



Duke Paoa Kāhinu Mokoe Hulikoholā Kahanamoku

The “Duke” was truly Hawai‘i’s ambassador to the world in the early days of Hawai‘i tourism. He became famous as an athlete, participating in the World Olympics of 1912, 1920, and 1924. He broke nearly every swimming record in the books, developing his own signature strokes, including the “Hawaiian crawl,” which changed the shape of competitive swimming. Duke helped revitalize the sport of surfing in Hawai‘i and exported a love for that sport internationally. As a surfer, he was one of the Waikīkī beachboys, a tourism attraction in their own right, “talking story” with visitors from around the world. As a world traveler, Duke was the personification of Hawai‘i and the aloha spirit before the destination was on the tourism map.

Duke’s fame opened opportunities for him outside of Hawai‘i, and he tried an acting career which brought him celebrity friends (including John Wayne, whose nickname “Duke” traces to their friendship). But, acting involved being away from Hawai‘i, and Duke returned to the islands acting as “the ambassador of aloha,” which became an official title when Hawai‘i became a state in 1959.

Today, Duke’s contributions to Hawai‘i are recognized with a statue in Waikīkī and, as a living testament, the Duke Kahanamoku festival, an annual Waikīkī event celebrating surfing and watersports.

Duke’s name and accomplishments continue to be recognized around the world, providing an enduring legacy that highlights the aloha spirit.