Pauline King, ed., *The Diaries of David Lawrence Gregg: An American Diplomat in Hawaii, 1853-1858.* Honolulu: Hawaiian Historical Society, 1982. Pp. 605, illustrations. $25.00.

David L. Gregg was not one of the great men of American history or Pacific affairs. Small triumphs continually eluded him throughout his life, triumphs that might have more firmly established him in the historical record. He was, for instance, an ambitious, seemingly gifted politician in Illinois in the 1840s, but perforce remained in the shadow of such contemporary giants as Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas. Although he was touted for governor of Illinois in 1852, his campaign succumbed to an upsurge of anti-Catholic prejudice and to his own unwillingness to take a stand on the divisive issue of slavery. Though defeated, Gregg was not forgotten, and following the election of fellow Democrat Franklin Pierce to the Presidency that same year, he was offered a minor political plum--United States Commissioner to the Hawaiian Islands. But Gregg's service to the Islands was not particularly noteworthy. He was, for instance, intimately involved with the annexation negotiations in the mid-1850s, but his work has largely remained a footnote in the history of U.S.-Hawaiian relations since the Islands did not become a part of the American Republic for another four decades. And after leaving his post as consul in 1857, he became finance minister in the Hawaiian cabinet but was swiftly forced out of office, in part because of his less than sober approach to the consumption of alcohol. When he left the Islands in the mid-1860s it was fitting that he should finish his career as a public servant in a marginal town on the American frontier: Carson City, Nevada. Clearly, Gregg was no political luminary.

Yet if David Gregg's career was generally undistinguished, the diaries in which he recorded his activities in Hawaii between 1853 and 1858 illuminate many vital issues and aspects of Hawaiian history. Indeed, as scholars begin to probe this collection of ten diaries that Pauline King has so skillfully edited, they will gain a deeper insight into the complicated and often convoluted affairs that characterized Hawaii at midcentury. Of

greatest value, as King points out, is Gregg's reconstruction of his protracted, tiresome, and secretive meetings in 1853-1854 with the Hawaiian Minister of Foreign Relations, Robert C. Wyllie, concerning the annexation of the Islands to the United States. Gregg's account is certainly the most extensive record of the negotiations available, at least from the American perspective. In addition, the text (and more often the notes) reproduces the various protocols signed by Wyllie and Gregg, documents that further enhance our understanding of the processes, prejudices, and political maneuverings that transpired throughout the negotiations. These documents, as well as Gregg's assessment of them and of the countless conversations he had with Wyllie, members of the Hawaiian royal family, and others, suggest that historians need to reexamine the reasons for the collapse of the negotiations in late 1854, early 1855.

Merze Tate, in a seminal essay, "Slavery and Racism as Deterrents to the Annexation of Hawaii, 1854-1855" (*Journal of Negro History,* 1962), argued that the negotiations fell apart due to Hawaiian concerns about American racial prejudices and to American policy debates over the general question of the expansion or prohibition of slavery, issues that were of the utmost importance in the bloody events that were rocking Kansas at the time of the annexation discussions. These domestic issues, according to Tate, ended the United States' desire for overseas expansion. Tate's heavy emphasis on the impact of racial fears obscures an equally compelling factor, one that Gregg recognized as critical to the demise of the annexation talks: the future Kamehameha IV's understandable ambition, once he gained power, to retain control of his kingdom, "to wear a crown" (p. 201). For him, the talks with the United States were only a safeguard "to be used in case of an emergency to his advantage and for his protection" (p. 194).

Tate's assessment of Gregg's character and the role it played in his handling of the negotiations must also be reexamined. Gregg had a personal stake in annexation, Tate concludes, for he was offered a substantial bribe by the scheming American merchant, G. W. Ryckman, that hinged on the successful conclusion of an annexation treaty. This presumably helps account for Gregg's imperial (and imperious) behavior, but the evidence that Tate cites from Gregg's diaries does not substantiate the charge. Quite the contrary: by the time Ryckman approached Gregg, the latter was convinced that annexation would not occur arid so informed Ryckman. Moreover, Gregg clearly despised Ryckman and was appalled by the attempted bribe. In this incident, Gregg acted in a scrupulous manner (pp. 203, 206, 208-10).

The majority of Gregg's time in Hawaii was spent not in secret negotiations but in more mundane affairs. It is in an examination of this routine that the texture of his life as U.S. Commissioner is richly revealed. He spent an inordinate amount of time, it seems, making obligatory social calls on various members of the royal family, calls that in turn prompted some astute observations on their characters and capabilities. More than most of the foreign residents in Honolulu, Gregg appreciated the skills and talents of the Hawaiian nobility, though he could not always transcend a cultural sense of racial superiority. Equally revealing (and time consuming) was the ritualistic fencing with other foreign consuls, the daily exchange of patriotic bombast, exchanges that disclose the clash of national ambitions and jealousies that frequently rippled the surface of Honolulu society. Gregg played the game well, deftly handling political intrigue and recording sharply etched portraits of the other players in his diary. Of Monsieur Perrin, head of the French delegation, he observed: "He cannot be trusted. He would sacrifice his own father to sustain himself" (p. 287). Gregg was no more sympathetic to the Reverend Richard Armstrong, "a bigoted sectarian, who sees no merit in any thing that does not square with his own theological notions" (p. 223). Gossip too was a staple in Gregg's life and in the lives of the other foreign residents. Perhaps the most comic of the many revelations that dot his journal were those that concerned the lecherous Monsieur Landais, who enjoyed a reputation for adultery and for despoiling virgins; his antics were explicitly reported in the diaries. Nor did Gregg miss an opportunity to recount the many rumors that swirled around town about the royal family's behavior, or the seamy events that surrounded the suicide of Fred James Porter and the attempted assassination of Madame Rouquette by a crazed American sailor (the Madame herself was none too stable, Gregg observed). By revelling in such salacious and sensational stories, Gregg showed that he too was not immune to the voyeurism born of Honolulu's intense insularity, a trait he had once decried: "Scandal may have its fill in this town. There is no place like it in the wide world: No place is so bad in the countenance it gives to slander" (p. 286). In time, Gregg would know the full meaning of this as he too fell victim to the rumormill, losing first his post as commissioner and then his portfolio as finance minister.

In guiding the publication of these diaries, and in ably reconstructing missing portions from Gregg's personal correspondence and from U.S. State Department memoranda, Pauline King has provided an invaluable service to those fascinated by the Hawaiian past. Both specialist and lay reader will learn much from Gregg's diaries and from King's introductory remarks and biographical sketch of David Gregg that highlight important

issues and place his life and activities in their appropriate historical context. Nearly one hundred pages of notes supplement the text, some of which provide substantive commentary though most are of only antiquarian interest. Nonetheless, this is a richly detailed, provocative, and significant contribution to the historiography of Hawaii and of U. S. diplomacy.

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