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Our Historical Roots

Thomas Hopu: Pioneer of Christianity in Hawaii

Thomas Hopu, born in 1795 and raised in Kohala, was influential throughout the early missionary years in Hawaii. He aided in translating the Bible, as well as other teaching documents, into Hawaiian. He served as lay pastor of Mokuaikaua Church, the oldest church in Hawaii and what is today a United Church of Christ congregation, delivering powerful sermons, spreading cheer, and ministering to people in need.



Thomas left Hawaii in 1807 on a voyage to America aboard the ship *Triumph*. He sailed with Henry 'Opukaha'ia, Hawaii's first known Christian and scholar, along with Captain Brintnall, a trader who frequented the Sandwich Islands. After studying religion at the Foreign Mission School in New Haven, Connecticut, and following the death of Henry, Thomas desired to return to the islands to spread Christianity to his Hawaiian people.

On October 23, 1819, the Pioneer Company of missionaries of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign



Silhouette of Thaddeus
Courtesy of Hawaiian Mission Houses

Missions (ABCFM) from the northeast United States set sail aboard the ship *Thaddeus* for the Hawaiian Islands. Four young Hawaiians joined the Pioneer Company: Thomas, William Kanui, John Honoli'i and Prince George Humehume Kaumuali'i, son

of the King of Kauai.

Thomas went on to serve at Mokuaikaua Church and as spiritual advisor to Kamehameha II and III. Following Henry's death in 1818, the book *Memoirs of Henry Obookiah* was authored by Edwin W. Dwight. It was published as a fundraiser for the Foreign Mission School and to finance ABCFM missions to Hawaii, continuing the legacy of Thomas and other notable Christians who influenced the future of Hawaii.