

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been . . .

John Keats

Long before Keats wrote this poem, indeed, even while he was writing, intrepid mariners from England, France, Holland, Japan, Portugal, Spain, and the nascent United States truly had or were exploring the western islands that spangle the broad Pacific.

Magellan, d'Abreu, Mendana, Villalobos, Tasman, da Roca, Anson, Carteret, Wallis, de Bougainville, Ogasawara, the beloved Captain James Cook, and the grandfather of the poet whose stanza heads this article, John Byron, all left their imprints on the islands they found, or shall we say, rediscovered. But how were these islands named?

The search for name origins, etymology, can be frustrating but frequently rewarding. Falcon Island gave us such a reward (see Tonga Island story THE COMPASS

January-February 1963). It was first sighted from HMS *Falcon* in 1865 as a reef awash (Lat. 20° 19' S. Long. 175° 25' W.). Two years later, HMS *Sappho* observed smoke issuing from it. By 1885 the reef took on the form of an island. Four years later it was surveyed by a team from HMS *Egeria*; its dimensions were reported—one and a half miles long, one mile wide, and rising to an elevation of 153 feet above sea level. By early 1894 the island had disappeared, but by December of the same year, phoenix-like, it rose again. It was then 50 feet above the sea, three



miles long, and a half mile wide. By 1905 it was a waste land, and by 1913 was reported *non est*.

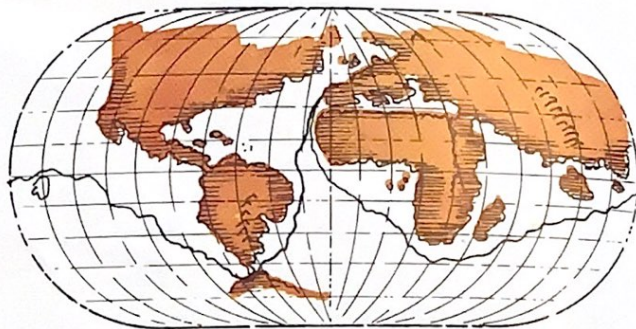
Although the Polynesians (many islanders) were Aryans who spread eastward from Asia, let us steam westward in our search for names, as did Ferdinand Magellan when he circumnavigated the globe. But we will take a more northerly course, destination—Hawaii. Captain James Cook, the great English explorer and scientist, rediscovered the islands of this group in 1778. We say rediscovered, for he was not the first European to visit the ocean paradise. The Spanish navigator Gaetano raised the Hawaiian Islands in 1555. But records of their existence, kept secret by Spain, had been forgotten—had been buried in national archives that no one ever looked at.

Captain Cook named the group the Sandwich Islands, in honor of John Montagu, 4th Earl of Sandwich, then serving his second term as First Lord of the Admiralty. Cook was killed in those same islands a year later. Therefore, he never knew that the man for whom he named them had the dubious honor of the following footnote to his career: "For corruption and incapacity, Sandwich's administration is unique in the British Navy."

Another interesting bit of Hawaiian lore concerns the *ukulele*, an island trade-mark. It was introduced to Hawaii by the Portuguese but named by the islanders when, from a distance, they saw the Portuguese tars strumming the instruments. The sailors, they thought, were scratching flea bites—hence, the word *ukulele*—jumping bug.

Standing out from Hawaii, we follow a track set by the English Captains Thomas Gilbert and William Marshall, who, in 1788, cruised among the island groups which bear their names. Both groups of islands were, however, discovered in 1529 by de Saavedra. Commodore John Byron rediscovered them in 1775, and Captain Wallis, the poet of the Pacific, sailed among the islands two years later. The Gilberts and Marshalls, plus the Carolines and the Fiji archipelago make up Micronesia (small islands).

The Carolines originally were named Sequeira Isles by their discoverer, Diego Rocha, of Portugal, who opened them to European trade in 1527. The word sequeira is close to the Spanish word for dry. A century and a half later, Admiral Francesco Lazeano renamed them the Carolines in honor of Charles II of Spain.

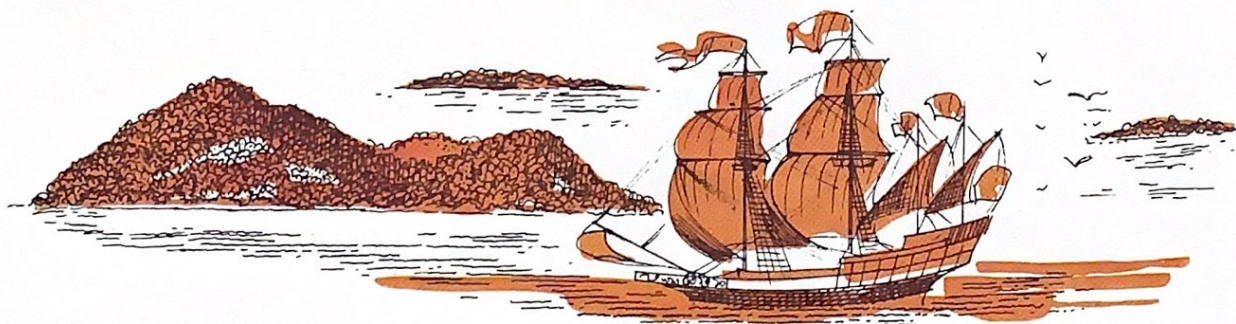


The Fiji Islands comprise an archipelago of some 250 islands. The name Fiji is a corruption of the native word Viji, originally the name of the principal island. The isles of the nor'east group were seen first by Abel Tasman, who also discovered, on a circumnavigation of Australia, the island that bears his name—Tasmania—and New Zealand (New Sea Land). The ubiquitous Captain Cook discovered the southernmost islands of the archipelago in 1773.

As we cruise about Oceania, we set our course east again and perhaps a quarter point south. And, thus, steam into one of the world's most beautiful and romantic island groups, and one of the most confusing namewise—the Society Islands—now commonly called Tahiti. Captain Wallis asked the name of the lovely island in 1767. "O Tahiti" (It is Tahiti), replied a handsome native; and for a hundred years after, the English called the island Otaheite. The Polynesian tongue, although musical and liquid, is limited in the number of usable letters. Therefore, it was left to the missionaries to write the language of the Islands; and it is almost impossible to find the true meaning of names like Hawaii and Tahiti.

Part of the archipelago that makes up Tahiti was discovered by Pedro Quiros in 1607. Captain Wallis named one of the islands King George's in 1767. The nor'west group was named *Illes Sous Le Vent* (Islands under the wind) or Leeward Islands by Sieur Louis de Bougainville. That was in 1768. Two years later, Captain Cook renamed the Leeward group, the Society Islands in honor of the Royal Society of which he was a member.

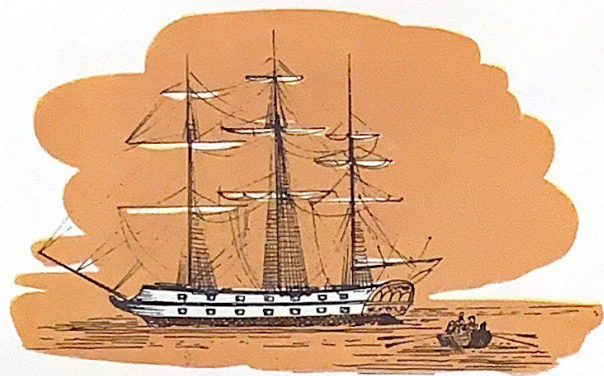
Louis de Bougainville, when he visited Tahiti, claimed



it for France, and named it La Nouvelle Cythere (New Isle of Aphrodite). He also christened the Manua group (Samoa), which had been discovered by the Dutch Admiral Jakob Roggeveen, *Illes des Navigateurs*, a name still used. Nor was de Bougainville's name forgotten, for the largest island of the Solomon group bears it, as does the beautifully flowering vine *bougainvillea*. Louisade, too, in the Melanesian (black islands) group was named by the *Sieur* for Louis XV, King of France. The latter islands, however, were seen first in 1606 by the Spanish explorer Torres.

To the north of Tahiti the *Marquezas*, sometimes called the *Mendana Islands* for their discoverer, sparkle on the bosom of Oceania. Alvaro Mendana, however, named them the *Marquezas* in 1595 to honor Don Garcia Hurtado de Mendoza, Marquis of Canete, Viceroy of Peru, and patron of the voyage.

Steaming west by south we raise the New Hebrides named by Captain Cook for the islands west of Scotland. In 1606 the devout Pedro Fernandez de Queiros of Portugal named these same islands, which he thought a continent, "Southern Land of the Holy Spirit." The name is preserved in the modern island of Espiritu Santo. So west of the New Hebrides lies the island of New Caledonia, also



named for Scotland—a poetic appellation—and discovered by the well-traveled Captain James Cook in 1774. The island's original name was *Balade*.

Now, after laying a course almost true nor'west, we find ourselves in and among the Solomon Islands of Melanesia. Twenty years ago the men of America (Canada and the United States) the British Commonwealth, France, Holland, and Japan knew them well. The islands were discovered in the late 16th century by the intrepid Marquis de Mendana, who named them the *Islands of King Solomon*. He charted them so inaccurately, however, that no navigator found them again for two centuries. It was the redoubtable Louis de Bougainville who rediscovered them.

West of the Solomons lies New Guinea, second largest island in the world. It was seen first by Antonio d'Abreu in 1511. Thirty-five years later, Ynigo Ortiz de Retez named the island *Novo Guinea* because the natives, he thought, so resembled those of Africa's west coast.

And now we near the archipelagos that form the gateway to the Far East. These islands stand as redoubts to Taiwan, Japan, and the Philippines, the bastions that guard Asia and the Malay Peninsula. The Marianas, consisting of Rota, Guam, Tinian, Saipan, and Aguijan, the latter uninhabited, were discovered in 1521, by the great Ferdinand Magellan. His crew named them *Islas de los Ladrones* (Islands of the Thieves) because of the larcenous proclivities of the natives. The islands were rechristened *Las Marianas* in 1668, the name they bear today, in honor of Maria Anna of Austria, widow of Philip IV of Spain.

Following the discovery of the Marianas, Magellan discovered the islands of the Philippines, but he named them for St. Lazarus. They were renamed in 1542 for Philip II of Spain. Magellan had been a Portuguese hero of renown before he sailed around the world under the flag of Spain. Portuguese explorers also discovered modern Taiwan, which they named *Formosa* (beautiful).

Later, in the same century, the great Japanese explorer Ogasawara discovered the Bonin Islands. Bonin is a corruption of the Japanese words *Munin To*, meaning empty of men. Today, however, the 27 larger islands of this group are known as *Ogasawara Jima* in honor of their discoverer. Some of the smaller islands of the group disappear and reappear from time to time.

Steaming northward, we encounter another name that baffles—Palau. The islands were discovered in 1543 by Ruy Lopez de Villalobos. He named them *Los Arrecifes* (the reefs). The origin of their present name is unknown, however.

We cannot leave Oceania without saluting the island of Bali. That isle is synonymous with beauty, both of the land and its people. The name is derived from the Sanskrit word for strength—*Balin*. And now, as we steam ever westward, we may say with young John Keats:

"... Round many western islands have I been ..."

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