

Robert William Kalanihiapo Wilcox

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Robert Wilcox at the Royal Military Academy in Turin.
Photo courtesy of Bishop Museum Archives.

Early Life

Robert William Kalanihiapo Wilcox (Wilikoki) was born on February 15, 1855 in Kuhulu/Kahulu, Honuaula, Maui. His father, William Slocum Wilcox, was an American sea captain from Newport, Rhode Island. His mother, Kalua Makoleokalani, was daughter of Makole and Haupa, of Honuaula Maui. Wilikoki was very curious and clever since he was a young boy. This moved his parents to enroll him in both an English language speaking school (at age 7), and Haleakalā School for Boys (at age 8). After completing his studies, he served as a renowned teacher at both Ulupalakua school and Keawekapu school for some years before serving as legislative representative of Wailuku Maui, where he was known as “Ka Loea Kalai Aupuni o Mauihikina.”

Wilikoki, had always been a very focused, passionate and eager learner. Even after being well-educated, his hunger and desire for new knowledge persisted. Aside from this, he was a determined and strong-voiced kāna-ka advocate for the prosperity of his land, his people, his Mo‘i and his country. I believe that Kalākaua saw this dedication in him, and thought of no one else to best represent Hawaiian youth to be educated in this first cohort of students to study abroad.

“Ua hooholo iho nei au o oe kekahi o na keiki Hawaiai e boouna ia no ka honauao kiekie ana ma na Aina e, a o kou mau hoa ma ia buhai bookahi, oia no o James K. Booth a me Robert N. Boyd.”
-Kalākaua



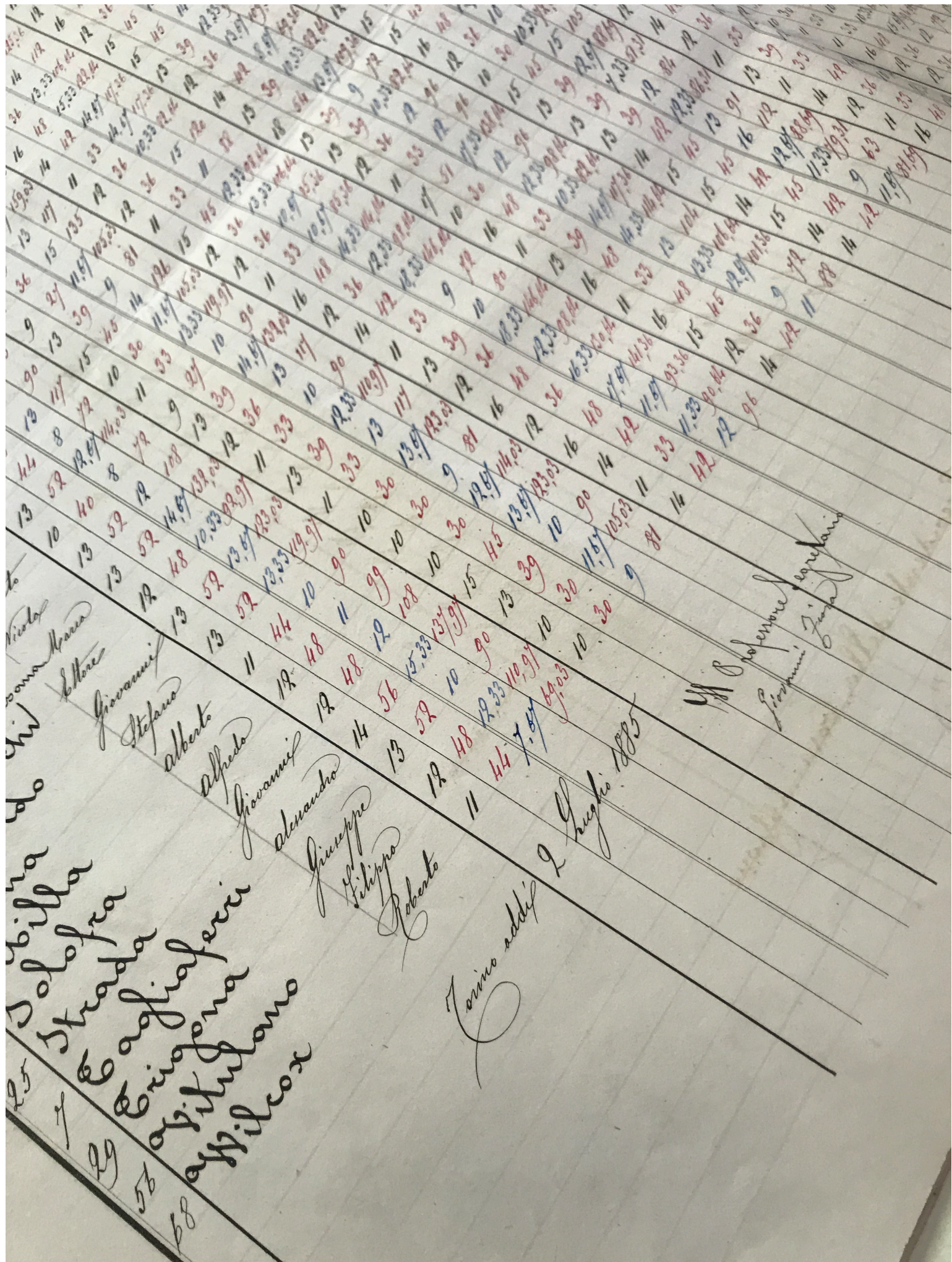
Robert Wilcox as a young child.

Royal Military Academy

Wilikoki studied at the Royal Military Academy of Turin. This academy is one of the oldest military academies in Europe. These types of institution were strictly hierarchal, which is why Wilikoki enrolled at a higher level, and Booth had to enroll after the completion of his studies in Naples. It is here that Wilikoki learned Italian, and succeeded in his studies under Capt. Geletta in his first year. In July of 1882 he enrolled in his Freshman year of college, where he learned geography, navigation, and drawing. Physical assignments included riding horse, sword mastering, precise shooting, cannon firing and much more. In his second year of schooling, he learned advanced geography, drawing, navigation, the histories of Napoleon and Frederick the great, and other famous soldiers of Europe and America. In his third year at the Academy he learned, fort building, map analyzing and the history of wars in France and Germany. Wilikoki writes home often to news papers of their travels, and the many things he learns, always explaining ways this ‘ike can benefit Hawai‘i.



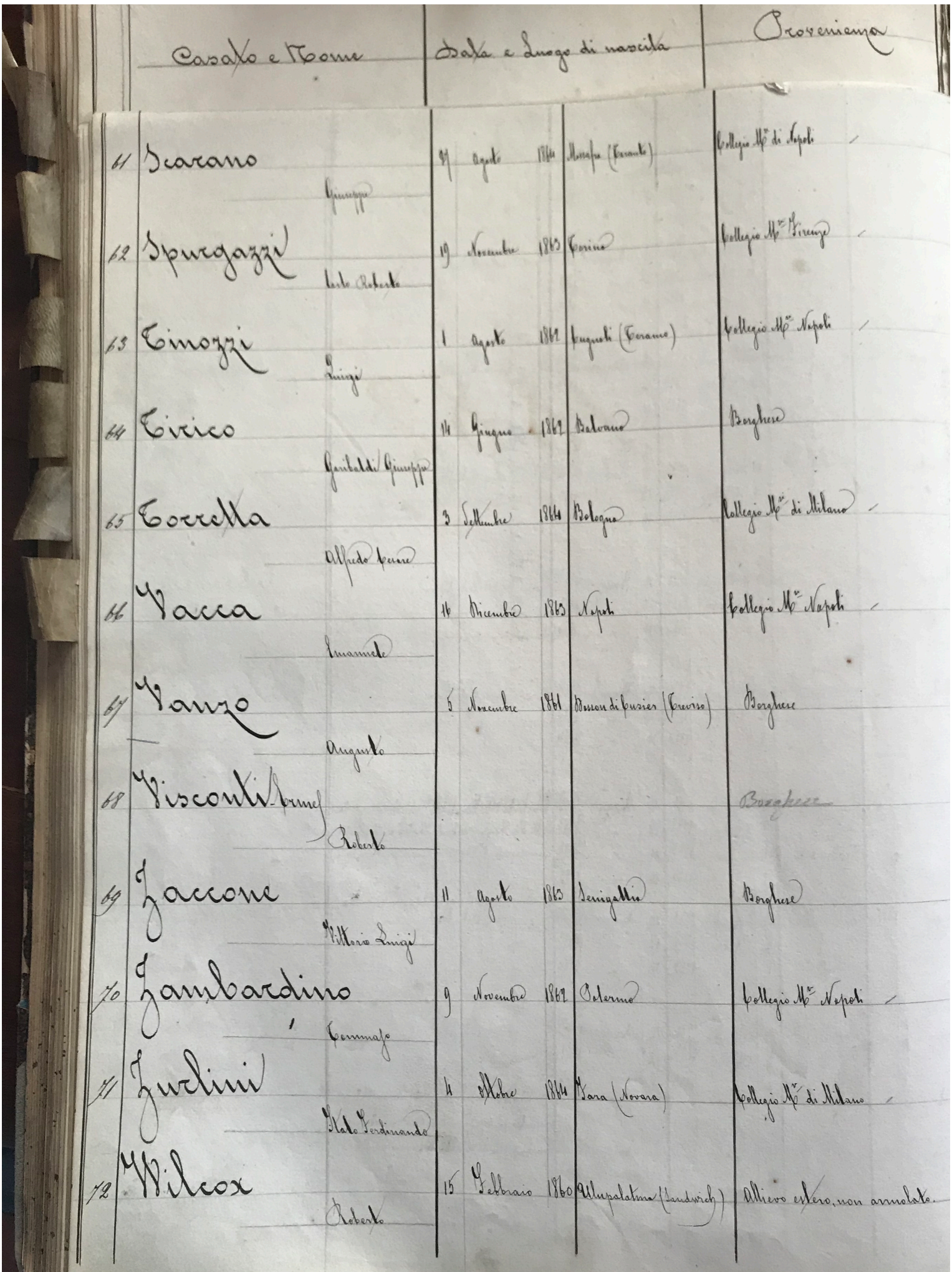
Special display for our Hawaiian Youths Abroad 2019 tour of the library at the Royal Military Academy in Turin.



Robert Wilcox grades and roster as part of the display and tour at the Royal Military Academy.

Following in His Footsteps

We were able to visit the very same Royal Military Academy that Wilikoki had attended, now called Scuola di Applicazione. We were greeted by Manuel Lami (Librarian), and Gian Luca Falessi (General Affairs Office Manager). At first impression, they were very impersonal and straight forward, but as the day went by they softened up, and we all engaged in conversation. We were given a briefing of the history of the college, followed by a tour of one of their libraries, holding particularly older texts. In the library is where they presented documents relative to the boys during their attendance at the academy. These documents were unearthed from their school archive, and included report cards, school registration cards, and pictures. Copies were later gifted to us.



Robert Wilcox admission paperwork for the Royal Military Academy in Turin showing his hometown of Ulupalakua.

O Ka Wiwo Ole Oia ka Mekini o ke Kanaka Koa

Following the June 30th, 1887 Bayonet Constitution, Wilikoki was called home for what he thought was work. In July 27, 1887 Wilikoki sent a letter home apologizing for “not being on the spot,” at the time of the rebellion. He continues, “I would have the place of the chief commandant, and the nosy ‘war-men’ would be than a silent rabbits.” One can imagine the pain he might have felt being trained extensively in military tactics, and being completely helpless to your king and country when they needed you most. A month later he and his new wife Gina Sobrero, Italian Baroness, made their way back to Honolulu. Their marriage didn’t last very long, and he becomes the 2nd person in Italy to get a divorce, the first being Giuseppe Garibaldi, Member of the Senate of Italy. His wife and daughter Signorina Vittoria Eleusine Maria Crolina Elizabeth Wilcox, return to Europe.

Upon arrival to Honolulu, Wilikoki immediately plans to reinstate the powers of Kalākaua. He shares, “O ka wiwo ole oia ka Mekini o ke kanaka koa, a o ko‘u Sila ia o ka Oihana Kaua.” A lesson he had learned abroad. He eventually organizes and leads the rebellion of 1889, in hopes to revert the changes made by the Bayonet Constitution. His well organized and strategically led plot was figured out just 48 hours before its implementation, and leads to 7-8 being injured including Robert Boyd. In reaction to the illegal overthrow of 1893, Wilikoki again planned a counter-revolution with the support of Samuel Nowlein, Joseph Nawahi, and Charles T. Gulick William H. Rickard. This was a last attempt to reestablish the Kingdom. The war lasted from January 6 to January 9, 1895, that consisted of three battles on the island of O‘ahu. Wilikoki continued to serve different roles to put his education and training in service to his lāhui.

