



Las Vegas
Hawaiian Civic Club

MEMO TO: Las Vegas Hawaiian Civic Club Board and Membership
SUBJECT: History Report
Date of Memo: November 1, 2023
FROM: Gail Wright, LVHCC Historian



*In the spirit of adventure,
To know what was over the horizon,
The sea was their highway.
With the wind, waves and stars, the sun and moon
As their navigation.
They found new lands, new islands.
They were the WAYFINDERS.
Modern day Wayfinders have rediscovered,
What their ancestors knew thousands of years ago!*
Gail Wright

Hōkūleʻa

Hōkūleʻa's first voyage was to and from Tahiti in 1976. This voyage allowed the *Hōkūleʻa* to prove two things: that the initial voyage to Hawaiʻi by ancient Polynesians was not done by accident or by drifting on ocean currents, and that ancient Hawaiian traditions are still relevant and useful in modern society. Since then, she has sailed over 100,000 nautical miles including the 1995 trip to the west coast of North America. On the west coast trip, she was accompanied by her sister canoe *Hawaiʻiloa* to share their cultural and *Aloha* spirit with North America.

Hawaiʻiloa

On July 24, 1993, a beautiful new Hawaiian voyaging canoe was launched at Pier 36 in Honolulu Harbor. The canoe, named *Hawaiʻiloa*, took two years to build. At first, the plan called for building the canoe out of indigenous materials of Hawaiʻi in order to re-learn ancient canoe building arts; the hulls were to be carved from Koa logs. (See "[The Building of Hawaiʻiloa](#)").

However, after a nine-month search in 1989-90, it was discovered that the forests of Hawaiʻi no longer had Koa trees large enough for the hulls of a voyaging canoe. Over the years, the forests had been cut down for lumber and to clear land for cattle ranching (See "[Sacred Forests](#)" by Sam Low).

When Byron Mallot, CEO of the Sealaska Corporation, heard of Hawaiʻi's need for logs to build a traditional voyaging canoe, he offered to donate two Sitka spruce trees. Two trees, 200-feet tall, eight feet in diameter, and over 400 years old, were found on Shelikof Island in Soda Bay, Prince of Wales Island, west of Ketchikan, Alaska.

Traditionally, Hawaiians used drift logs from the Pacific Northwest to make canoes. Menzies, a surgeon and naturalist accompanying Captain George Vancouver to Hawai'i, reported in 1793: "the largest single canoe we had seen amongst these islands [was] about sixty feet long and made of one piece of the trunk of a pine tree which had drifted on shore on the east end of the island of Kaua'i a few years back." Hawaiians considered these logs gifts from their gods.

The two 66-foot, 25-ton spruce logs for *Hawai'iloa* came by ship rather than on the ocean currents. The gift highlighted the possibility and the need for native peoples to work together in their efforts to maintain their cultural traditions in the modern world.

Between February and May 1995, *Hawai'iloa* [completed her first voyage](#), from Hawai'i to Tahiti and the Marquesas Islands and back—a 6000-mile, 3-month long journey. Two days after arriving home in Hawai'i, she was shipped with *Hōkūle'a*, who sailed with her to the South Pacific, to Seattle, arriving in Seattle on May 19.

The canoes' first trip to the North American west coast.

The *Hōkūle'a* sailed into San Diego Harbor on Friday, July 21st, 1995 for its 5-day visit. The *Hōkūle'a* was escorted by canoes from the San Diego Outrigger Canoe clubs, the San Diego Harbor Police Fire Boat, and other escort boats. A Native American welcoming ceremony followed with members of the *Kumeyaay*, *Luiseno* and *Cupa* tribes blessing the canoe and crew. Pacific Islander representatives presented their own ceremonial welcomes lasting more than a couple of hours with *Ho'okupu* of *haku lei*, *lauhala* mats, bananas and a roasted pig. This event was the start of the first San Diego Pacific Islander Festival, which has continued annually to this year (2023).

In addition to the arrival of the *Hōkūle'a* and the Pacific Islander Festival, there was an accompanying Hawaiian art exhibit at the San Diego Museum of Man, titled "*Hale Naua*", or "Turning back the sky". The exhibit featured the works of Rocky Jensen, a well-known Hawaiian artist, and his group, Hale Naua III, a society of Hawaiian artists. Rocky, his wife Lucia (a Hawaiian history researcher), and other artists attended the opening of the exhibit.

A future *Hōkūle'a* visit to San Diego

Hōkūle'a is currently heading down the west coast of North America making several stops in the Los Angeles area and is expected to be in San Diego November 8 through 14. They will be docking at the San Diego Maritime Museum. The link below provides the travel plans of the canoe [California Coast Port Schedule and Public Events - Hōkūle'a \(hokulea.com\)](#).

The current voyage is planned for 2023 to 2027 and is to be a 43,000 nautical mile, 47-month circumnavigation of the Pacific by traditional Polynesian voyaging canoes *Hōkūle'a* and *Hikianalia* with a 400-person crew to 36 countries and archipelagoes, nearly 100 indigenous territories, and 345 ports. This is the link to learn more about this voyage: <https://hokulea.com/moananuiakea/>.