

## TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROCECT

### Lesson Title—Hawaiians in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Oregon (1820s-1860s)

Created by Sean Gilligan

**Grades:** 9-12

**Length of Class Period:** 48 minutes (this will be a three class period activity)

**Inquiry** (what essential questions are students answering, what problems are they solving, or what decision are they making?)

-How was Fort Vancouver an example of economic diversification?

-How was Fort Vancouver an example of multiculturalism in action?

-What roles did Hawaiians play in the Hudson's Bay Company?

-How did Hawaiians contribute to the development of the Pacific Northwest?

-What challenges did Hawaiians face in the Pacific Northwest after the United States gained control of Oregon Country?

-If you were a Hawaiian living in 1860s Oregon, what rights would you want and how could you advocate for and secure those rights?

**Objectives** (What content and skills do you expect students to learn from this lesson?)

-Students will interpret the significance of Fort Vancouver and Kanaka Village in the development of the Pacific Northwest.

-Students will interpret an article and primary source excerpts about Hawaiians in 19<sup>th</sup> century Oregon.

-Students will write a letter to President Lincoln where they portray a Hawaiian living in 1863 Oregon. By doing this writing activity, students will gain experience advocating for their rights and demonstrating historical empathy.

**Materials** (What primary sources or local resources are the basis for this lesson?)-(please attach)

Hawaiians in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Oregon (1820s-1860s) Article and Primary Sources Excerpts (includes primary source excerpts obtained from the National Parks Service Fort Vancouver website and

*Leaving Paradise, Indigenous Hawaiians in the Pacific Northwest (1787-1898)* written by Jean Barman and Bruce McIntyre).

National Parks Service Fort Vancouver Website

An Oregon Hawaiian's Letter to President Lincoln Writing Activity

**Activities** (What will you and your students do to promote learning?)

I recommend that this lesson be used after studying about the Oregon Trail but during a Civil War unit after students have just finished learning about the Emancipation Proclamation. Thus, students will gain an understanding of Oregon during the Civil War era (usually the West Coast is ignored during a Civil War unit).

As initiation, ask students to review what they learned about the Oregon Trail. Then ask students who was living in Oregon Country before settlers from the United States arrived. Students will probably mention the regional Native American nations. Also, point out that pre-Oregon Trail Pacific Northwest was very multicultural. Hudson's Bay company employees came from French Canadian, Scottish, Iroquois Indian, and Hawaiian backgrounds. Also, there were the employees' Native American wives and their Metis (mixed-blood) children. These HBC employees lived in settlements in the Pacific Northwest before settlers arrived from the United States. Let students know they will examine life at Fort Vancouver and Kanaka Village. Also, students will focus on the Hawaiian experience in Oregon from the 1820s to the 1860s.

At this point, if possible, students should go onto computers and examine the Fort Vancouver website. This will provide visuals and opening information on the topic. Also, students should explore a map, atlas, or online map to gain a geographical sense of the Pacific Northwest and Hawaii.

Once website exploration has been completed, review the essential questions that will be posted. Then students will receive the main reading: Hawaiians in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Oregon (1820s-1860s) Article and Primary Source Excerpts. Students should be split into reading partners. The article will be jig-sawed. Every partnership must read the "Fort Vancouver and The Village" section. Half the class partnerships will be assigned to additionally read the "Hawaiians and the Hudson's Bay Company" section. The other half of class partnerships will be assigned to additionally read the "Discrimination in Oregon Territory" section. Student partners will read and write down notes about what they are learning. Students should use the essential questions that correspond to their reading section to aid in writing down insights notes. Then student partnerships will share their insights. These insights will be placed on the board. The last essential question (If you were a Hawaiian living in 1860s Oregon, what rights would you want and how could you advocate for and secure those rights?) should be discussed after insights are shared.

At the next class session, An Oregon Hawaiian's Letter to President Lincoln Writing Activity is distributed to the students. Ask students to remember yesterday's essential question. Today, students will write a letter to President Lincoln as a Hawaiian living in 1863 Oregon. The instructions are reviewed and then students write. Strongly encourage students to use primary source excerpts as much as possible in their writing. As closure for this writing activity, ask for two students to share their letters. Then ask the class: How do you think that President Lincoln would have responded to these letters? Also, to tie this into students' own lives, ask students: How can you advocate for yourself or for others when you feel that something unfair has happened?

### **How will you assess what students learned during this lesson?**

- Verbal Responses
- Active pair interpretations
- Written interpretations
- An Oregon Hawaiian's Letter to President Lincoln Writing Activity

### **Connecticut Framework Performance Standards—**

#### Standard 1-Content Knowledge

1.1 Significant events and themes in United States History

High School 10. Assess the significance of the evolving heterogeneity of American society (e.g. role of immigrants and contributions of minority groups).

#### Standard 2-History/Social Studies Literacy

2.2 Interpret information from a variety of primary and secondary sources.

High School 6. Determine the central ideas of, and be able to, summarize information from primary and secondary sources.

2.3 Create various forms of written work to demonstrate an understanding of history and social studies issues.

High School 16. Write informative/explanatory texts about events and topics.

High School 18. Write arguments using discipline-specific content.

## **An Oregon Hawaiian's Letter to President Lincoln Writing Activity**

The year is 1863. You are a Hawaiian who lives in Oregon and used to work for the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Vancouver. Your life has been very different since the 1840s when large numbers of American settlers moved in and Oregon became part of the United States. Oregon is your home and you want to be respected. President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation went into effect on January 1, 1863. Maybe this means that President Lincoln could be open to the idea of expanding more rights to Hawaiians. So you decide to write a letter to the President advocating for the expansion of rights for Oregon's Hawaiian residents.

Your letter must follow this format:

### Paragraph 1

Introduce yourself to President Lincoln. Explain when and why you moved to Oregon. Talk about your past work for the Hudson's Bay Company. Also, talk about what you do now for work.

### Paragraph 2

Explain to President Lincoln that you want the federal government to try to help Hawaiians gain more rights in Oregon. What rights do you want and why?

### Paragraph 3

Describe how Hawaiians have contributed to the Pacific Northwest.

### Paragraph 4

Describe examples of discrimination that Hawaiians face or have faced in Oregon.

### Paragraph 5

Explain why this discrimination is wrong and needs to be changed. Conclude by explaining how increased rights for Oregon's Hawaiians will be good for the United States.

## **Hawaiians in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Oregon (1820s-1860s)**

### **Article and Primary Source Excerpts**

The Fort Vancouver website (National Parks Service-NPS) and the book *Leaving Paradise, Indigenous Hawaiians in the Pacific Northwest (1787-1898)* (by Jean Barman and Bruce McIntyre) were very helpful sources for this article and the primary source excerpts.

#### Fort Vancouver and The Village (Kanaka Village)

Fort Vancouver was a fur trading post and supply depot for the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). It was located on the Columbia River in present day Vancouver, Washington, located across the river from present day Portland, Oregon. The fort was established during the winter of 1824-1825 and was in operation until 1859. Fort Vancouver was also a trading post for the coastal trade and contained large agricultural operations as well. The farms provided potatoes, wheat, barley, corn, peas, oats, pigs, cattle, sheep, and goats. The HBC annually sent out from Fort Vancouver two well-equipped hunting and trapping parties, between 50 and 100 men and women. Food supplies and trade goods were sent from Fort Vancouver to smaller HBC posts. Furs traded by the Indians at each post, or trapped by HBC employees, were sent to Fort Vancouver by regularly scheduled canoe, boat, and horse brigades, and loaded onto company ships and transported to London.

The Hudson's Bay Company was a British company, but its employees represented a mix of cultures. At Fort Vancouver, many of the laborers lived in a village next to Fort Vancouver. Company and Catholic Church records show that the laborers were French Canadians, Iroquois Indians from eastern Canada, Scottish (especially Orkney Islanders), and Hawaiians. These men usually married women from local Native groups, and thus, the wives also represented 30 different Pacific Northwest Native groups (Cowlitz, Kalapuya, Klickitat, etc.). The wives often helped their husbands with their jobs whether it was fur brigade work, agricultural labor, or other tasks. Their children were called Metis (French for mixed-blood). The children also helped their parents with their jobs. Very little English was spoken in the village. You would have heard Canadian French, Scottish Gaelic, Iroquois Mohawk, Hawaiian, and a great variety of regional Native languages. In order to communicate with one another, most villagers learned Chinook Jargon (Chinook Wawa), a language that is a mix of Chinook, English, and French. By the 1840s, the village became known as "Kanaka Village" because of the increased number of Hawaiian laborers living there ("Kanaka" means person in Hawaiian. Hawaiians were often called Kanakas in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.). Since the 1820s, Hawaiians had been there but their presence was even stronger by the 1840s.

As of 1846, this British operation was located on American soil as the Oregon Country became part of the United States. Life would change for all of Fort Vancouver's employees and residents, especially for the Hawaiians.

#### Hawaiians and the Hudson's Bay Company

By the late 1780s, Hawaii (the Sandwich Islands) was a favorite place for ships in the China trade to stop. Ships stopped in Hawaii for recreation, supplies, ship repair, and trade.

Hawaiians were great seamen, so American whaling ships were happy to hire them. As early as the 1790s, ships were taking on Hawaiian crew members as part of the Pacific Northwest fur trade. Before long, many Hawaiians were employed at fur trading posts throughout the Pacific Northwest. This continued throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Hudson's Bay Company Governor Simpson on a visit to Hawaii in 1841, reported that

“About a thousand males in the very prime of life are estimated annually to leave the islands, some going to California, others to the Columbia, and many on long and dangerous voyages, particularly in whaling vessels, while a considerable number of them are said to be permanently lost to their country, either dying during their engagements, or settling in other parts of the world.” (NPS website)

Hawaiian men contracted for three year terms as HBC servants. They were paid in cash (between 10 and 19 pounds a year), merchandise (warm clothing), and food rations (smoked salmon called lomi lomi and sea biscuits). Many Hawaiians worked at Fort Vancouver's saw mill. Chief Factor Dr. John McLoughlin (person in charge of Fort Vancouver) said the sawmill in 1840 was “a scene of constant toil. Thirty or forty Sandwich Islanders (Hawaiians) are felling the pines and dragging them to the mill; sets of hands are plying two gangs of saws by night and day; nine hundred thousand feet per annum; are constantly being shipped to foreign ports” (NPS website). By 1844, more than 100 Hawaiians worked at Fort Vancouver. 300 to 400 Hawaiians were employed by the HBC at various Columbia River posts. Besides sawmill work, Kanakas worked as canoe men, sailors on river boats and trans-ocean ships, gardeners, farm workers, soldiers, cooks, fur trade brigade laborers, guards, shepherds, sawyers, coopers, woodcutters, and stokers on steamships. Also, all Fort Vancouver employees no matter the occupation were expected to do the following tasks as needed: guard duty, farm labor, maintenance work, paddling or portaging canoes, and the cleaning, drying, sorting, and baling of furs.

Hawaiian workers were typically young single men, so just like the French Canadian, Scottish, and Iroquois Indian employees, they married local Native women. HBC leaders were happy with these marriages because Hawaiians with families were likely to renew their contracts. In 1829, Roman Catholic missionaries “officially” married some 50 Kanaka laborers to their Native wives, mainly Chinook and Cowlitz women. These couples often lived in Kanaka Village and communicated with each other through Chinook Jargon. Many Hawaiian/Native American children would be born. For example, Catholic missionary records show that “children like Jeanne born in 1832 and Philomena in 1840 were baptized Catholic, very likely at their mothers' instigation, their father's identified only as a 'Owhyhee' or 'Kanaka'” (Barman and McIntyre, 128). The sons often worked for the HBC just like their fathers. Daughters often married other Hawaiians. The wives of Kanaka workers often worked as farm laborers, salmon processors, or even in manufacturing items such as candles for sale at the company store. By establishing families in Oregon, these Hawaiian employees were creating a new home far from the Hawaiian Islands. The Pacific Northwest had become their home.

The Fort Vancouver website says the following about 19<sup>th</sup> century Hawaiian contributions to the Pacific Northwest:

“Hawaiians played an important role in establishing the economic institutions of the Pacific Northwest. They provided the food and built the shelters of the fur traders and the early missionaries. They had worked on many of the merchant ships plying between Hawaii, China, Europe, and the Northwest. From the earliest Hawaiians who came as seamen or contract workers, to the ones who worked at Fort Vancouver and elsewhere along the Pacific Coasts, they all made an important contribution to the development of the area” (NPS website).

#### Discrimination in Oregon Territory

Throughout the 1840s, more settlers from the United States moved into the Fort Vancouver area. Hawaiians of the Hudson’s Bay Company began to experience discrimination from some of these settlers. In 1845, Dr. McLoughlin asked the HBC to send to Fort Vancouver, a Hawaiian “who was educated, trustworthy and able to read the scriptures and assemble his people for public worship” (NPS website). The person selected was William R. Kaulehelehe (also known as “Billy” or “Kanaka Wiliam”). He was not an ordained minister but was licensed to preach by Protestant missionaries. Kaulehelehe and his wife Mary S. Kaai came to Fort Vancouver to minister to the fort’s Hawaiians. He said the following of Fort Vancouver’s Hawaiians:

“The Hawaiians have repeatedly and daily asked me to see about their trouble of being repeatedly abused by the white people without any cause. They thought I had come as an officer to settle their difficulties. I said no, I did not come to do those things. I had no instructions from the King and ministers of the government in Hawaii to do those things. All that I have come for was the word of God and school.” (Barman and McIntyre 130)

As of 1846, Oregon Country officially became part of the United States. The land became known as Oregon Territory (present day states of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho). Hudson’s Bay Company, a British company, was still allowed to operate on American soil. Besides facing racism from American settlers, Oregon Territory and later Oregon as a state would pass laws that actively discriminated against Hawaiians. The Oregon Provisional Government Legislature in 1848 enacted legislation to keep African Americans out of the territory. At the moment, the legislature said nothing about Oregon’s Hawaiian residents (some of whom had lived there since the 1820s). Oregon was home for its Hawaiian residents and they wanted to become U.S. citizens. A missionary from the Hawaiian Islands described how “some Hawaiians presented themselves before the proper officers, and desired to become American citizens, and be allowed to vote in the coming election on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June (1849), but the Governor did not feel authorized by the existing laws of the United States to allow them to do it” (Barman and McIntyre 137). Governor Joseph Lane asked the supreme judge of the territory to examine the issue. The supreme judge decided that Hawaiians were excluded from voting “on the basis of federal legislation limiting naturalized citizenship to white males” (Barman and McIntyre 137).

In 1850 the U.S. Congress was debating a bill known as the 1850 Land Grant Bill for Oregon. Samuel R. Thurston, Oregon's territorial delegate, got Hawaiians "excluded from land grants and from ownership of lands" they already lived on (Barman and McIntyre 138). Thurston's argument linked racial prejudice with the general American settlers' dislike of the HBC. He spoke out against a proposed amendment to the bill on the grounds that "it would give land to every servant of the Hudson's Bay Company, including some hundreds of Canakers, or Sandwich Islanders, who are a race of men as black as your negroes of the South, and a race, too, that we do not desire to settle in Oregon" (Barman and McIntyre 138). Thurston spoke out against granting Hawaiians the basic rights of citizenship:

"These foreigners in Oregon who have left the company (Hudson's Bay Company), or shall leave it, and prove their love of our country by completing their final oath of love and allegiance, should have an appropriation, and be taken into the fold of American citizenship—aye, sir, should have a donation of land; but I am not giving land to Sandwich Islanders or negroes. I have no fears of defining my position here." (Barman and McIntyre 138)

Thurston also pronounced that "the Canakers and Negroes if allowed to come there (Oregon), will commingle with our Indians, and a mixed-race will ensue, and the result will be wars and bloodshed in Oregon" (Barman and McIntyre 138). Thurston's vision won. The Donation Land Act of 1850 provided for land grants "to every white settler or occupant of the public lands, American half-breed Indians included", but not Hawaiians (Document: The Donation Land Claim Act, 1850).

Oregon became a state in 1859. Oregon's laws stated that Hawaiians could not acquire land grants, could not be naturalized, could not vote, could not buy alcohol, and could not testify against whites in court. In 1859, the HBC gave up Fort Vancouver because it was becoming more difficult to do business on American soil, so operations were moved to Victoria, Canada. People still lived in Kanaka Village. The U.S. Army had built a military fort next to Fort Vancouver in the late 1840s. Now that the HBC was gone, the army wanted the Fort Vancouver property and the lands of Kanaka Village. In 1860, the U.S. Army destroyed Kanaka Village and forced its residents to move out. William Kaulehelehe and his wife refused to move until the soldiers removed the windows and doors from his home, carried him out by force, and burned the house in March of 1860. William and his wife moved to British Columbia along with other Hawaiians. But many Hawaiians chose to stay in Oregon and Washington Territory because it was their home.

Oregon continued to pass discriminatory legislation in the 1860s. 1862 Oregon legislation decreed that:

"each and every negro, chinaman, kanaka, and mulatto, residing within the limits of this state, shall pay an annual poll-tax of five dollars, or be subject to forced labor for the state until the tax was paid along with the expenses of arrest" (Barman and McIntyre 138).

Oregon also made it illegal for any white person to intermarry with any “Negro, Chinese, or any person having one-quarter or more Negro, Chinese or Kanaka blood, or any persons having more than one-half Indian blood. The penalty for engaging in or performing such a ceremony was imprisonment up to a year” (Barman and McIntyre 138).

President Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation went into effect on January 1, 1863. But in the Pacific Northwest of the 1860s, Hawaiians, African Americans, Chinese, and Native Americans were struggling with much injustice and the federal government was not paying attention.