

# A Constitutional Government

## The Declaration of Rights—1839

One of the first changes made by Kamehameha III took place in government. Kamehameha III was convinced that all people should have certain rights. In 1839 he put these rights in writing in a document called The Declaration of Rights.

“God hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on the face of the earth in unity and blessedness. God has also bestowed certain rights alike on all men, and all chiefs, and all people of all lands.

“These are some of the rights which he has given alike to every man and every chief, life, limb, liberty, the labor of his hands, and productions of his mind....”

## The Constitution of 1840

The next year an even more important event happened. Kamehameha III granted his people laws which, for the first time, explained in writing how the government would be run. These special laws became the Constitution of 1840, the first written constitution ever granted to the people of Hawai‘i.

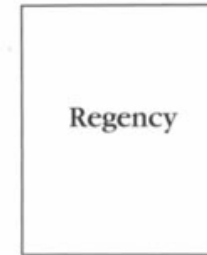
A constitution is a document in which the basic laws and principles of a government are written down. The Constitution of 1840 defined the powers and duties of government officials who were charged with keeping its laws. The Declaration of Rights was made the preamble, or introduction, to this constitution.

By signing the constitution Kamehameha III agreed to not only share more of his powers, but also to limit them. For the first time Hawaiian men from the *maka'āinana* (working class) would take part in government. Foreigners who became citizens of the kingdom could also participate.

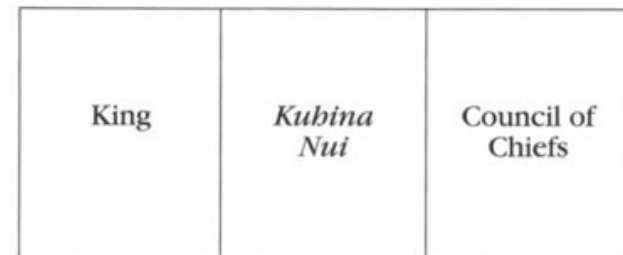
The Constitution of 1840 granted the *maka'āinana* the right to vote, be elected or appointed to office, and help make the laws of the kingdom. Hawai'i would be governed by the king along with the *kubina nui*, the chiefs and the *maka'āinana*.

### Changing Government under Kamehameha III

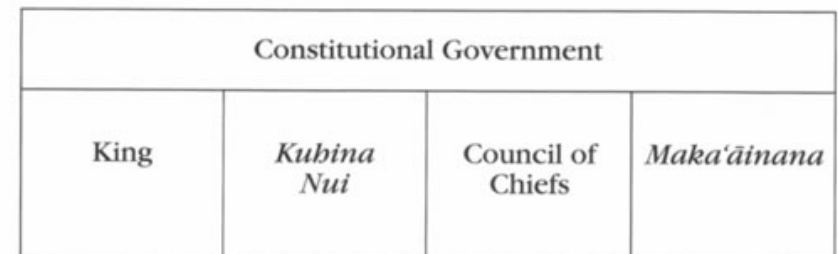
1825



1835

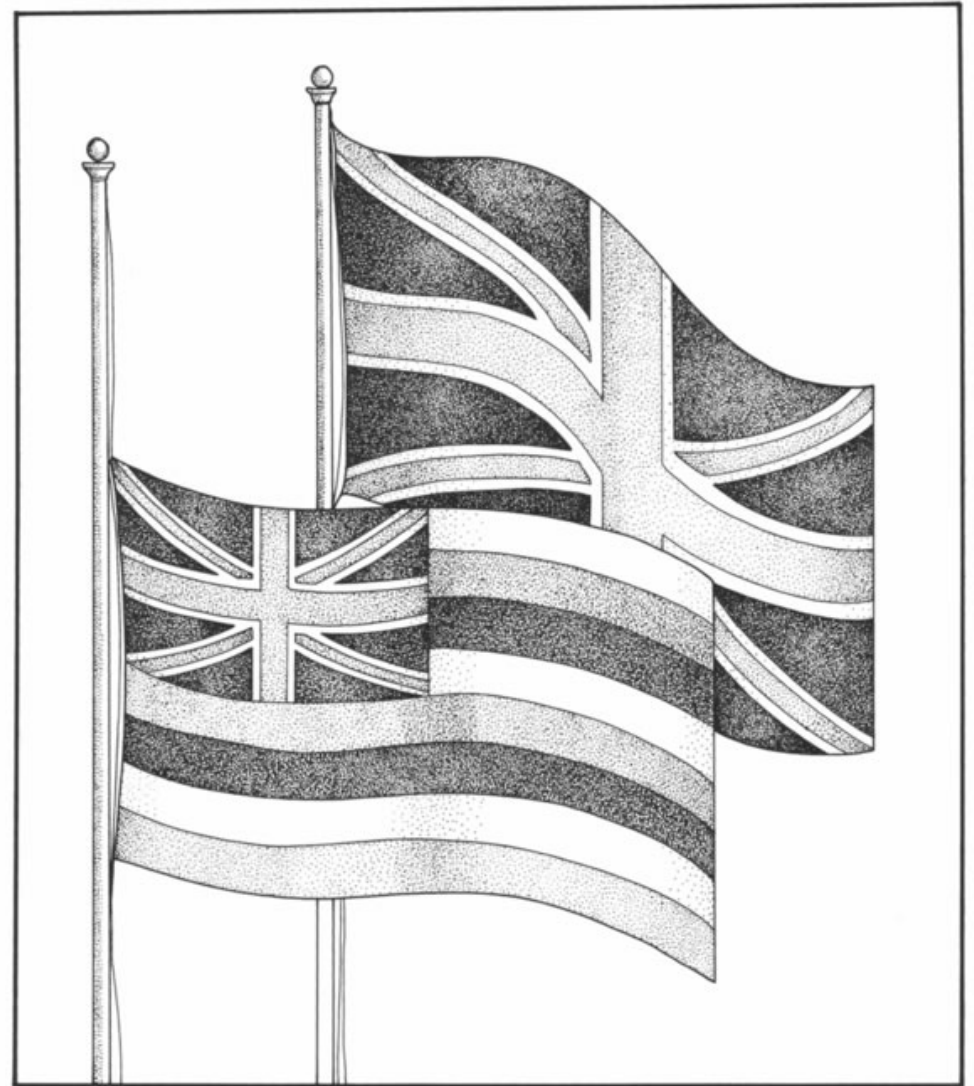


1840



## Takeover of the Kingdom

In 1843, three years after the signing of the constitution, the kingdom suffered a serious blow. With his ship's cannons pointing at Honolulu, British Captain Lord George Paulet seized control of the Hawaiian kingdom. He claimed this action was necessary to protect the rights of British residents in the islands. On February 25, 1843, the Hawaiian flag was lowered and the British flag hoisted in its place.



*R. BURNINGHAM*

*The Hawaiian flag was lowered on February 25, 1843*

Hawai'i had never before been ruled by a foreign power. Kamehameha III was furious! He saw the fear, anger and confusion among his people. However, to avoid any loss of life, he had to give in to Paulet. Kauikeaouli assured his people that the kingdom would be restored once the British government learned about the forceful takeover.

## Restoration of the Kingdom

Five months later, on July 31, 1843, the king's hope for the return of the Hawaiian monarchy came true. With the help of British Admiral Richard Thomas, the Hawaiian flag was once again raised over the islands. The kingdom was restored!

A colorful ceremony was held in an area near the intersection of Ward Avenue and Beretania Street in Honolulu. Today this place is a park whose name honors Admiral Thomas—Thomas Square.



*British Admiral Richard Thomas*

In a thanksgiving service at Kawaiaha'o Church, Kamehameha III spoke the words that became the motto of the state of Hawai'i: "*Ua mau ke ea o ka 'āina i ka pono.*" This has most commonly been translated as: "The life of the land is perpetuated in righteousness."

The celebration continued for ten days. For years following that first celebration, Kauikeaouli made Restoration Day, July 31, the most important holiday of the year.