

His Hawaiian Majesty's Royal Envoy: Curtis Pi'ehu Iaukea and Henry French Poor

Na Hiwa Ka'apuni
Undergraduate Student in 'Ike Hawai'i and Political Science
Hawaiian Youths Abroad 2019, Native Hawaiian Student Services

Curtis Pi'ehu Iaukea was born on December 13, 1855 in Waimea, Hawai'i where he was hānai'd by his uncle, Kaihupa'a, and raised in the north corner of 'Iolani palace. In 1862, he became one of the very first students to attend St. Albans school, now known as 'Iolani High School. In 1863, the school was moved to Lua'ehu on Maui as a boarding school where Iaukea studied for six years. It wasn't until 1870 that St. Alban's was moved back to Pauoa in Honolulu. In June of 1872, King Kamehameha V, Lota Kapuaiwa, sent Iaukea to work on the West Maui Sugar Plantation in Lahaina. After Lota's death on December 11 of the same year, it wasn't long before Iaukea quit the sugar industry and ran away to Hilo in 1873 where he lived with his sister, Mareaa, until he was commanded by Kalākaua himself to return to palace to serve during the King's visit to Hilo on August 26, 1874.



Curtis Pi'ehu Iaukea. 1883. Hawai'i State Archives

6. "It is proposed further that, on leaving Madrid, Mr Iaukea should proceed to Italy and visit the young Hawaiians who are being educated there."

In 1883, Iaukea was commissioned by King Kalākaua as Special Envoy and Minister of Plenipotentiary to represent the Kingdom at the Court of St. Petersburg as well as other courts in Europe in a higher capacity on special missions; the Republic of France, the Kingdom of Servia, the Empire of Austria, the Kingdom of Italy, England, India and Japan. With no special training in diplomacy, Col. Iaukea was endowed with qualities that one said, "made him a natural for the plans for which King Kalākaua had selected him." (Iaukea 1988, pg 52)



Henry French Poor. 1883. Hawai'i State Archives

On this special mission, Col. Iaukea was to be accompanied by Henry French Poor as his diplomatic secretary and fellow travel companion. Henry French Poor was born in Honolulu in 1856, only a year after Iaukea, and attended Punahou High School. When he was in his mid-twenties, he was recruited by King Kalākaua to go into government service for his exceptional education and skills as a writer, printer, and accountant. As they traveled the world together, Henry Poor would write majority of the letters and progress reports that were sent back home while, most times, Iaukea only signed his name at the end of each account, which Henry Poor never ceased to include, "H. H. M's Special Envoy" for His Hawaiian Majesty's Special Envoy.

"Again I assure you, Hawai'i is independent of foreign influence. Hawaiian interests and our Government's policy is to have amicable and friendly relations with every country and all on the same level. All interests, influence or policy, must be Hawaiian and for Hawai'i and on an independent basis." – Henry Poor (Iaukea 1988, pg 62)

to Rome to complete my mission there and from there will report further. Remaining assurances of my highest regard and consideration I remain
Your Excellency's most obedient servant
Curtis P. Iaukea
Es. Es. M's Special Envoy.

Letter written by Henry Poor signed by Iaukea. 1883. Hawai'i State Archives

London, England

On August 1, 1883 in England, Iaukea and Henry Poor met with two young men of the Hawaiian Youths Abroad program who were studying there at the time, Matthew Makalua and Joseph Kamauoha.

He reported back to King Kalākaua with this:

"It was gratifying to note the great improvement since they left the islands. They both seemed ambitious to excel and have profited much by their new associations and studies. The social advantages they enjoy here, advantages which are usually denied young Hawaiians at home at this time, have tended to develop in them kindly and manly traits of character. I think they will acquit themselves with credit." (Iaukea, 1988, pg 94)



It is evident that Iaukea and Poor truly cared about the Hawaiian youths, their well-being and education. They wanted to do for them whatever they needed to make their own journey abroad one they always felt encouraged to achieve for the greater sake of their land, their people, and their country. Iaukea and Poor considered the progression of the program itself a direct reflection of the progression of the Kingdom as well and in the midst of their diplomatic mission around the world in representation of the Hawaiian Kingdom, Iaukea and Poor were particularly pleased at the growth and determination the Hawaiian youths abroad committed themselves to in service to their lāhui.



Though we went as malihini, we discovered that these spaces we so eagerly entered were not entirely new to us, but instead a long forgotten piece of who we are as kanaka and where we once stood in the world. As our 'ohana continued to stand in protection of our piko, Mauna a Wākea, our kuleana led us to Europe to follow in the footsteps of the haumāna who also once left their own piko to better serve the lāhui. Though our hearts yearned to stand with our 'ohana, we remembered that so many of our people once left to traverse the world in an effort to better protect what we still find ourselves trying to protect; our land, our people, and our Kingdom. These Hawaiian youths who were sent abroad less than 150 years ago were doing no less when they left with the intention to return and serve. We have learned their names, seen their faces, and heard their stories and we commit to sharing what they left behind for our lāhui so that we may bring life back to who they were and what they accomplished in service to our 'āina, our people, and our country. May we give honor to them in our pursuit of remembrance.