kīhei and Kaʻanapali, but the attractions that draw the most visitors are ʻIao Valley in the West

© Shutterstock

Surfing is a popular recreational activity in Hawaiʻi, which has many famous surfing areas.

The state bird of Hawai'i, the nēnē goose, was brought back from near extinction.

Maui Mountains and the spectacular volcanic summit of Haleakalā, famed for its colorful scenery and hiking trails into the vast crater of this dormant volcano. With the demise of pineapple production, the nearby island of Lāna'i is now visited by the well-to-do for the luxury resorts at Mānele Bay and Kō'ele.

The "huge" island of Hawai'i has seen the visitor industry grow primarily on the west side with the development of major resorts in the Kona and South Kohala Districts where the best Big Island beaches are. Still major attractions on the east side draw visitors to Waipi'o Valley, Akaka Falls, and the sleepy, rainy town of Hilo, which has a friendly charm. The biggest draw on the Big Island is Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, a place of beautiful native forests and stark volcanic craters and lava fields. Kīlauea, the active volcano that has continued to spew forth lava since the winter of 1983, is a must-see for all visitors.

Symbols of Hawai'i

Hawai'i, like all U.S. states, has named a state flower, tree, and the like to represent the state.

The Hawaiian state bird, the nēnē goose, is a mutation of the Canada goose, a North American wetland bird. Scientists believe that some of these geese were blown to the Islands by strong winds long ago before the arrival of humans. The Hawaiian species has evolved to be smaller than its ancestor and has lost most of the webbing between the toes of its feet because it is no longer a wetland bird. In the 1950s the nēnē was brought back from near extinction when there were as few as 30 individuals. Although the nēnē is still endangered, an estimated 800 live in the wild now.

The state flower is the endemic ma'o hau hele. The bright yellow flower of this hibiscus grows on a bush that may reach a height of seven or eight feet in drier forests.

The kukui, the state tree, is known in the rest of the Pacific as the candlenut tree. This species was brought to Hawaii by the aboriginal Polynesian voyagers because of its value in their daily life. The nut of the tree is so oily that it can be burned for light, like a candle. Other parts of the tree were used for canoe building, medicines, fish floats, dyes, tattoos, and other daily needs. The tree is easy to spot growing in the valleys of the mountains because of its very light-green leaves.

The humuhumunukunukuapua'a is the Hawaiian state fish. This small reef dweller, more insignificant than its name indicates, is also called the reef triggerfish. Its Hawaiian name translates as the "triggerfish with the small, pig-like nose."

Hawai'i also claims its state marine mammal to be the humpback whale, its state dance to be the hula, the state individual sport to be surfing, and the state team sport to be outrigger canoe paddling.

Celebrating Hawaiian Culture

Each major Hawaiian island is distinguished by its own nickname, color, and flower. Hawaiian schoolchildren learn these for the May Day pageant held in all schools on May 1st every year. "May Day is Lei Day in Hawai'i" are the lyrics of a popular song, and on this one day Hawaiian culture is celebrated in special ways. Two students may be honored as the "king" and "queen." Others may repre-

sent princes, princesses, and other members of the "court" from each of the major islands. All are elaborately dressed and wear beautiful flower *lei*. Several classes may perform *hula*, the style of dance native to the Islands. Other classes may sing Hawaiian songs while playing *'ukulele*, a small, four-string instrument introduced 130 years ago by Portuguese immigrants. Parents pour into the hall or under the tent to enjoy the Lei Day celebration and take pictures of their *keiki* (children).

Websites of Interest

Hawaiian History

www.hawaiihistory.org

This website offers short articles on the history of Hawai'i as well as chronicles of important happenings in the government, economics, and society. A gallery of historical photos and drawings is available to view and download.

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park

www.nps.gov/havo

One of the most popular Hawaiian tourist destinations is featured on this website, which presents maps, pictures, and videos of happenings in the park, including the continuing eruption of Kilauea Volcano. The "For Teachers" section offers electronic field trips.

Plants of Hawai'i

www.botany.hawaii.edu/faculty/carr/natives.htm

From this website it is easy to discover the endemic and indigenous plants that grow in Hawai'i. Learn their names in Latin, English, and Hawaiian and see beautiful pictures of the plants.

Tourism in Hawai'i

http://gohawaii.com

The official tourism site for Hawai'i, this website gives information about places to go and things to do on all of the islands. "Stories of Hawai'i" videos cover a wide range of colorful topics.

The lovely yellow hibiscus is the state flower of Hawai'i.

Edward F. Klein, PhD, is professor of applied linguistics at Hawai'i Pacific University in Honolulu, his home for 38 years. His areas of expertise are phonology, sociolinguistics, history of the English language, and ESL practica. His avocations are gardening and hiking.

Lū'au

At a *lū'au*, professional performers present a Polynesian dance in the soft glow of twilight.

© Shutterstock

Lū'au (also *luau*) originally referred to the green tops of young taro (a tropical plant with edible roots), especially when baked with coconut cream and chicken or octopus, but nowadays it refers to a party based on the cuisine and customs of Hawai'i.

Visitors to the Islands often pay dearly for tickets to *lū'au*, usually sponsored by hotels. These affairs may include the transportation, a *lei* greeting upon arrival, professional Polynesian music and dance performances, and a dinner of Hawaiian foods. Some people wonder what they are eating and may be surprised to find that the menu includes raw fish and octopus, seaweed, slightly fermented mashed taro, and pork cooked in a hole in the ground. Nevertheless, the master of ceremonies ensures that everyone has a good time through his humor and the audience participation that he encourages throughout the evening.

But *lū'au* aren't just for tourists. Sometimes *lū'au* are local fundraisers for schools or other good causes, but more often they are informal events in someone's back yard. Locals throw *lū'au* to celebrate a child's first birthday, a graduation, or even Mom or Dad's 60th birthday. Inevitably there is music, but it may be provided by a circle of friends, accompanying themselves on *'ukulele*. *Hula*, Hawai'i's native dance, may be planned beforehand, or some folks may simply stand up and volunteer on the spot. The food will be similar to the commercial *lū'au*, but often the pig is cooked for many hours right there in an underground oven called an *imu*. Guests look forward to *poke* (raw seasoned fish or octopus with seaweed), *kālua* pork, *lomilomi* salmon (raw salmon, onions, tomatoes), chicken *lū'au* (chicken wrapped in those green tops mentioned above), *poi* (mashed cooked taro) and many other delicious dishes.

© Shutterstock

A ʻukulele draped with a lei.

Hawaiian Vocabulary

aliʻi	chief, monarch
aloha	love, affection, hello, good-bye
hula	Hawaiian style of dance, both traditional and modern
kai	sea, sea water
keiki	child, offspring, shoot (of a plant)
lei	garland of flowers worn around the neck or head, made at home or at shops using orchids, jasmine, plumeria, and many other flowers.
lūʻau	Hawaiian-style party
mahalo	thank you
mauna	mountain
moana	ocean
ʻukulele	four-string musical instrument shaped like a small guitar
wai	fresh water