

**INTRODUCTION**

This is the third in a series of articles regarding 19th and early 20th century photographers whose images appear on old postcards. Previously published articles regarding the country of **Japan** (TPA 12, 1998) and **Darjeeling, India** (TPA 14, 1999) include general information about the early history of photography and 19th century photographic processes.

This article will look specifically at the lives and images of three men who photographed some of the people and places of the Pacific Ocean. They are **James J. Williams**, **Ray Jerome Baker** and **Captain Frank Hurley**.

**A BRIEF BACKGROUND ON PHOTOGRAPHY**

It is generally agreed that photography traces its popular and utilitarian beginnings to 1839. This is when **Louis Jacques Mande Daguerre** and **William Henry Fox Talbot** announced the invention of two photographic processes, the daguerreotype and the photogenic drawing. In 1851, **Frederick Scott Archer's** wet collodion-on-glass process further enhanced the medium.

Worldwide, countries adopted the new art and science of photography at different times and in a variety of ways. While Europeans and Americans were quick to embrace the new technology in their respective homelands, their colonial, commercial and journalistic representatives who lived, travelled and photographed abroad frequently generated fear and suspicion with the new technology. Asians in particular viewed camera as soul-stealers and "murder boxes".

However, by the mid-1850s and 60s, the camera had "caught on" and its uses and purposes were expanding. The burdensome box, with its glass plates and chemicals, was no longer confined to the studio. There were wars, archaeological sites, landscapes and street scenes to record for posterity. In addition, the Western world was becoming interested in ethnology, anthropology and "armchair" exploration.

Beginning in the 1870s, photography played an increasingly important role in tourism, both in the form of souvenir album prints and magic lantern slides. For those unable to travel abroad, lecturers **John L. Stoddard** and **Burton Holmes** were treating American audiences to travelogues of far-away places. In addition, armchair travellers in America and Europe were collecting stereographic views of the world. In the early 1900s, the photographic postcard, both printed and "real photo", found its universal niche.

**ill 1, 2:**

These two real photo cards by **J.J. Williams** appear to carry a copyright date of 1916 above the signature. The photo of the woman with the ukulele is signed in pen, "**J.J. Williams**".



**PHOTOGRAPHIC MASTERPIECES ON PICTURE POSTCARDS**

**& Headhunters & Hula Girls**

**BY: SALLY A. FALL**



**HEADHUNTERS AND HULA GIRLS**

I've chosen the title, "Headhunters and Hula Girls", as one that might have appeared on a travel book, brochure or motion picture film up until the mid-20th century. It's sexy, it's savage, it's exotic! Such a title would have enticed the polite public to purchase a book or pay a fee to view a film about the South Seas. For the adventurer who had both the will and the means to travel, "Headhunters and Hula Girls" would have provided an irresistible reason to explore the beaches and jungles of our tropical Pacific isles.

The three men who are featured in this article were all born in the latter half of the 19th century. The earliest of the three, **James J. Williams** (1853-1926), was concerned principally with the commercial use and value of photography as it pertained to portraiture and tourism in the Hawaiian Islands. **Ray Jerome Baker** (1880-1972) recognized the quickly spreading westernization of the Islands and, as a result, devoted himself to documenting the native Hawaiian people and their vanishing lifestyles. **James Francis "Frank" Hurley** (1885-1962), best known for his numerous Antarctic explorations, documented on glass plate and on film the little-known tribal life of Papua New Guinea.

**PHOTOGRAPHY IN HAWAII**

Photography (pa'i ki'i) first appeared in Hawaii in 1845 with the introduction of daguerreotype equipment. Initially, photographers clustered in and around Honolulu, Hawaii's main commercial center. A few of the more adventuresome ones made pre-announced photographic forays to the outlying islands. There they took portraits of Hawaiian natives as well as pictures of European and Asian laborers who were working on the sugar cane plantations. These distant laborers, often away for years at a time, wanted to send portraits home to family members.

Nineteenth century photographers of Hawaii included daguerrian artist **Hugo Stangewald**, studio portrait photographer **Joseph W. King**, **Henry L. Chase** of cartes-de-visite fame, and **Charles Leander Weed**, well-known for his early scenic views of the Islands. The first native Hawaiian photographer was **John Meek, Jr.** By 1890, there were approximately 60 photographers at work in the Hawaiian Islands, and we are told that by 1900 at least 40 photographers were of Japanese or Chinese ancestry. **K. Amaya** of Yokohama operated studios on Oahu and Kauai, and was active as a photographer in the Islands from 1894 through 1897.



## RAY JEROME BAKER

Ray Jerome Baker and his wife, Edith, first visited Hawaii in 1908 while on vacation from Eureka, California. Enchanted by the Polynesian paradise, they moved to Honolulu in 1910. It was fellow Socialist Party member, the famed writer *Jack London*, who had first interested the Baker's in the Islands after his visit in 1907.

Baker met photographer *James J. Williams* in 1908, and they were to remain close friends until Williams' death in 1926. Baker often worked for or with Williams, and always with an aesthetic eye focused on the native Hawaiian life through his work with Williams and other tourism promoters. With time, Baker came to realize that the Islands were changing forever, and that photographic documentation of "old Hawaii" was becoming increasingly important for its historic value. Today, Baker is recognized both for his work as a photo historian and as a historic photographer (ill 4).

In 1910, Baker took film/motion picture lessons from *Thomas Edison*. His hand-colored motion pictures of the 1918 eruption of Kilauea Volcano are legendary, as are his unique motion pictures of the funerals of Queen Liliuokalani in 1917 and Prince Kuhio in 1922. He also produced lantern slides by re-photographing black and white stills, which Edith dutifully hand-colored for his lecture and slide shows. He lectured in Hawaii, as well as aboard the Oceanic Steamship Company liners which crossed the Pacific between the mainland and the Islands.

## JAMES J. WILLIAMS

In addition to the commercial success of the sugar industry in the 19th century, there was a growing interest in promoting Hawaii as a tourist destination. *James J. Williams*, who had purchased the photography business of *Menzie Dickson* in the early 1880's, was both a studio portraitist and a tourism promoter. (ill 1, 2 - previous page)

Williams published a guidebook for visitors in 1882, and, in 1888, he initiated "Paradise of the Pacific", a monthly magazine targeted specifically at the tourist trade. More tourists meant more business for the enterprising Williams, and his Honolulu studio/gallery featured a wide array of portrait backdrops. These included "tropical settings, Diamond Head, coconut trees, and the ocean, sitting on rocks, with hay scattered around for a more 'natural' effect." (*Davis, Na Pa'i Ki'i, 1980*) Fancy parlor-like settings were also available. Williams was actively interested in landscape photography, too.

J.J. Williams' life-long interest in photography lasted until his death in 1926 when, at the age of 72, he was struck by the running board of a streetcar near his Fort Street studio. His son, *James A. Williams*, continued to operate the business in one form or another well into the latter part of the 20th century.



ill 3:

This studio photograph of a lightly clad Hawaiian hula dancer was taken in 1927 by *Ray Jerome Baker*. This real photo postcard is not dated.



ill 4:

"Japanese Woman". Baker visited Japan, but he also took many photographs of the various ethnic peoples who lived and worked in Hawaii.

During the 1920s and 30s, Baker continued to photographically record important events in Hawaii, as well as travel the Pacific isles and rim countries. In 1938, Edith suffered a stroke, and she returned permanently to California in 1940 to be cared for by a relative. Baker remained in Hawaii, and during World War II, he made portraits of military servicemen stationed in the Islands.

Following the war, Baker travelled ever more widely, to America and Europe, and completed his last great series of Hawaiian photographs in 1960. He died in 1972 at the age of 91, having outlived his wife and son. Ray Jerome Baker bequeathed his beloved visions of "old Hawaii" to the Bernice P. Bishop Museum in Honolulu.



## JAMES FRANCIS "FRANK" HURLEY

Born in 1885, Frank Hurley was a native Australian and life-long photographer. He is best remembered for his Antarctic expeditions with Dr. Douglas Mawson in 1911 and with Sir Ernest Shackleton's ill-fated "Endurance" expedition, 1914-1916. What many people don't realize is that as a young adult, Hurley joined forces with photographer Henry Cave who had a successful postcard business in Australia. Prior to his polar years, Hurley made his living taking pictures for postcards!

Hurley had always possessed a wandering streak, having left home at age 13 to make his own way in the world. He remained in touch and good stead with his family, and it was his father who helped to set him up in business with Cave in 1905.

Beginning with Mawson's Expedition in 1911, Hurley's feet were rarely on Australian soil for very long. He did meet and, after a ten-day courtship, marry a young French opera singer in Egypt in 1918, but he spent most of his life estranged from his wife and children. Whilst in Papua New Guinea in 1921, his third daughter was born in Sydney, but his first glimpse of her was at age five months.

His two major expeditions to Papua New Guinea took place in 1920/21 (ill 5, 6) and 1922/23 (ill 7, 8). His first visit to the Australian territory of Papua had taken place in 1913, between two Antarctic journeys. In 1916, as Hurley and a portion of the Endurance crew awaited rescue from Elephant's Island in the Antarctic, it was of home and sunnier climes that they dreamed: "Our thoughts centered upon the vast mystery island, New Guinea, a land shrouded by impenetrable jungles, ribbed with mountains and inhabited by savages, which holds the most extensive virgin tracts untrodden by white men outside of the Polar regions.... A coterie of kindred spirits, of which I was one, vowed that should we ever escape from our frigid imprisonment, we would forthwith embark upon a thawing out enterprise into the wilds of New Guinea." (*Hurley, Pearls and Savages, 1924*) Four years later in 1920, following the end of the war and the beginning of marriage, Hurley finally set off for his "mystery island, New Guinea."

Throughout his life's career, Hurley was both a still and motion picture photographer. His Endurance photographs and film have been especially popular in books and at movie houses with the recent revival in polar (con't)

(J.F. Hurley cont'd)

exploration. He published books and presented lectures in an effort to support his family and photographic obsession. Film and book titles included "Pearls and Savages", "The Lost Tribe", "Siege of the South", "Symphony in Steel" and "A Nation is Built".

During both wars, Captain Frank Hurley served as an official war correspondent with a special emphasis on photography and film. His composite printing of several photographic negatives in order to create a "better picture" was somewhat controversial during World War I. This practice was a hang-over from his picture postcard days. Hurley's photographs of Ypres, Passchendaele, Hill 60 and Hellfire Corner are timeless. His World War II films and photos of the desert war with Rommel and the seige of Tobruk are classic as well.

Hurley returned home after World War II to find his children married and that his financially-strapped wife had moved into a small, drab, semi-detached cottage. He rebuilt his life, but the marriage remained a shell. He spent his last years creating a pictorial record of Australia. Captain Frank Hurley died in 1962, surrounded by the family which he had ignored for so many years.

**Research Materials**

**Hawaii, Williams and Baker:**

*Hawaiian Yesterdays: Historical Photographs* by Ray Jerome Baker, Robert E. Van Dyke and Ronn Ronck, Mutual Publishing Company, Honolulu, 1982  
*Na Pa'i Ki'i: The Photographers in the Hawaiian Islands, 1845-1900*, Lynn Davis, Bishop Museum Press, 1980.  
*Photographers of Old Hawaii*, Joan Abramson, Island Heritage Limited, 1976.

**Frank Hurley:**

*Frank Hurley in Papua: Photographs of the 1920-1923 Expeditions*, Jim Specht and John Fields, Robert Brown & Associates, 1984.  
*In Search of Frank Hurley*, Lennard Bickel, Macmillan Company of Australia, 1980.  
*Pearls and Savages*, Captain Frank Hurley, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1924.

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**III 7, 8:**

Hurley returned to Papua in 1922/23 to explore the Western Division, some of which had never been photographed before. These two cards "Man of Goaribari" and "A lesson in the art of arrow-making" were probably taken in January 1923.

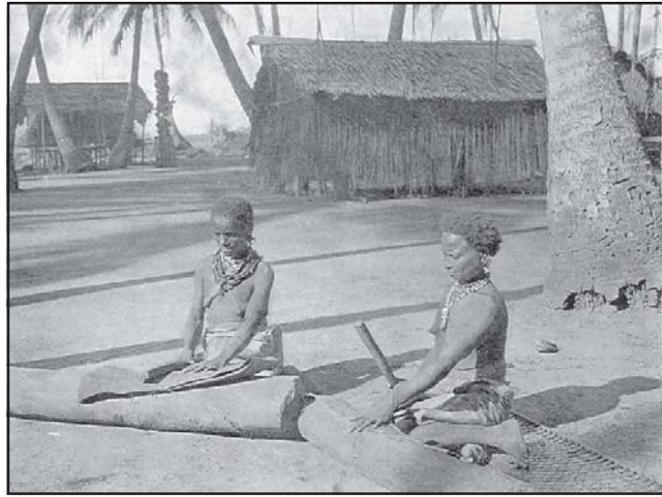


Photo.—Capt. Frank Hurley  
 Manufacturing bark cloth. Wanigela, Collingwood Bay, North-Eastern Division, Papua.  
 THE AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM, SYDNEY.

**III 5, 6:**

We know that in 1927 the Australian Museum in Sydney prepared a set of 12 postcards from Hurley's expeditionary photographs. These two pictures, "Pygmy-Negrito bowman" and "Manufacturing bark cloth" were taken during the 1920/21 expedition.

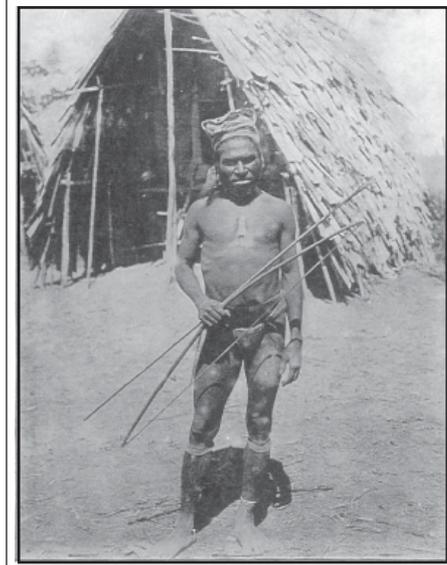


Photo.—Capt. Frank Hurley  
 Pygmy-Negrito bowman; palm-leaf hut in background. Ononghe, inland from Yule Island, Central Division, Papua.  
 THE AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM, SYDNEY.



Photo.—Capt. Frank Hurley  
 A lesson in the art of arrow-making. Bai Bai, or Babai village, near entrance to Port Bevan, Western Division, Papua.  
 THE AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM, SYDNEY.



Photo.—Capt. Frank Hurley  
 Man of Goaribari, a true Papuan. Goaribari Island, Western Division, Papua.  
 THE AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM, SYDNEY.