

ASCENT OF MAUNA LOA by Isidor Löwenstern

6th February 1839

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(Proofreader's marks and editors changes ignored)

This is the part of Mr. Löwenstern's report that was referred to in the tenth volume (1841) of the Journal of the Royal Geographical Society under "Papers received and Read, but not yet Published" item XXIV (page xvi):

"Mr. J. Löwenstern on a Pyramid at Remedios, with a route from Mexico to Mazatlan, and ascent of Mawna Roa".

The description of the ascent of Mauna Loa was omitted from the version of Mr. Löwenstern's report published in the eleventh volume (1841) as article VI (pages 100-107):

"Journey from the City of Mexico to Mazatlan, with a Description of some Remarkable Ruins," by M. J. Löwenstern.

I left Porthsmouth August 10<sup>th</sup> 1837 for New = Yorke; - visited the principal towns of the United States and of both Canadas, the falls of Niagara, Trenton, Catskills and Montmorency. - Descended on the Ohio and Mississippi to New = Orleans, passed over to Havannah where I embargued for Vera Cruz. - From here by Halapa, Perote, Puebla, where I visited the Pyramid of Cholula, to Mexico. - Excursions from here to the Cave of Cacahuimilpa on the road of Guernavaca and to the Pyramid of Hochicalco. - Than the Mines of Real del Monte, the Hacienda and Cascade de Regla, and the Obsidian mines of the ancient Mexicans. - Here I found the Peñas cargadas. - I visited the Pyramids of San Jaun de Teotihuacan, the plain near Otumba, and the Antiquities near Tercuca. - In the immediate neighbourhood of Mexico the ruins of the Temples of Toruba (Tumuli) and found near Remedios the above described Pyramid. - Leaving Mexico the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June I proceeded by the Road I had the honour to give you the Itenerary to Mazatlan, visiting El Queretaro Celeya, the Mines of Guanajuato, the Pyramid of Tepatitlan, Guadalaxara Tepu. - After 11 months stay in Mexico I left for the Sandwich Islands staid in Woahoo and visited the Islands of Mowee (Maui) and Owhihee (Hawaii) particularly the Volcano of Kirau-Ea and ascended the Mauna Roa, I had the melancholy satisfaction to be in Karakakua Bay Kaawaloa on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Feb<sup>y</sup> 1839, the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Cook's death. After two months stay in the Islands I left for China, then disturbed by the Opium question, staid principally in Macao and visited Canton embarked Macao on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June, obliged to take the Eastern Passage on account of the contrary Monsoon, passed through the Moluccas, landed at Celebes and leaving the Indian Archipelago through the straits of Sapy I rounded Cape Hope, visited St Helena. I landed at Dover Nov 15<sup>th</sup> 1839 after 165 days passage from Macao.

R.G.S. rec<sup>d</sup> 27 Feb/40

Dear Sir.

I send you here some few remarks on my ascent of the Mountain of Mauna Roa or Mauna Loa on the island of Owhyhee (or Hawaii) Sandwich Islands. - The Terminal Crater on the Top of this Volcano cannot be compared in the least with that of Kilau=Ea on the same Island, which latter is probably the largest and most magnificent existing Volcano. - The circumference of the present nearly circular Crater on the Top of Mauna=Roa, is to my opinion no more than 2 miles, having from 1/2 to 3/4 of a mile in Diameter. -

The distance from the Summit to the blacke ledge seems to me not 1270 feet, but no more than half that sum. -

Having no instruments for measuring the hight of the Mountain, I can only state that the hight of it given by Mr Douglas at 13230 or 13175 feet, # seems very probable, having found comparatively but little snow for the begin of February and only 3 to 4 hours walk from the begin of the snow to the Top of the mountain. -

I reached the Crater from the E. side, and found the Lava on the W and N.W. Side of a yellow and red colour. - The bottom of the Crater on the E side and from S:E: to S: was covered with snow. - I saw no action in the Crater, but heard the same hissing sound Mr. Douglas mentions, but could not distinguish, if it was produced by fire, or occasioned by the noise of the wind, passing through the fissures of the Lava. - There were on the bottom of the Crater some conical elevations of darke brown and light brown colour. - The colour of the Lava in general is darke brown. -

I was the next after Mr Douglas to ascend this mountain, and the third after Mr Goodrich, who ascended it the first, and discovered the Crater on the Top\*. - The ascent is very difficult, the mountain being entirely composed of Lava of whose general formation I observed three kinds. -

Comparing the Lava on the Top of Mauna Roa, with that of Kirau=Ea, it has rather the appearance, at least on the E: side where I stood, of no recent eruption. -

An additional difficulty is the want of guides, the natives having an invincible dread for the cold, so that I was like Mr. Douglas deserted by all except one, Poano, Rev: Mr. Koans servant in Hilo. -

The highest of the Thermometer near the Coast in Hilo at noon was 86°, the lowest at the begin of the snow on the Mauna Roa during the night was 28°. -

The distances as nearly as I can compute them are from Hilo, Byrons Bay to the Top of Mauna Roa<sup>T</sup>:

	Miles
From Hilo to Ora	
1st day Feb <sup>y</sup> 1 <sup>st</sup> 1839 . . .	, 26
F <sup>y</sup> 2 <sup>d</sup> , fr Ora to the Volcano of Kirau-Ea: . .	, 28 a 30.
F <sup>y</sup> 3 - Staid at the Volcano. -	
4 <sup>th</sup> fr Kirau-Ea to my first sleeping station where Therm: fell in the morn <sup>g</sup> to 30° and to which with halts I employed 9-1/4 hour (halts 2-1/4 hour)	, 26
5 <sup>th</sup> from here to the End of Vegetation employed 10 hours of which halted 3-1/4 hours . . . . .	, 20 to 24
6 <sup>th</sup> fr the End of Vegetation to the begin of Snow employed 4-1/4 with reposing 2 hours	7 to 9
fr the begin of Snow to the Top which I reached at a quarter past 4 p:M: employed 4 hours of which reposed 1-1/4 hours	9 to 10

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#The numbers are from "Volcanoes in the Sandwich Islands", Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London, Volume 4, 1834, pp. 333-344.

\*Joseph Goodrich planned to ascend Mauna Loa but did not make the attempt as far as is known. He did climb Mauna Kea several times, however, claiming the first recorded ascent. Archibald Menzies was the first to climb Mauna Loa. David Douglas, and apparently Löwenstern, failed to reach the true summit of Mauna Loa, by the way.

†Löwenstern seems to assume a steady pace of 3-1/2 miles per hour, independent of the type of terrain or the altitude. Consequently, he overestimates distances, particularly those higher up on the mountain. David Douglas made the same mistake in his journal.

Berthold K. P. Horn

Joseph Goodrich hoped to attempt Mauna Loa during a tour of the island planned for January 1833. He noted in a letter to the editor of the American Journal of Science, dated Nov. 17, 1832 that, as far as he could learn, "the mountain had not been ascended by any person." This is curious since John Young gave an account of Archibald Menzies' "journey to Mauna Roah" to James Macrae on the evening of June 13th, 1825 when the latter was staying at the house of Reverent Goodrich. Macrae was guided up Mauna Kea June 17th by Goodrich, who had visited this mountain several times since Aug. 26th, 1823 when he made the first recorded ascent. Goodrich, however, did not ascend Mauna Loa. If he had ascended Mauna Loa he would have reported his observations to the American Journal of Science, as promised. David Douglas, who is generally credited with the second recorded ascent on Jan. 29th, 1834, stayed with Goodrich for three months. Goodrich was preoccupied with problems in relation to his missionary work until he departed Hilo in Nov. 1835.

If Goodrich had ascended Mauna Loa, he would not have been the first. That honor belongs to Archibald Menzies who reached the summit Feb. 16, 1794. Many have overlooked this pioneering ascent since Menzies' journal was not published for many years as a result of his refusal to turn it over to Captain Vancouver at the end of their voyage of discovery, wishing to consult first with his sponsors at the Royal Botanical Gardens. Even the account of Menzies' ascent of Hualalei appeared in print only in 1829 in the Magazine of Natural History -- thirty-five years after the fact. David Douglas and Isidor Löwenstern did not reach the true summit, by the way, visiting only the eastern flank of the caldera.

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