
HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

RECOGNIZING MEKIA KEALAKAI'S BIRTHDAY OF OCTOBER 15 AS ROYAL
HAWAIIAN TROUBADOURS DAY.

1 WHEREAS, at the dawn of the twentieth century, Hawaiian
2 string bands tirelessly travelled the circuit of world fairs,
3 chautauquas, and vaudeville, playing the largest venues of their
4 day; and

5
6 WHEREAS, they spread a new Hawaiian style of string driven
7 ensemble music featuring a synthesis of string, brass, and reed
8 instruments all played with a virtuosity that has defined and
9 influenced much of what is now considered to be quintessentially
10 American music; and

11
12 WHEREAS, the musical innovations of this generation include
13 two of the most iconic stringed instruments of the modern era,
14 the Martin Dreadnought acoustic guitar and Fender Stratocaster
15 electric guitar; and

16
17 WHEREAS, after several years of research drawn from public
18 and private archives, historical societies, personal
19 correspondence, recordings, oral histories, and collaboration
20 with the C.F. Martin Guitar Company, groundbreaking research has
21 surfaced on the life story of Mekia Kealakai, a Native Hawaiian
22 born into poverty who was the son of a sergeant major in the
23 Royal Guard; and

24
25 WHEREAS, like many at-risk youths today, Kealakai found
26 himself in a reform school for juvenile delinquents at the age
27 of twelve; and

28
29 WHEREAS, what could have led to a lifetime of trouble,
30 instead became a life-changing opportunity through the



1 mentorship of Royal Hawaiian Band leader Henri Berger, who
2 introduced him to music; and

3
4 WHEREAS, as he studied legendary composers in the western
5 classical tradition, Kealakai became an accomplished student of
6 theory, harmony, and composition, fusing the Western classical
7 repertoire with the cosmopolitan traditions of his hometown
8 Honolulu and creating a new Hawaiian ensemble style along with
9 his band mates; and

10
11 WHEREAS, faced with uncertain political times, Kealakai and
12 musicians of his generation left the islands to share their
13 unique Hawaiian string band music with audiences throughout the
14 continental United States and around the world, in time becoming
15 internationally renowned ambassadors of Hawaiian culture and
16 music; and

17
18 WHEREAS, playing to audiences of ever-increasing size,
19 without the aid of amplification, these young Hawaiian musicians
20 found themselves at the leading edge of innovation in guitar
21 design that came to define the sound of modern popular music;
22 and

23
24 WHEREAS, Kealakai began collaborating with the C.F. Martin
25 Guitar Company, the leading manufacturer of acoustic guitars at
26 the time, and requested they make an extra-large jumbo guitar;
27 and

28
29 WHEREAS, that Kealakai model would later become known as
30 the Dreadnought guitar, the guitar of choice for icons including
31 Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Gabby Pahinui, the Beatles, and Bob
32 Marley; and

33
34 WHEREAS, the Kealakai Center for Pacific Strings has
35 presented four sold out Sovereign String Band concerts featuring
36 award winning Hawaiian musicians Aaron Mahi, Raiatea Helm, and
37 Jeff Peterson, joined by premier artists from the worlds of
38 classical and opera to bring this historic legacy to life before
39 contemporary audiences; and

40
41 WHEREAS, the Kealakai Center for Pacific Strings has
42 released a compact disc in collaboration with the Library of



H.C.R. NO. 135

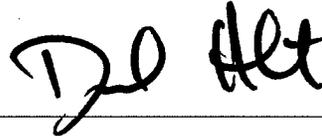
1 Congress of historic Hawaiian string band music from 1904, and
2 curated a major exhibition for the Bishop Museum, opening in
3 Spring 2020; and

4
5 WHEREAS, recognition of the Royal Hawaiian Troubadour
6 generation and their seminal contributions to the musical arts
7 is long overdue; now, therefore,

8
9 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
10 Thirty-first Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session
11 of 2021, the Senate concurring, that this body recognizes Mekia
12 Kealakai's birthday of October 15 as Royal Hawaiian Troubadours
13 Day; and

14
15 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
16 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Governor, President
17 of the Pu'uhonua Society, and Chief Executive Officer of Bishop
18 Museum.

19
20
21
OFFERED BY:



MAR 12 2021

