

# Alexander Hume Ford (1868-1945)

By

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## Contents

<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Introduction.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Honolulu, 1907.....</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Outrigger Canoe Club, 1908.....</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">Mid-Pacific Magazine.....</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">Londons Redux, 1915.....</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">Pan-Pacific Union.....</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">Impact on the Surf World.....</a>	<a href="#">15</a>

## Introduction

Alexander Hume Ford was one of the main surfers who helped revive surfing during the first two decades of the Twentieth Century, helping to found the [Outrigger Canoe Club](#) and promote [George Freeth](#) and [Duke Kahanamoku](#) as surfing's first stars of international stature. While promoting Hawai'i to the rest of the world, he also helped start board surfing in Australia and the East Coast of the United States. "I thought [Duke Kahanamoku](#) did that," I can hear you say. Read on.

Alexander Hume Ford was born on April 3, 1868, in Florence, South Carolina. The Ford side of his family stretched back to the Seventeenth Century, "when Frederick Ford of London arrived in Charleston harbor in 1668 with three ships, many servants, and a royal charter from the king of England for a large tract of land." Another forebear, "Peter Hume settled in South Carolina's Goose Creek section about 1729. His son, Robert, bought the plantation Hopsewee from Thomas Lynch in 1762. Located on the North Santee River, the plantation had been built by Lynch, the South Carolina delegate to the Continental Congress and was the birthplace of Thomas, Jr., a signer of the [Declaration of Independence](#). The tract of land... included forty-five hundred acres lying mainly south of the Winyah Barony and swampland along the Santee."<sup>1</sup>

It was here that Ford was born, the son of Frederick Wentworth Ford and Mary Mazyck Hume Ford. His mother died at his birth and his father died four years later, in 1872. "After his parents died," wrote Valerie Noble in her 1980 biography of Alexander Hume Ford, "the young Alexander grew up with his maiden aunt, Ellen. The Fords were wealthy; they owned Ford's Point near South Island, which was near Georgetown and large acreage near Florence. Ford's three sisters inherited and disposed of the property. With part of their large inheritance, they educated Alexander and his brother Frederick at Porter Military Academy in Charleston. The schooling included high school and two years of college."<sup>2</sup>

Ford worked briefly for the *Charleston News and Courier* in 1885. The next year, at age 18, he left the American South after graduating high school; not to return for many years. "There seemed nothing to hold me in the South any longer," he wrote. "My parents died when I was very young. My mother, in fact, died when I was born. I was the last of seven children, and was raised by a maiden aunt... I remember stories about my family and of their wealth, which came from the rice plantation. The prosperity was declining, though, following the [Civil War](#). And the family was declining as well..."<sup>3</sup>

Ford spent the better part of his adult life as a freelance writer in New York City and Chicago, writing for the daily newspapers and creatively as a playwright. He wrote of New York City, in 1887: "There is an excitement here that I am sure cannot be found anywhere else."<sup>4</sup> By 1896, Ford wrote, "I am beginning to know other people than those in finance. I am thoroughly caught up in drama and writing. It is exhilarating to see my words in print and my ideas alive on the stage."<sup>5</sup>

At the height of his writing career, in 1899, Ford traveled across Eastern Europe, Russia, Siberia, China and the Far East. On assignment, he wrote articles for *Century*, *Engineering*, *Era* and *Harper's*.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Noble, Valerie V. [Hawaiian Prophet: Alexander Hume Ford](#), ©1980, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> Noble, Valerie V. [Hawaiian Prophet: Alexander Hume Ford](#), ©1980, p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> Noble, Valerie V. [Hawaiian Prophet: Alexander Hume Ford](#), ©1980, p. 1. Prologue quoting Ford's reminiscences written in 1887, a year after leaving South Carolina.

<sup>4</sup> Noble, Valerie V. [Hawaiian Prophet: Alexander Hume Ford](#), ©1980, p. 3. Quoting from personal writing of Alexander Hume Ford, 1891.

<sup>5</sup> Noble, Valerie V. [Hawaiian Prophet: Alexander Hume Ford](#), ©1980, p. 4. Quoting from personal writing of Alexander Hume Ford, 1896.

<sup>6</sup> Noble, Valerie V. [Hawaiian Prophet: Alexander Hume Ford](#), ©1980, p. 9.

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## OUR AMERICAN COLONY AT JERUSALEM

By ALEXANDER HUME FORD



CHILDREN OF THE COLONY FLYING THE AMERICAN FLAG ON THE FOURTH OF JULY IN DEFIANCE OF THE ORDERS OF THE AMERICAN CONSUL



**I** HAVE returned from the Holy Land, where I was shown the Mount of Calvary, the tomb of Christ, and the manger in which the Savior of mankind was cradled. Near by these most sacred spots in the universe I fell upon a God-fearing colony of American-born citizens, who for more than a quarter of a century, while enjoying the respect and friendship of an "infidel" Turkish Government,

have been subject to renewed controversy with one of their own creed and country; one who should, of all others in the wide world, be their best and truest friend, counselor, and protector. For not only is this man a duly ordained minister of the Gospel, but he is America's consul at Jerusalem, with far-reaching power to help or harm his fellow-citizens in the Holy City.

A slight difference in the interpretation of a verse of Scripture, and once more, at the very sepulcher, the father is turned against his

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## Honolulu, 1907

By early 1907, at age 39, Ford, “a slight, quick-moving man, with a pointy goatee and enormous whisk-broom mustache,” settled down in Honolulu, Hawai‘i. Two decades later, he would claim that “it was the thrill of the surfboard that brought me to Hawaii.” This was probably more surfing promotion than it was accurately autobiographical. It is far more likely that Ford settled on O‘ahu because it was the American stepping stone to Asia. Even so, Ford wrote that “As a boy I used to sit in school idling away my time building air castles over the picture in my geography book of Hawaiian men and women in impossible attitudes, who, standing on the tiniest of boards, stood poised upon the crest of monster rollers. I longed for Hawaii and sighed to read the brief statement that only native Hawaiians of all the people in the world every accomplished the art of standing on the waves.

“Thirty years later I stood on the beach at Waikiki and saw that my boyhood dreams might be realized. White men of all ages were racing in upon the foam and I, too, in time became one of their number, while young girls not in their teens seemed to learn the art of standing on their tiny boards after a couple of trials, and old men found no difficulty in mastering the art.

“My geography [book] had merely lied about Hawaii, as many an otherwise good book has done since. Surfboard riding is an art easy of accomplishment to the few and difficult to the many. It is at its best when the rollers are long in forming, slow to break and, after they do, run for a great distance over a flat, level bottom such as the coral beds at Waikiki...”<sup>8</sup>

Two of the most important months in Ford’s life occurred in May and June of 1907.

By the beginning of summer, Ford had already spent considerable time trying to learn how to surf, with negative results. He had hired more than one local beach boy to teach him, but “It seemed to me,” he wrote later of what transpired, “that my teachers must give me up as an inept pupil, and they did.” Undeterred, Ford kept trying, anyway.<sup>9</sup>

His perseverance was rewarded one day in May, when “A young hapahole (half-white, half native)... took pity on me. He was the champion surfer of the islands. I learned in a half an hour the secret I had sought for weeks.”<sup>10</sup> His savior was nineteen year-old [George Freeth](#), captain of the Healan Swim Team and foremost of the surf riders then surfing Waikiki.<sup>11</sup> This chance encounter between Alexander Hume Ford and George Freeth would ultimately result in a greater awareness of Hawaiian surfing in the United States, Great Britain and Oceania.

Directly following their encounter that month, both Ford – “the livest live wire of all the Pacific commonwealth”<sup>12</sup> – and Freeth accompanied a United States congressional delegation then touring the islands. The tour was planned for a two-month period, from May 8<sup>th</sup> to mid-July. There were 28 members of Congress, some of whom Freeth probably gave beginning surf lessons to.<sup>13</sup> Overall, Freeth acted as both a host and the delegation’s lifeguard.<sup>14</sup> The fact-finding expedition’s mission was to determine if Hawai‘i could qualify for future United States statehood. Ford used the occasion to network with politicians from the U.S. mainland and would draw on the connections he had made for years afterwards.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Warshaw, Matt. *The Encyclopedia of Surfing*, ©2003, p. 210.

<sup>8</sup> Smith, Joel T. “Reinventing the Sport, Part II – Alexander Hume Ford,” *The Surfer’s Journal*, Volume 12, Number 2, Spring 2003, pp. 31-32. Original quotes in *Mid-Pacific Magazine*, January 1926, p. 13. See also Noble, 1980, p. 65.

<sup>9</sup> Verge, 2001, p. 85. Unidentified quote from Ford.

<sup>10</sup> Ford, Alexander Hume. “Learning to Surf,” *Mid-Pacific Magazine*, Volume 75, Number 2, February 1911, p. 155.

<sup>11</sup> *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, February 16, 1907. See photo. Cited in Verge, 2001, p. 82 and end note #5, p. 153.

<sup>12</sup> Noble, 1980, quoted in Warshaw, 2003, p. 210.

<sup>13</sup> *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, May 11, 1907. Cited in Verge, 2001, p. 85 and end note #12, p. 153.

<sup>14</sup> *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, July 3, 1907. Cited in Verge, 2001, p. 85 and end note #16, p. 153.

<sup>15</sup> Verge, 2001, p. 85.

## Alexander Hume Ford (1868-1945)

When the congressional tour left O‘ahu for the other main islands in the chain, Ford returned to Honolulu. It was then that he met up with world famous adventure writer [Jack London](#) and his wife Charmian, on May 29, 1907. Burly and brash, Jack London was in his glory days as a best-selling author. He had already achieved international fame with adventure novels such as [The Call of the Wild](#) (1903), [The Sea Wolf](#) (1904) and [White Fang](#) (1906).<sup>16</sup>

“Ford had a restless, driving energy, and such people can, sometimes, be insufferable,” noted his major biographer Valerie Noble. “He must certainly have taken Jack London and his wife, Charmian, by surprise on the evening of Wednesday, May 29. The Londons were sitting in a cool corner of the... [[Moana Hotel](#)], when a bearded young man stepped briskly up to them with ‘You’re Jack London, aren’t you? My name is Ford.’ London acknowledged the greeting and said that he had heard that Ford was in Honolulu and had wanted to see him. He’d read much of Ford’s writings. Quickly introduced to Charmian, Ford rushed on in quick conversation with Jack. In an undertone, he told London that he had a lot of good material for stories, but there was no use for him to try, as his fiction was rot. He could write travel articles, but admitted that it took no artist to do that. Ford then offered to jot down and give them to London. London suggested that he join them for dinner, during which Ford talked steadily.”<sup>17</sup>

Although both men shared the common interests of writing and traveling, it was Ford’s interest in the ancient Hawaiian sport of surfing that really caught London’s attention. Ford promised to give London “whacking good material – for stories.”<sup>18</sup>

Charmian recalled of that evening: “At present he (Ford) is interested in reviving the old Hawaiian sport of surf-boarding on the breakers. When he left, we were able to draw the first long breath in two hours... One had the sense of being speeded up; but his generous good nature was worth it.”<sup>19</sup>

Ford’s primary biographer Valerie Noble wrote that Ford’s “enthusiasm for surfing was boundless.”<sup>20</sup>

Jack London was so taken with Ford’s description of wave riding that he promised to join Ford on a “surfing excursion.” Charmian noted that her husband “finds the man most stimulating in an unselfish enthusiasm to revive neglected customs of elder island days, for the benefit of Hawaii and her advertisement to the outside world.” She considered Ford a “genius” at “pioneering and promoting” who “swears he is going to make this island’s pastime (surfing) one of the most popular in the world.”<sup>21</sup>

The following Saturday, June 1, “True to his promise, Ford appeared... with an enormous surfboard, and made fun of the small one that had been lent to the Londons.”<sup>22</sup>

Imagine a beginning surfer trying to teach someone who has never done it. Ford would have been in a predicament had it not been for George Freeth, once again. Freeth was surfing off Waikiki that day, further out. When London saw how well and easily Freeth rode the outside breakers, he – like Ford – was encouraged in his own efforts to ride.

“Out there in the midst of such a succession of big smoky ones,” later wrote the beginning surfer, hard-drinker and chain-smoker Jack London, “a third man was added to our party, one Freeth. Shaking the water from my eyes as I emerged from one wave and peered ahead to see what the next one looked like, I saw him tearing in on the back of it, standing upright with his board, carelessly poised, a young god bronzed with sunburn. We went through the wave on the back of which he rode. Ford called to him. He turned an air spring from his wave, rescued his board from its maw, paddled over to us, and joined Ford in showing me things...”<sup>23</sup>

Although London later suffered from severe sunburn and a bump on the head from a loose board, he wrote enthusiastically about his first surfing session. “Ah, delicious moment when I first felt that breaker

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<sup>16</sup> Lueras, 1984, p. 68.

<sup>17</sup> Noble, 1980, p. 45. Lueras probably got the location from Noble. Both have it as the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, but surf champion and Hawaiian legislator Fred Hemmings clarified, on 2/6/2003: “The Royal Hawaiian hotel wasn’t built till 1927. He must have met him at the Moana (1901). Aloha, Fred.”

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Smith, Joel T. “Reinventing the Sport, Part I: Jack London,” *The Surfer’s Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 1, Winter/Spring 2003, p. 29. Source unknown. Possibly Ford, *St. Nicholas* magazine, August 1908, p. 878.

<sup>19</sup> London, Charmian, *Our Hawaii*, p. 53. Quoted in Smith, 2003, Part II, pp. 32-33 and Noble, 1980, p. 45.

<sup>20</sup> Noble, Valerie. *Hawaiian Prophet*, p. 242.

<sup>21</sup> Source unknown, but possibly London, Charmian, *Our Hawaii*, p. 73. Quoted in Smith, Joel T. “Reinventing the Sport, Part I: Jack London,” *The Surfer’s Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 1, Winter/Spring 2003, p. 28.

<sup>22</sup> Noble, 1980, p. 46.

<sup>23</sup> London, Jack. “A Royal Sport,” *Cruise of the Snark*, 1911, Macmillan Company, New York. Quoted in Lueras, 1984, p. 70.

## Alexander Hume Ford (1868-1945)

grip and fling me. On I dashed, a hundred and fifty feet, and subsided with the breaker on the sand. From that moment I was lost.”<sup>24</sup> Writing further he acknowledged, “I tackled surf-riding, and now that I have tackled it, more than ever do I hold it to be a royal sport.”<sup>25</sup>

London not only appreciated surfing, but also the younger Freeth’s skill and demeanor. “Where but the moment before was only the wide desolation and invincible roar, is now a man, erect, full-statured, not struggling frantically in that wild movement, not buried and crushed and buffeted by those mighty monsters, but standing above them all, calm and superb, poised on the giddy summit, his feet buried in the churning foam, the salt smoke rising to his knees, and all the rest of him in the free air and flashing sunlight, and he is flying through the air, flying forward, flying fast as the surge on which he stands. He is a Mercury – a brown Mercury. His heels are winged, and in them is the swiftness of the sea.”<sup>26</sup>

The same day Jack London surfed with Ford and Freeth, Charmian watched from the beach and wrote of what she saw: “The thick board, somewhat coffin-shaped, with rounded ends, should be over six feet long. This plank is floated out to the breaking water, which can be done either wading alongside or lying face-downward paddling; and there you wait for the right wave. When you see it coming, stand ready to launch the board on the gathering slope, spring upon it, and - keep going if you can. Lie flat on your chest, hands grasping the sides of the large end of the heavy timber, and steer with your feet. The expert, having gauged the right speed, rises cautiously to his knees, to full stature, and then, erect with feet in the churning foam, he makes straight for the beach.”<sup>27</sup>

As for London himself, he was determined to be able to stand and ride his borrowed surfboard: “But tomorrow, ah tomorrow. I shall be out in that wonderful water, and I shall come in standing up. And if I fail tomorrow, I shall do it the next day, or the next. Upon one thing I am resolved: the Snark [his sailboat] shall not sail from Honolulu until I, too, wing my heels with the swiftness of the sea, and become a sunburned, skin-peeling Mercury.” London was also stoked to see Ford surf. “What a sport he is,” London exclaimed, “and what a sport for white men, too.”<sup>28</sup>

“With Ford’s help, London spent several hours in the small surf and came in safely. Charmian got into the act, too, ending a successful ride on the beach in front of some strangers. It took her a while to learn how to get on the board without help; the board was cumbersome and the water lively. When Charmian said she would never learn the sport, Ford said that she could. It was easier than she thought, but she told him that she had better let her husband try it out first. In learning to surf, both the Londons were hit on the head by a loose board.”<sup>29</sup>

But that was not all. Although he would write glowingly of surfing, Jack London’s first surf sessions were extremely painful. The difficulty of learning was compounded by a severe case of sunburn. Both Jack and Charmian were burnt by the sun during an era that did not know much about sunscreen or the need to replace skin oils when out of doors. When Jack came back from surfing with Ford, his “Face and body were covered with large swollen blotches, like hives; his mouth and throat were closing painfully.”<sup>30</sup>

London had sensitive skin and after a day surfing, his “shoulders and back of neck were cruelly grilled, goodness knows; the really frightful damage had been wreaked on the backs of his legs, especially the tender hind-side of the knee joints, which were actually warping from the deep burning so rapidly that in a few moments he could not stand erect because the limbs refused to straighten.”<sup>31</sup>

A little over a week later, “Ford visited the Londons... Jack diagnosed his violent swelling after the sunburn as urticaria. Ford defended himself with ‘But I warned you’ and also snickered at the sight of

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<sup>24</sup> London, Jack. *The Cruise of the Snark*, 1911, p. 46. Quoted in Smith, 2003, Part 1, p. 27. See cover shot of “Surfing’s first magazine cover appearance” in *The Outing* magazine, January 1908, edited by Caspar Whitney, 25 cents.

<sup>25</sup> London, Jack. *The Cruise of the Snark*, 1911, p. 46. Quoted in Smith, 2003, Part 1, p. 27.

<sup>26</sup> London, Jack. “A Royal Sport,” *Cruise of the Snark*, 1911, Macmillan Company, New York, p. 76.

<sup>27</sup> London, Jack. “Riding the South Seas Surf,” *Women’s Home Companion*, October 1907. Quoted in Finney and Houston, 1966, pp. 69-70.

<sup>28</sup> London, Jack. *The Cruise of the Snark*, 1911. Quoted in Smith, 2003, Part 1, p. 28.

<sup>29</sup> Noble, 1980, p. 46.

<sup>30</sup> Noble, 1980, p. 47. Charmian London quoted.

<sup>31</sup> Noble, 1980, p. 47. Charmian London quoted.

## Alexander Hume Ford (1868-1945)

London trying a step or two. ‘And you’re luckier than I was the first time I got sunburned – worse than you are...’<sup>32</sup>

Despite his problems with his skin and the pain surfing had resulted in, Jack London wrote an impassioned article about wave riding, entitled “Riding the South Seas Surf.” It was published in the October 1907 issue of *Woman’s Home Companion*, a well-read American magazine of the time, and later reprinted in the British *Pall Mall* magazine in 1908 as “Joys of the Surf Rider.”<sup>33</sup> In 1911, it comprised a chapter in London’s collection of writings entitled *Cruise of the Snark*. London wrote about “a royal sport for the natural kings of earth” and his own “ecstatic bliss” of riding his first waves. His writings unquestionably attracted interest in wave riding not only on the U.S. Mainland, but also other parts of the western world.<sup>34</sup>

Jack London was not the only one inspired to write about surfing. Ford – referred to by Hawaiians as “Hume Ford” or sometimes just “Hume”<sup>35</sup> – would go on to promote surfing and Hawai‘i in such popular American magazines as *Colliers* and *St. Nicholas*. Noting the Caucasian influence in the revival of surfing, he wrote: “The white man and boy are doing much in Hawaii to develop the art of surf-riding.” As for reciprocity, “The white lad has taught the native boy to play baseball and the native has taught his fair-skinned cousin all the sports of his forefathers.” Ford encouraged: “Learn to ride a surfboard. It is the sport of Kings.”<sup>36</sup>

Jack London had high praise for Ford: “Not only did the Hawaiian born not talk about it [surfing], but they forgot about it. Just as the sport was at its dying gasp, along came one Alexander Ford from the mainland. And he talked. Surfboarding was the sport of sports. There was nothing like it anywhere else in the world. They ought to be ashamed for letting it languish. It was one of the Islands’ assets, a drawing card for travelers that would fill their hotels and bring them many permanent residents, etc.”<sup>37</sup>

Jack and Charmian London spent several weeks in Hawai‘i in the summer of 1907. They mostly stayed in a bungalow at the Hau Tree Inn which is now the Halekulani Regent Hotel. The bungalow itself was situated on open grounds opposite one of Waikiki’s better breaks, now known as “Number Threes.”<sup>38</sup>

From the bungalow, it was only a few minutes’ walk to the then six year-old Moana Hotel, on Kuhio Beach. “This stretch of sand was the daytime haunt of surfriders, who numbered only a few in those days,” wrote Leonard Lueras in *Surfing, The Ultimate Pleasure*. “There, under an old *hau* tree, and in and around the old Moana Bath House, he [London] found the spiritual ‘ancestors’ of today’s famous Waikiki beachboys, the most obvious of that chang-a-lang gang being a loose clique of Hawaiians and part-Hawaiians who had formed a *hui*, or club, they called the Waikiki Swimming Club. This informal group was the precursor of two other beach clubs – the Outrigger Canoe Club and *Hui Nalu* (‘Club of the Waves’) – organized in 1908.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Noble, 1980, p. 48. Ford quoted.

<sup>33</sup> Smith, Joel T. “Reinventing the Sport, Part 1: Jack London,” *The Surfer’s Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 1, Winter/Spring 2003, p. 27.

<sup>34</sup> London, Jack. “A Royal Sport: Surfing at Waikiki,” 1907. See also Finney and Houston, 1966, p. 70.

<sup>35</sup> Smith, 2003, Part II, Endnotes.

<sup>36</sup> Smith, 2003, Part II, p. 33. Quotes from Ford’s articles in *Colliers* and *St. Nicholas*.

<sup>37</sup> London, Jack. “My Hawaiian Aloha,” *The New Hawaii* by Charmian London, p. 20. Quoted in Smith 2003, Part II, p. 33.

<sup>38</sup> Late 1900s surf photographer Warren Bolster said Number Three’s was his favorite spot to shoot. In 1995: “On the wrong swell direction it’s pretty good. On small days it’s pretty good. In the off-season it’s pretty good. When it’s on, it’s absolutely magic. A perfectly shaped reef. [Joey] Cabell says it never closes out. Also one of the sunniest spots in the world, with prevailing offshores and sparkling blue water.” See “Viewfinders,” *Longboard Magazine*, Volume 3, Number 1, April/May 1995.

<sup>39</sup> Lueras, 1984, p. 68.

## Outrigger Canoe Club, 1908

Alexander Hume Ford traveled to Australia, New Zealand and the New Hebrides in later 1907 and early 1908. While visiting Manly beach, in Australia's New South Wales, Ford curiously wrote: "I wanted to try riding the waves on a surf-board, but it is forbidden."<sup>40</sup> Although surf clubs were becoming popular and bodysurfing had been widely practiced since the late 1800s, no one had, as yet, stood up on a board and ridden waves in Australia.

Ford returned to Honolulu on March 2, 1908. "He had met lecturer, traveler, and writer [Burton Holmes](#); both stayed at the Seaside Hotel."<sup>41</sup> Perhaps influenced by the robust growth of surf clubs in New South Wales, Ford talked with Holmes about forming one at Waikiki.

Ford was also prompted, in part, by concerns of over-development. Just as surfing's revival was underway, the construction of large hotels and private residences at Waikiki had slowly begun to close off beach frontage. Natives and newcomers who surfed found themselves being squeezed off sections of the beach.<sup>42</sup>

The closest equivalents to surf clubs in the Honolulu area were swimming clubs like the Healanis, Myrtles and the Waikiki Swimming Club. Ford and Burton talked about doing something similar, but having surfing and canoeing being the focus, rather than swimming. "Ford was forming a club a month in those times," exaggerated one newspaper account.<sup>43</sup>

"He and Holmes photographed various beach lanais and made pencil drawings for a possible club lanai," wrote Noble. "Ford spoke to the Commercial Club on March 18, urging the organization of an Outrigger Club and, on April 7, a letter was circulated to various clubs asking them to encourage the idea. It was signed by eleven people, including Ford."<sup>44</sup>

Ford approached the trustees of the Queen Emma Estate and petitioned them for a plot of land next to Waikiki's Moana Hotel. He wanted a place where a clubhouse and surfboard storage facilities could be built.<sup>45</sup> A newspaper report noted that Ford was encouraged in these endeavors not only by filmmaker Burton Holmes, but also Jack and Charmian London and Honolulu socialite [Ella Wheeler Wilcox](#).<sup>46</sup>

Ford's negotiations were successful. In a memoir published in 1944, a year before his death on October 14, 1945, Ford wrote: "I got a 20 years lease on what is now the [Outrigger Canoe Club](#) grounds for \$5 a year, provided the dues for boys under 16 would not be over \$5 a year. I wish it were so now. Such dues made it possible for every kid with guts to live at least half the day fighting the surf."<sup>47</sup>

"Charter members numbered eighty-six adults and some fifteen junior members. The club was formally organized on May 1, 1908," wrote Ford biographer Valerie Noble, differing somewhat in the details: "The club leased, for thirty years at ten dollars a year, an acre and a half of land between the Seaside and Moana hotels."<sup>48</sup>

The Outrigger Canoe Club was officially founded for the purpose of "preserving surfing on boards and in Hawaiian outrigger canoes." The club became the first formal organization whose mission it was to

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<sup>40</sup> "Australia Through American eyes," *The Red Funnel*, Dunedin, June 1 1908, p. 468. Quoted in [Thoms](#), p. 14.

<sup>41</sup> Noble, 1980, p. 53.

<sup>42</sup> Ford, Alexander H. "Out-Door Allurements," in *Thrum's Hawaiian Annual*, Honolulu Star Bulletin Printing Company, Honolulu, Hawaii, 1911, pp. 143-144. Quoted in Finney and Houston, p. 70. See also Noble, 1980, p. 66.

<sup>43</sup> Lueras, 1984, p. 70. Newspaper quote unknown.

<sup>44</sup> Noble, 1980, pp. 53-54.

<sup>45</sup> Lueras, 1984, p. 73.

<sup>46</sup> Lueras, 1984, p. 73. Newspaper article unidentified.

<sup>47</sup> Ford, 1944 memoir. Quoted in Lueras, 1984, p. 73. Publication source unspecified.

<sup>48</sup> Noble, 1980, pp. 53-54.

## Alexander Hume Ford (1868-1945)

preserve surfing. Not long after, the club offered facilities for dressing, and a grass hut for board storage right on the beach at Waikiki.<sup>49</sup>

“Two grass houses were purchased from the old zoo and moved in sections to the Outrigger grounds,” wrote Valerie Noble. “One was used as a bathhouse for members and the other, facing Moana stream, which wound under Kalakaua Avenue and across the beach, served as a storehouse for the surfboards. Hau trees were planted and a lanai designed by Lucius Pinkham was built. A small portion of the club housed a little kitchen where members prepared hot food for picnic luncheons and suppers. A women’s auxiliary would be formed later for wives and daughters of members and became a separate organization known as the [Uluniu Women’s Swimming Club](#). Many people in Honolulu now had a place to surf, swim, and canoe. The only problem was the mosquitoes; the club was situated on a swamp.”<sup>50</sup> The swamp was the Moana Hotel lagoon – a brackish pond on the Diamond Head side of the club grounds, fed by the Apuakehau (Manoa) Stream.<sup>51</sup>

“There was a need for facilities to store boards, canoes, plus the availability of showers and dressing rooms with lockers,” recalled [Duke Kahanamoku](#). “Today’s swank and renowned Outrigger Canoe Club actually began as a tumbledown grass shack purchased from the local zoo in Kapiolani Park and reassembled on the Waikiki shore.”<sup>52</sup>

A pavilion, where dances and other social events could be enjoyed, was soon built and became a popular gathering place for club members. The ground floor was sand and became the storage area for canoes and surfboards. The second floor was a spacious *lanai* open to the cooling trade winds and was used for dances.<sup>53</sup>

“Ford guaranteed the [Queen Emma] estate trustee,” wrote Noble, “that the property would be used only for the purpose of reviving and preserving the ancient Hawaiian sport of surfing on boards and in outrigger canoes.”<sup>54</sup>

According to legendary surfer [Tom Blake](#), who wrote the first book on surfing history nearly two decades later, the original charter of the Outrigger Canoe and Surfboard Club read: “We wish to have a place where surfboard riding may be revived and those who live away from the water front may keep their surfboards. The main object of this club being to give an added and permanent attraction to Hawaii and make the Waikiki beach the home of the surfrider.”<sup>55</sup> Author Leonard Lueras, writing in 1984, has the 1908 charter reading: “... to give an added and permanent attraction to Hawaii and make Waikiki always the Home of the Surfer, with perhaps an annual Surfboard and Outrigger Canoe Carnival which will do much to spread abroad the attractions of Hawaii, the only islands in the world where men and boys ride upright upon the crests of the waves.”<sup>56</sup>

Today’s Outrigger Canoe Club simply quotes founding father Ford that the OCC’s purpose was to make sure that “the native and small...boy” could “doff their duds and mount their (surf) boards at will” as well as “enjoy the waves off of Waikiki.”<sup>57</sup> Ford wrote that “preserving surfing on boards and in Hawaiian outrigger canoes” was Outrigger’s goal.<sup>58</sup>

Ford became the Outrigger’s first president. He “and others organized the club,” wrote Joseph Brennan in [DUKE, The Life Story of Hawai’i’s Duke Kahanamoku](#), “and charitably invited some of the hau-tree beachboys to come in as members. The new club was a quantum leap in comfort and style for the beachboys. Here was a large grass-covered house on the beach with ample room for storing surfboards and canoes. It had a touch of class, and most of the boys went over to the ‘fancy’ new club. Some, however,

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<sup>49</sup> Ford, Alexander Hume. “Out-door Allurements,” *Thrum’s Hawaiian Annual*, 1911, pp. 143-144. Also quoted in Finney and Houston, 1966, p. 70 and Finney and Houston, 1996, p. 61.

<sup>50</sup> Noble, 1980, p. 54.

<sup>51</sup> See [www.outriggercanoeclub.com](http://www.outriggercanoeclub.com).

<sup>52</sup> Kahanamoku, 1968, p. 32.

<sup>53</sup> See [www.outriggercanoeclub.com](http://www.outriggercanoeclub.com).

<sup>54</sup> Noble, 1980, p. 54.

<sup>55</sup> Quoted by Blake, in *The Pan Pacific*, 1930. See also Blake, 1935, p. 60.

<sup>56</sup> Quoted in Lueras, 1984, p. 70.

<sup>57</sup> Ford, Alexander Hume. “Out-door Allurements,” *Thrum’s Hawaiian Annual*, 1911, pp. 143-149. See also [www.outriggercanoeclub.com](http://www.outriggercanoeclub.com).

<sup>58</sup> Ford, Alexander Hume. “Out-door Allurements,” *Thrum’s Hawaiian Annual*, 1911, pp. 143-144.

## Alexander Hume Ford (1868-1945)

did not. Among the holdouts was Duke; his loyalty to the more pedestrian club [the Waikiki Swimming Club] was rock-ribbed. Not until nine years later did he forsake the club he had helped to organize. 'Prestige' could wait."<sup>59</sup>

From the start, the composition of the Outrigger was mixed, with a significant number of surfers being of white skin. This was a unique development, given the history of Hawai'i since the time Europeans first landed on Hawai'i's shores in 1778. During all that time, few Caucasians had learned to surf and surfing itself declined to the point of near-extinction. As Ford had noted as a kid, it was popular belief that only Hawaiians could surf with any degree of success. Famous Nineteenth Century American author [Mark Twain](#) had added to the myth by writing, in 1866: "None but the natives ever master the art of surf-bathing thoroughly."<sup>60</sup>

Yet, "in one of the great ironies of surfing history, the century's beginning saw Caucasians join with Hawaiians and mixed bloods to help revive the sport that had been in decline for nearly a hundred years," wrote writer Kent Pearson. Just as the haoles "had been in various ways responsible for the decline of Hawaiian surfing, so there was a significant Haole influence in its revival."<sup>61</sup>

"The Caucasians began to take to surfing - and that was a real switch," Duke Kahanamoku recalled. With growing interest and lack of suppression, water sports like swimming, canoeing, skulling and surfing once again became dominant pursuits at Waikiki.<sup>62</sup>

After helping organize the Outrigger Canoe Club, Alexander Hume Ford continued to promote surfing through surf carnivals, competitions, his own writing, and even photography. As a promoter, he was non-stop. A perfect example of this was after George Freeth moved to Southern California in 1907. Ford lost no time in finding a new surf hero in [Duke Paoa Kahanamoku](#). Several years before Duke became famous as an Olympic swimmer, Ford was already promoting Duke as Hawai'i's "Champion Surf Rider."<sup>63</sup>

Ford also promoted Hawai'i by the use of photography. Before he got into the act, the first photographs of surfers had already been taken by both Thomas Severin and Frank Davey in the 1890s. Their shots were portraits of Hawaiians in the Waikiki area holding their surfboards.<sup>64</sup> Ford went a step further by shooting action shots around 1908 that were, perhaps, the first photographs of surfing ever to appear in magazines (*St. Nicholas* and *Colliers*). In the following years, R. E. Matteson photographed George Freeth surfing at Redondo Beach in 1909 and in 1910, Alonzo Gartley photographed Hawaiians playing in the Waimea shorebreak.<sup>65</sup>

By the summer of 1909, Waikiki surfing had attracted a number of Honolulu businessmen, including one or two ex-governors of the Islands and even some judges from the Territorial Supreme Court. That summer, Ford's article "Riding the Surf in Hawaii," was published in the popular and influential *Colliers National Weekly*. In it, Ford wrote about wave riding, surfboards, the "annual" Christmas contest, night surfing, State Supreme Court justices riding waves and the mix of both natives and "white boys" out in the lineup.<sup>66</sup> Board length now averaged eight feet, up from six.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Brennan, 1994, p. 22.

<sup>60</sup> Twain, Mark. "Native Surf Bathing," *Roughing It*, 1866, p. 526. See Finney and Houston, 1966, p. 69 or Lueras, 1984, p. 51.

<sup>61</sup> Pearson, 1979, p. 33.

<sup>62</sup> Kahanamoku, 1968, p. 31 and Blake, 1935, 1983, p. 50.

<sup>63</sup> Smith 2003, p. 33. Quoted source unknown.

<sup>64</sup> Smith, Joel T. and Hall, Sandra Kimberly. "A. R. Gurrey Jr.: The Genesis of Surf Photography," *The Surfer's Journal*, ©2005, Volume 14, Number 2, April-May 2005, p. 50.

<sup>65</sup> Smith, Joel T. and Hall, Sandra Kimberly. "A. R. Gurrey Jr.: The Genesis of Surf Photography," *The Surfer's Journal*, ©2005, Volume 14, Number 2, April-May 2005, p. 50.

<sup>66</sup> Ford, Alexander Hume. "Riding the Surf in Hawaii," *Colliers National Weekly*, August 14, 1909. See also Finney and Houston, 1966, p. 71. Ref. #4 and *The Surfer's Journal*, Volume 6, Number 2, Summer 1997, p. 123.

<sup>67</sup> Blake, 1935, 1983, p. 50.



Outrigger Canoe Club, 1908

## *Mid-Pacific Magazine*

Ford's enthusiasm was not limited to surfing and all things Hawaiian. As time went on, he became more and more driven to bring the culturally diverse peoples of the Pacific Rim together, using Honolulu as the base – “The Crossroads of the Pacific.” Toward that end, the *Mid-Pacific Magazine* was born.

Ford printed the first issue of his *Mid-Pacific Magazine* in 1911. The monthly would run for 26 years, with the expressed purpose to “increase understanding among nations and peoples.” The premiere edition featured Duke on the cover with a lengthy article entitled “Riding the Surfboard.” Although the article was credited to “Duke Paoa,” it was most certainly written by Ford.

Even with his eyes on the bigger picture of a Pan-Pacific Union, Ford did such things as raise financing for inter-island transportation in league with George Freeth's father, assisted in trade agreements with Australia and New Zealand, introduced surfing to Australian Percy Hunter, promoted tourism and immigration, and actively encouraged statehood for the Hawaiian Islands as part of the United States of America.<sup>68</sup>

Although Ford benefited from his promotional work, the financial component was not that much. “All he does is for Hawaii,” Charmian London observed, “desiring nothing for himself except the feverish unremitting pleasure of sharing the attractions of his adopted land.”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Smith, 2003, Part II, p. 34. Ford introduced Hunter to surfing in 1908. Percy Hunter was the head of the New South Wales Immigration and Tourism Bureau. He said that by 1910, there were already several surfboards stashed at Manly Beach. See *Mid-Pacific Magazine*, January 1911, “Skiing in Australia,” by Percy Hunter. See also Noble, 1980, pp. 57-58.

<sup>69</sup> London, Charmian, *Our Hawaii*, p. 105. Quoted in Smith, 2003, Part II, p. 34.



## Londons Redux, 1915

Jack and Charmian London returned to Waikiki in 1915, eight years after Jack first got stoked on surfing after meeting Ford – “the best pal I ever had”<sup>70</sup> – and George Freeth. It was also eight years after the first publication of London’s “Surfing: A Royal Sport,” the magazine article that brought the revival of surf riding on wooden boards to the attention of the Western world.

They “arrived in Honolulu on the *Matsonia* the morning of March 2. Ford went on board to greet them and, although eight years had passed, London found that Ford was as buoyant and brimful of ideas as he had ever been.”<sup>71</sup>

Honolulu had grown since their 1907 visit and they were quick to note the testimonies of that growth all three were, in part, responsible for. Not all of the change was for the better. “Ainahau had been broken up into lots and was the site of a boardinghouse,” wrote Hume Ford’s biographer Valerie Noble. “Never once did they... glance that way. ‘Too sorrowful and indignant we were that the home of Likelike and [Kaiulani](#) should not have been held inviolate.’ London said: ‘I am glad we’re here now, for someday Waikiki beach is going to be the scene of one long hotel, and wonderful as it will be, I can’t help clinging to the old idea for once.’”<sup>72</sup>

“On March 11, the Londons met [Queen Liliuokalani](#) at her request,” Noble continued. “They also spent time at the Outrigger and enjoyed Duke Kahanamoku and the young Hawaiians in and out of the water. Jack found that surfboarding had come into its own. Instead of always coasting at right angles to the waves, he noticed that now surf-riding was at ‘astonishing slant angles.’”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Noble, 1980, p. 76. Jack London quoted.

<sup>71</sup> Noble, 1980, p. 76.

<sup>72</sup> Noble, 1980, p. 77. Jack London quoted.

<sup>73</sup> Noble, 1980, p. 77. Jack London quoted.

## Alexander Hume Ford (1868-1945)

“The newest brood of surf-boarders had learned and put into practice angles never dreamed of a decade earlier,” Charmian wrote. “Now, instead of always coasting at right-angles to the wave, young [Lorrin P. Thurston](#) and the half-dozen who shared with him the reputation of being the most skilled, would often be seen erect on boards that their feet and balance guided at astonishing slants.”<sup>74</sup>

In only a decade or so of revival, riding skills had obviously developed to the point where the ancient technique of *lala* - surfing at sliding angles across the wave face – had been rediscovered and was now common practice in the riding style of a new generation of surfers.<sup>75</sup>

These later Waikiki revivalists were listed by Tom Blake who arrived in the Islands a decade later. The names were given to him by other veteran surfers who were there at the time: “At the 1915 period the best surfriders were: Major Keawasmaki, Major Keaweamahi, Duke and David Kahanamoku, [Lorrin] Potter Thurston, Smith, Dad Center, Foster, Hickman boys, Carter, Dudie Miller, Tommy, Holstein boys, Tough Bill, Whittle, Typhoon, B. Harris, and G. Harris.”<sup>76</sup>

The Londons left Honolulu mid-year, but returned again in December, staying until July 1916. While on O‘ahu in 1915 and 1916, the Londons not only noted the changes to Honolulu and Waikiki, but also the many changes that had taken place in the revival of the surfing. Jack was especially surprised to find the Outrigger Canoe Club at 1200 members, “with hundreds more on the waiting list, and with what seems like half a mile of surf-board lockers.”<sup>77</sup>

Charmian noted surfing’s commercial potential: “Take surf-boarding, for instance... Not only did the Hawaii-born not talk about it, but they forgot about it. Just as the sport was at its dying gasp, along comes Alexander Ford from the mainland. And he talked. Surfboarding was the sport of sports. There was nothing like it anywhere else in the world... It was one of the island’s assets, a drawing card that would fill the hotels and bring them many permanent residents.”<sup>78</sup>

“What are you going to do about it?” asked a native Hawaiian of Ford. “This is just talk, you know, just a line of talk.”

“I’m not going to do anything except talk,” Ford replied. “It’s you fellows who’ve got to do the doing.”<sup>79</sup> And that’s how Ford operated.

## Pan-Pacific Union

One day in 1907, under the algarrobas at Pearl Harbor, “London and Ford [had] discussed socialism, at Ford’s initiative,” wrote Noble. “Ford concluded that he couldn’t understand London’s socialism... Ford told London that he would soon leave for Australia and the Pacific at his own expense to see if there were a way to get the peoples to work together for one another and the Pacific. London said, ‘That’s socialism – look out.’

“Ford retorted, ‘I don’t care if it is. That won’t stop me... Hawaii with her mix of races and no race problems should be the country to take the lead. I’m going to call a Pan-Pacific convention here.’”<sup>80</sup>

By 1915, Hume Ford was already shifting his personal activity to focus more on his vision of multi-racial and multi-ethnic harmony in the Pacific, forming the Pan Pacific Union towards those ends. Headquartered in Honolulu, “the Crossroads of the Pacific,” Ford put the same kind of energy into promoting peace in the Pacific as he had promoting surfing and Hawai‘i. For the next twenty years, he gave it his all, constantly travelling and talking throughout the Pacific Rim and many places in the rest of the world.

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<sup>74</sup> Finney and Houston, 1966, p. 71. Ref. #6.

<sup>75</sup> Stecyk, “Hot Curl,” *The Surfer’s Journal*, 1994, p. 65.

<sup>76</sup> Blake, 1935, 1983, p. 61.

<sup>77</sup> London, Jack, 1922, p. 8. Quoted in Finney and Houston, 1966, p. 71.

<sup>78</sup> London, Jack, 1916. Quoted on title page of Chapter Five of Finney and Houston, 1966.

<sup>79</sup> Noble, 1980, p. 78. Paraphrased.

<sup>80</sup> Noble, 1980, p. 47. Ford and London quoted, though probably conjecture.

## Alexander Hume Ford (1868-1945)

Unfortunately, world events and the conflicting self-interests of individual countries conspired against what Ford saw as the possibility of a [League of Nations](#) in the Pacific. Following failed peacemaking in 1937, Ford returned to the Hawaiian Islands tired and disillusioned. With some bitterness, he told the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*: “I’m never again going to try to understand other people or other nations. Efforts directed toward international friendship hereafter should by all means avoid any approach through intellectual channels... It won’t work.” In essence, Ford denounced not only his Pan-Pacific Union but acknowledged the futility of his over twenty years in promoting “better understanding between nations.”<sup>81</sup>

Hume Ford was not quick to arrive at his feeling of futility for the Pacific. As early as 1930 and probably earlier, he recognized that no sword was ever struck that did not cut both ways, especially when it came to the growth of the Hawaiian Islands. “He had seen the last grass house disappear from the streets of Honolulu and had seen the marble bank buildings replace the picturesque shacks on Main Street and liked none of it. He thought that he was alone in wishing the world in Hawaii would stand still... at times, it was thrust upon him that he was witnessing the passing of Hawaii and the birth of something else, which, to his mind, was not lovely; it was a big money-making community.”<sup>82</sup>

“He recalled that the first few years of his stay in Hawaii were spent with natives and others on the surfboard or with them on the all-but-inaccessible native trails: ‘Today, these trails are closed to man and the water sheds conserved for the use of the hundreds of thousands that have come to these islands and are making their fortunes here.’

“Ford wrote that he had made no fortune and he never would. What fortune, he asked, would compensate for the days when he and Jack London used to collect about them in their camp at Waikiki the natives of Hawaii, men of Japan, sons of [Sun Yat-sen](#) and their friends and talk with them of a Pan-Pacific Union?”<sup>83</sup>

At the age of 77, Alexander Hume Ford died early Sunday morning, October 14, 1945, on the island of O‘ahu.<sup>84</sup> For several years he had fought anginal attacks and senility while [World War II](#) raged around him.

Two years before his passing, the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* published a tribute to him, printing, in part: “Alexander Hume Ford... was one of our best known citizens – a restless, fast walking, fast talking, fast thinking, fast doing chap, with an eternal urge to improve the world and everybody in his vicinity...

“‘Hume Ford,’ as we called him familiarly, was forever starting movements to bring conventions, scientific congresses and other groups to Hawaii. No celebrity was too big for him to tackle. He hobnobbed as familiarly with presidents and premiers and ambassadors as with the beach boys of Waikiki.

“His thin, spare frame, a bit stooped, his shock of uncombed and graying hair, his tuft of reddish brown graying beard, his keen and restless eyes, his peculiar half loping gait, and his rapid fire speech on any subject from aardvarks to zymotechnics, were familiar to all Honoluluans.

“So here’s a hail and aloha to Alexander Hume Ford...”<sup>85</sup>

“Always use the middle name,” cautioned Gwenfread Allen, who worked for many years at the *Star-Bulletin*, “because he was proud of belonging to the Hume family of South Carolina.”<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, December 24, 1937. Quoted in Smith, 2003, Part II, p. 35.

<sup>82</sup> Noble, 1980, p. 202. From Ford’s reminiscences of Hawai‘i, in the Japanese *Times and Mail*, 1930.

<sup>83</sup> Noble, 1980, p. 203. From Ford’s reminiscences of Hawai‘i, in the Japanese *Times and Mail*, 1930.

<sup>84</sup> Noble, 1980, p. 240.

<sup>85</sup> *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, April 13, 1943, reproduced in Noble, 1980, pp. 238-239.

<sup>86</sup> Noble, 1980, p. 247. Gwenfread Allen quoted.

## Impact on the Surf World

This brings us back to those southern states of North and South Carolina, on the United States Atlantic seaboard.

In the research for his book *Surfing on the Cape Fear Coast*, longtime North Carolina surfer [Skipper Funderburg](#) came across several historical postcards from [Wrightsville](#), North Carolina's beach scene in the first two decades of the Twentieth Century. One is postmarked 1909 and another one is hand-dated July 12, 1912. In both postcards, young boys can be seen with Hawaiian-style bodyboards. That is, the plan shapes are almost identical to the ones seen in photographs of boards in Hawai'i at the turn of the millennium.<sup>87</sup>

For surfing, this is quite an historical find, because for many decades it was assumed that [Duke Kahanamoku](#) was the first surfer on the East Coast, essentially bringing board surfing to the "Right Coast" from California and Hawai'i. These unearthed postcards definitively document surfing (albiet prone surfing, or bodyboarding) on the East Coast prior to Duke's bodysurfing before the [1912 Summer Olympics](#) (Stockholm, Sweden, late June to late July), on [Long Island, N.Y.](#), and his board surfing at [Atlantic City, New Jersey](#), after the 1912 Olympics.<sup>88</sup>

In the book, *Land of the Golden River, Vol. 1*, published in 1975, local Wrightsville author Lewis Phillip Hall (1907-1980), wrote of his personal experiences surfing Wrightsville Beach: "In the early twenties (1920's), before the jetties were constructed, a sand bar ran the entire length of the beach. We swam out to the combers (breakers) where (it was) making up [probably: "macking up"]. At times there would be ten or fifteen youths in a crowd. It was a beautiful sight, ten surfers riding the cresting wave a long time... I'll have to admit, however, that we did not ride our boards standing erect, but lying halfway the board."<sup>89</sup>

We know that Ford promoted water sports on the East Coast. Unfortunately, the earliest documented actions are dated December 1919, in Charleston, South Carolina, when, according to the *Charleston News and Courier*, Ford showed "motion pictures of Hawaiian surfboard riding to boys of the Crafts School and their friends" and later met "some of the older boys and their fathers to discuss the formation of an athletic and aquatic club, with headquarters on South Battery to revive the boating sports of old days in Charleston."<sup>90</sup>

Additionally, "On the evening of New Year's Day, 1920," noted his biographer Valerie Noble, "Ford was a guest of honor at an informal gathering of the remaining members of the 'Gibbes Street Gang,' which hadn't met for thirty-odd years. The 'Gang' had begun forty years earlier, and the sons of this generation enjoyed the boating facilities at Charleston's Gibbes Street. Then modern improvements came and the tidal flats were filled in, but the boys were never given another place where they could build boats and learn to swim without interference."<sup>91</sup>

It is a fact that both South Carolina and Georgia are surf deficient. However, in both Florida and North Carolina, the story is different. Both states get good surf on a regular basis. It is not too much of a stretch to think that Hume Ford may have had a hand in popularizing the use of Hawaiian bodyboards along the Carolina coast in the first decades of the 1900s. He quite possibly could. He quite possibly did.

Then there's Australia.

While assisting the 1908 trade agreements between Hawai'i and Australia and New Zealand, Ford introduced surfing to Australian Percy Hunter, the head of the New South Wales Immigration and Tourism Bureau. By 1910, when he visited Australia, Ford noted that there were already several surfboards stashed

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<sup>87</sup> <http://legendarysurfers.com/blog/2009/02/east-coast-surfing-prior-to-duke.html> and [http://legendarysurfers.com/blog/2009/02/wrightsville-nc-1909\\_13.html](http://legendarysurfers.com/blog/2009/02/wrightsville-nc-1909_13.html)

<sup>88</sup> <http://legendarysurfers.com/blog/2009/02/east-coast-surfing-prior-to-duke.html>

<sup>89</sup> <http://legendarysurfers.com/blog/2009/02/wrightsville-nc-1919.html> and Funderburg, Skipper, *Surfing on the Cape Fear Coast*, ©2008.

<sup>90</sup> *Charleston News and Courier*, December 27, 1919. Quoted in Noble, 1980, p. 88.

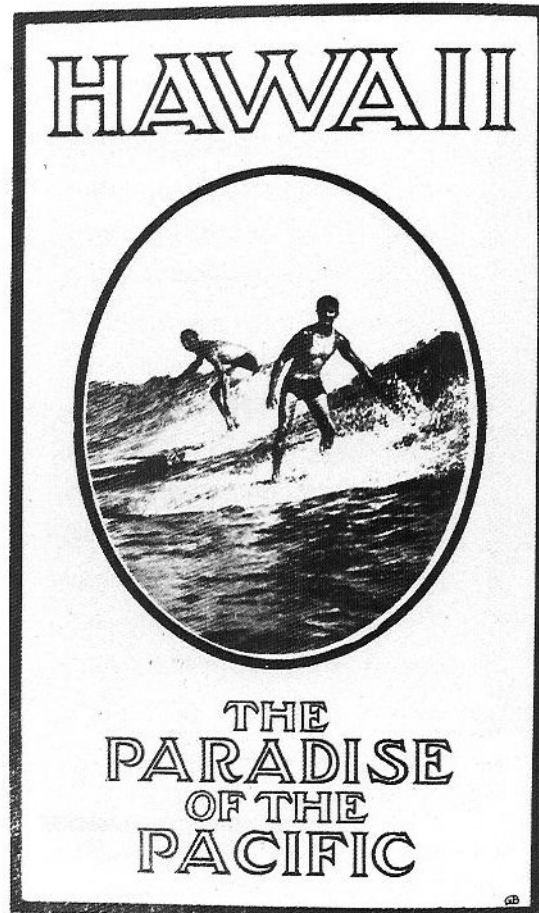
<sup>91</sup> Noble, 1980, p. 88.

at Manly Beach.<sup>92</sup> This was a full 4 and a half years before [Duke Kahanamoku](#) visited Australia for the first time and got credited for stoking Australians on board surfing.

Although more research on the issues of North Carolina and Australian surf beginnings needs to be done, it is probable that it was Alexander Hume Ford, and not Duke Kahanamoku, who had the earliest influence on surfing in both these places.

Ford's many newspaper articles prior to 1909 have become mere footnotes to history; his plays long forgotten. His Pacific Rim travels and politicking during the 1920s and 1930s have been nearly lost in time, a victim to the rise of World War II. While Ford probably thought his greatest achievement – and what he would be most remembered for – would be the Pan-Pacific Union and better relations between the peoples of the Pacific, this certainly was not to be. Today, he is remembered as the guy who turned Jack London on to surfing; the promoter of George Freeth, Duke Kahanamoku, and of Hawai'i, itself.

Most significantly, Alexander Hume Ford is best remembered by us surfers as a founder of the Outrigger Canoe Club; a man who – more than most anyone of his time – helped revive Hawaiian surfing, spreading it far and wide.



Paradise of the Pacific cover, 1911

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<sup>92</sup> Smith, 2003, Part II, p. 34. Ford introduced Hunter to surfing in 1908. Percy Hunter was the head of the New South Wales Immigration and Tourism Bureau. He said that by 1910, there were already several surfboards stashed at Manly Beach. See *Mid-Pacific Magazine*, January 1911, "Skiing in Australia," by Percy Hunter. See also Noble, 1980, pp. 57-58.