

A Place Called *Pu'u Kahea*

“There’s a place that’s near heaven, majestic and rare. A place of such splendor that none can compare, where my cup with sweet rapture to o’er flowing fills. It’s a place of enchantment called Echoing Hills.” Those words and more were put to music by some folks after they attended a Christian retreat more than sixty years ago at a bit of paradise called Pu’u Kahea. This fourteen acre property used as a conference and retreat center by the Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention since 1949, is located on the leeward coast of Oahu in the community of Waianae, about 30 miles west of Honolulu. It has a fascinating history begging to be told.

The origins of the place are inexplicably tied to the history of Hawaii and the sugar cane industry. The derivation of the name *Pu'u Kahea* is unclear. According to one writer, the Hawaiian term is translated “hill to call upon God,” another “echoing hills.” Legends point to the possibility that it came from the name of an ancient sacred place (*heiau*) where a pagan prophet of the time, Kaupoulupulu, resisted the devices of a ruthless and malevolent ruler named Kahahana. Archeological surveys point to the presence of two sacred sites, one dedicated to rain another to a shark god, which once occupied part of the conference grounds. When the prophet resisted the efforts of Kahahana, ruler of Oahu between 1773 and 1781, to restore these sites, Kaupoulupulu and his son, Kahulupue, were detained by messengers of Kahahana. After watching his son being beaten, the father “called” to his son to take his own life, making a prophecy that those who were coming over the sea would conquer the island soon. That site where the father called to his son was called *pu'uhea*. The site was called “*Pu'u Ka Hea*” when it was advertised for sale in 1948. That is the earliest known source of the use of that term. Frederick Meyer, the most prominent of the residents, 1899-1919, never used that term. In all likelihood, someone applied the term to the property prior to the sale of the property and after 1919, perhaps a later manager.

The Waianae Sugar Plantation, chartered in 1878, was the first major sugar operation on Oahu. A German entrepreneur, Hermann A. Widemann leased a large tract of more than 6,000 acres from Royal lands for 25 years and with a considerable bankroll, hired a manager, Julius Lynn Richardson, a Vermont native. Sixty acres were cleared for the installation of a sugar mill which was built in Scotland and transported to Hawaii aboard whaling ships. It was moved ashore in parts by way of small railroad cars on a tramway especially built for the project.

Once ashore it was assembled by an engineer from Honolulu. The mill stood directly in front of the present Waianae Protestant Congregational Church on Mill Street in Waianae. The current church building was constructed in 1913 to replace an older structure built in 1847. In January, 1880, the boilers of the mill were fired up and dignitaries from Honolulu made the day-long journey from Honolulu to admire the operation. Bricklayer Thomas Walker had built a square smokestack that soared skyward 110 feet. By 1884, Waianae was Oahu's second largest community sporting several stores, two churches, two schools, and a club house. Beginning in 1885, weekly mail service was established, an overland route leaving Honolulu at 10 AM every Monday and a steamer delivery on Friday afternoon. Eighty acres of sugar cane was the meager beginning of an enterprise that would last 68 years and forever change the Waianae coast.

Plantation Manager Julius Richardson immediately alienated native Hawaiians by destroying the sacred *Heiau* to build a stone wall around his newly constructed plantation house. Many of these stones more than likely remain on the property. Some of the *kahunas* (holy men) placed a curse on Richardson for his insensitive action. The mill operation, however, quickly became a thriving success. Track was laid and a locomotive was purchased in 1880 to bring the sugar cane to the mill from more than 400 acres then in production. The locomotive was purchased from the Fowler Company of Leeds, England. In order to get it ashore it, too, had to be dismantled and re-assembled. Then it was discovered that it did not fit the 30" narrow gauge track. The undercarriage had to be disassembled, machined to size, and re-assembled. By 1884, two additional boilers had been installed and a second smokestack constructed. Waianae Sugar Plantation purchased a second locomotive, added more track, employed 175 men, and produced 1200 tons of sugar. In 1885, Julius Richardson was mortally injured in a horseback riding mishap. Several *kahunas* and native Hawaiians were reminded of his desecration of the sacred sites.

Following Richardson's demise, a young German chemist, August Ahrens, became the plantation manager. He planted a coffee grove on some of the plantation holdings and continued to expand sugar production. By 1890, 600 acres were producing sugar cane with a yield of 2,500 tons. The workforce was at 350, a third locomotive was in service transporting the cane over 12 miles of track. In 1897, a Scotsman, David Center, became plantation manager, but only for two years. Ill health forced his retirement and Frederick Meyer, the builder of the

existing plantation house, the main feature of today's *Pu'u Kahea*, (PKCC), became the manager. He becomes the central character in the creation of a fiefdom that developed under his management of the Waianae Sugar Plantation between 1899 and 1919.

Frederick Meyer was a native of Charleston, SC, born to German immigrants on March 3, 1861. At the age of 13, Frederick was sent by his father, Henry, to a boarding school in California. However, when the ship he was aboard made a stop-over in Kealahou Bay of the Big Island of Hawaii, Frederick jumped ship. He found employment at the Waiakea Plantation in Hilo and started to learn the sugar business. Working on several sugar operations on Maui, Meyer gained valuable experience and met and married a 14 year old full-blooded Hawaiian woman, Mary Kakila Kapu, who would never learn English. Moving to Oahu soon after their first son was born, Meyer took a position at Waianae Sugar Plantation and quickly rose to the top. Much is known about Meyer's management style. He governed "like a tough but benevolent despot with extreme disregard for outside law." He would not permit any Hawaiian on the plantation to be jailed and would not allow outside law enforcement on the plantation without his permission. If trouble broke out, he sent "his huge, strapping sons to knock a few heads together. No one ever spent a night in jail, and everyone was given a second chance."

An article in the July 18, 1910 issue of the *San Francisco Chronicle* describes the plantation. The operation employed 750 laborers; 500 Japanese, 150 Chinese and the remainder mainly Portuguese and Hawaiian. They earned a monthly salary between \$18 and \$25. "The company has 100 apartment houses for the free use of the Asiatic families. Each building contains accommodations for two families in addition to which there are seven large houses for single men. White families are furnished with detached cottages of which there about 40 on the plantation. All the dwellings are surrounded with ground that may be cultivated by the occupants, and the villages in which the houses are laid out are supplied with laundries, bath houses for men and women, cook houses, running water, and sanitary appliances. Employees are furnished with wood and water without charge." Food was plentiful on the plantation. Meyer provided seeds and tools for the workers to grow their own fruit and vegetables. Livestock were kept on a ranch overseen by one of Meyer's sons and each family received their fair share of meat each week. A tradition followed by the plantation manager faithfully was to

supply a suckling pig to a family when a new baby was born, although he never attended the luau himself. Compared to other plantations, the workers at Waianae lived a rather comfortable lifestyle. Meyer provided both a Christian and a Catholic church and even supplied a Buddhist temple for his Japanese workers. The children of plantation workers were sent to school on the plantation. Meyer was a lover of sports and sponsored a baseball team that competed with teams from other plantations on the island. Some of Meyer's five sons were often to be found on the team rosters. A band of musicians was organized to provide music for special occasions. Basically, life was good at Waianae Sugar Plantation. A good indication that his workers were content with their conditions took place during the "Great Plantation Strike of 1909." Meyer's employees refused to participate. All was not a bed of roses, however. The Plantation was constantly involved in disputes about water rights and usage. Water was critical for irrigation of the sugar cane fields, but was also in demand from local farmers and other citizens: wells were drilled; viaducts constructed, ownership disputed, lawsuits initiated. The issue was a constant irritant to the Waianae coast.

In a publication entitled *A History of the Hawaiian Islands, Their Resources and People*, published in 1907, Frederick Meyer was characterized as a "southern gentleman of genial manners and hospitable nature and is esteemed by all who know him as one of Hawaii's most honored citizens." The same article reveals that the size of the plantation has grown to 16,000 acres, although only about 1,000 acres were in sugar cane, with an annual production of about 5,000 tons of sugar.

In 1910, Meyer decided to build a grander and more commodious plantation house than that which had been constructed by the first manager Julius Richardson in 1888. He apparently designed the three story structure himself and utilized one John S. Richardson (possibly a relative of the first manager) and a crew of some 30 laborers to do the demolition of the original house and then the building of the new residence which was architecturally suggestive of the southern plantation back in his place of birth in South Carolina. Thirty-six years later when the site was offered for sale it is aptly described in a sales brochure:

Built with care and fine materials of a decade ago, the main residence is a three story masterpiece of the old plantation type. Wide verandas on the first two floors, running about three sides, bespeak the designer's intent to insure leisurely, gracious living. Overall, its dimensions are 68 feet by 118 feet starting with an

old-fashioned “basement” with two large storerooms complete with shelves for home-canned goods and ventilated bins for current produce.

There are seven rooms on the first floor. Immense is the only word to describe them, and their wide doorways provide easy entrance. Were the residence be adapted to commercial uses, this floor alone will inspire architects and decorators at first glance.

On the second floor there are four rooms and two baths. Again the word immense must be used to picture them. And any housewife will be delighted with the more than ample closet spaces for linens, for clothes and for general storage.

The third floor is given over entirely to a ballroom, again with generous closets, the final touch of luxury crowning a gorgeous homeplace.

Here Frederick and Mary Meyer and their large family lived a somewhat charmed existence. A grandson by the same name recalled a more intimate reflection on the family in a private interview reported in a Bob Krauss column entitled “Dinner Recalls a Different Era” in *The Honolulu Advertiser*, Tuesday, October 17, 1972. The grandson Fred Meyer, a licensed pastor of the Waianae Congregation Church, was invited to a dinner in the plantation house dining room on that evening by the PKCC camp manager to reminisce about his visits there. He shared that he had not had a meal in that room since 1919, the year of his grandfather’s death. His memories provide a fascinating profile of the Meyer household.

Grandfather came from Germany. He was a big man, 6-foot-four. Grandmother was from the Big Island. She was Hawaiian, 6 feet tall, a big woman. He gave her anything she wanted. Grandmother was a taro-patch woman; work, work, work. She liked to be in her Hawaiian vegetable garden.

Grandmother hated to wear shoes. She dressed very fine in long dresses with a string so she could hold up one side. She wore her hair in a doughnut on top of her head. Later on her daughters-in-law thought she ought to wear shoes. Grandfather told them it was none of their business whether she wore shoes or not. He always dressed like a German cavalry officer and he smoked cigars. You could smell him coming.

There were imported rugs on the floor. [One of these original rugs was found in a third floor storage area and now graces the floor of the ballroom.] When grandfather invited me to visit, I couldn’t go into the fancy parlor (dining room) during working hours. There was another parlor with a pianola. But only the girls were allowed to play it except on Sunday evening. At the dinner table we had to dress up and eat properly. That’s where we ate haole (white) food. But sometime grandfather would hardly touch it. Then he would get up and go with grandmother into another little dining room off the kitchen. That’s where we could eat Hawaiian food with our fingers. But there were only two

chairs at the table, one for grandfather and one for grandmother. Everybody else had to stand up.

My grandmother had four maids, two cooks and a gardener. Grandfather rode a horse to work but he also owned a Packard motor car, the second auto in Hawaii. Grandmother would not ride in it. She always took the hack. They had a Japanese chauffeur who drove the Packard and the hack and who took care of the stables.

On Christmas and New Year's Eve grandfather and grandmother would stand on the upstairs lanai while musicians from all around came to serenade them. Grandfather would drop down envelopes with gold pieces to the musicians. The best group of the evening would come back and be invited into the house to eat and drink and play music for grandmother. They also got more gold pieces.

They hardly ever had any guests; only my father, grandfather's namesake, on Sunday afternoon at 2:30 and the Catholic priest, Father Sebastian. Grandfather wasn't Catholic but they could talk German together.

Grandfather always served the best liquor. I think gin was the favorite drink. It came in a square bottle. He had a big supply of liquor in the pantry. Prince Kuhio was a great friend of my grandfather. At campaign time, he came through on the train. Grandfather picked him up in the Packard. Prince Kuhio would make a very short speech and then go to the plantation house with grandfather. They would have a high old time on the lanai.

The third floor ballroom was for my grandfather and grandmother only. Nobody else ever came up here.

Frederick Meyer had an influential and important ally in Prince Kuhio. Born on March 26, 1871, Jonah Kuhio Kalaniana'ole, commonly known as the People's Prince, was prince of the reigning House of Kalakaua when the Kingdom of Hawaii was overthrown in 1893. Upon the assumption of the Kalakaua dynasty to the throne of the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1884, a proclamation ending the Kamehameha Dynasty also declared Kuhio a royal prince. King David Kalakaua, also Kuhio's uncle, then appointed him to a seat in the royal Cabinet administering the Department of the Interior. However, American businessmen overthrew the Hawaiian kingdom in 1893. A year later, Kuhio and brother Kawanakoa joined other native Hawaiians in an attempt to restore the monarchy. The attempt was unsuccessful, and Prince Kuhio was sentenced to a year in prison while others were executed for treason against the republic. After getting out of prison, Kuhio left Hawaii and traveled in South Africa for a few years, vowing never to return to a Hawaii that appeared inhospitable to Hawaiians. During his time away from home, he joined the British Army to fight in the Boer War. After returning home, Hawaii had already been annexed as a territory of the United States. Had the

Hawaiian monarchy continued, Prince Kuhio probably would have become King of Hawaii upon the death of Queen Liliuokalani. Instead, he was elected as Hawaii's congressional delegate for 10 consecutive terms. Kuhio was often called Ke Ali'i Makaainana (Prince of People), and is well known for his efforts to preserve and strengthen the Hawaiian people. While a delegate of Congress, he spearheaded the effort in the passage of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act that provides lands for native Hawaiians to homestead. Prince Kuhio was also known for restoring the Royal Order of Kamehameha I and establishing the Hawaiian Civic Club. Prince Kuhio served in Congress from 1903 till his death in 1922. His body was laid to rest with the rest of his royal family at the Royal Mausoleum in Nuuanu on Oahu. A statue honoring Prince Kuhio was dedicated in 2002. The statue is slightly larger than life-size, and is located in Waikiki. The territorial Legislature passed a resolution in 1949, establishing March 26 as a territorial holiday in honor of Prince Kuhio. One can only imagine the social and political conversations that took place between the Prince and his crony, Fred Meyer, (both were Republicans) on the broad lanais of the Waianae Sugar Plantation House over glasses of gin. They probably witnessed the heyday of the Waianae Sugar Plantation from the lanai.

On Thursday evening, August 21, 1919, Meyer complained about not feeling well. He made a brief appearance at his office at 5:00 AM on the 22nd, returning to his home about 6:30 to rest a while on the front lanai. He requested of a servant a glass of water and when she returned she discovered he was dead. Dr. R. J. Mc Gettigan was summoned and attributed his death to a heart attack. According to his obituary, Meyer was 57 years old, survived by his wife and six children: four sons, [one son, his eldest, preceded him in death by a few months] George Meyer, manager of the Waianae Ranch, John and Henry Meyer connected with the naval station at Pearl Harbor, and Edward Meyer with the Inter Island Steam Navigation Company, and two daughters, Misses Betsy and Christian Meyer both at home. He was a member of the Honolulu Lodge #616, B.P.O.E. His remains were cremated and interred in the Oahu Cemetery. [In the Protestant Cemetery connected to the Waianae Protestant Congregation Church on Mill Street, Waianae, are buried several members of the Meyer family. The oldest son of manager Meyer, his namesake, born June 20, 1883, when his mother was only about 15, died on February 8, 1919, only six months before his father, and is buried there. Also in the plot are Emma Meyer, 1884-1927, likely the wife of Fred, Jr., George K.

Meyer, Jr., 1904-1971, probably the son of his second son, Aileen Meyer, 1917-1938, and Baby Meyer, December 17, 1904.] About six years later July 27, 1925, the widow, Mary K. Meyer, died of diabetic gangrene of the leg and her ashes were placed by her husband's. Only 54 years of age, she had moved from the plantation house to 1328 Kinau Street shortly after her husband's death. Her obituary indicates the surviving daughters were now married: Mrs. Harry Hasiam and Mrs. B. H. Brown.

At least two other managers would serve at Waianae plantation before its final demise. A bachelor, Ernst Brecht, followed Meyer. He kept his distance from his workers and was seldom seen in public. He brought his sister from Germany to live in the plantation house with him. The last manager was Robert H. A. Fricke, a recognized agriculturist who had spent more than 30 years in the sugar business. He had actually worked as a foreman at Waianae when he came to Hawaii as a young man. Using scientific methods, which alienated his workers, he achieved record production, 8,000 tons in 1933. He became the manager in 1931 and oversaw the closing of the plantation operation in 1946. A jovial appearing Scotsman, Fricke's success at production was based on increasing irrigation. The plantation's monopoly on water consumption led to constant conflict among the people of neighboring towns who also had to have this precious resource. Fricke did allow the formation of a barefoot football team which was an extremely popular sport on the plantations. The beleaguered manager was a Scotch Rite Mason and a Shriner.

For the Waianae Sugar Plantation World War II was a catastrophe. The draft and high paying defense jobs created an enormous labor shortage. Some of the prime sugar cane fields were taken over by the military. The 1945 crop yielded only 3,000 tons. In May, 1945 workers voted to join the militant International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, meaning an immediate increase in wages and benefits. In September, 1946 the Oahu Railroad ceased to operate due to decreasing tonnage and increasing wages. The writing was clearly on the wall. On October 17, 1946 the stockholders of the public company, the American Factors, voted to liquidate. Within a few days nearly 10,000 acres and facilities were purchased for the mere sum of \$1,250,000 by a local group headed by wealthy financier and speculator Chinn Ho. There were only three conditions: the 140 plantation works left on the payroll could remain in their houses for six months; the present crop could be harvested; and the herd of 1,000 Angus cattle

would be sold apart from the real estate. A syndicate offered Ho a \$250,000 profit the very next day but he turned down their offer. Despite public reaction to the investment as foolhardy, Waianae did not become a ghost town. Seventy per cent of the plantation workers remaining on the plantation after operations ceased bought their homes. Quonset huts and other military buildings unused after the war were hauled over to Waianae and erected cheaply on lots acquired from Ho's developers. Some are still standing in the community. A new era was on the horizon for the Waianae community and it was one without the Waianae Sugar Plantation.

Nothing is known of the interim period between the closing of the plantation in 1946 and the purchase of the plantation house and adjoining acreage by the Hawaii Baptist Convention. The Capital Investment Company, Ltd. produced a sales brochure with pictures and apt description of the property touting it as a possible Hawaiian dude ranch. Consisting of 16.075 acres, the estate included an eight room cottage, servant's quarters and garages. The advertisement concludes with this appealing sentiment:

With its warm sunny days, cool evening, excellent swimming, fishing and boating –

With hunting for wild pigs and goats, horseback riding over exciting mountain trails or through leisurely valleys –

With its easy access to Honolulu, only thirty miles over good, scenic roads –

With its large grounds, fertile soil and easily adapted, fine buildings – This grand old plantation home, Puu Ka Hea (Echoing Hills) is Oahu's greatest single development possibility, whether for private residence, ranch or resort hotel. Inspection and request for details are invited.

A writer named Helen Berkey published an article in a local publication during this time which similarly described the place. She wrote: "Pu'u Kahea is at present like an enchanted castle or palace waiting for magic hands to awaken it from its sleep. ... The house begs for life. The seven great rooms downstairs, the four enormous bedrooms upstairs, the ballroom on the third floor that extends the full length of the house, were meant for laughter, music and hospitality... Pu'u Kahea is not an old house, and it has not been vacant long. Even the chicken runs, the turkey runs and pig pens are well kept." She, too, suggests that the sugar

plantation house would make an ideal hotel and imagined that someone would soon put to good use this undiscovered paradise.

It was no doubt a God-directed thing that Hawaiian Baptists just happened to be searching for camp property. A committee appointed by the Convention was charged with finding a camp. Sue Nishikawa remembers that “one day a deacon at Olivet Baptist Church, Joe Bailey, read an article in a local publication about PKCC and he said ‘Let’s consider this for our camp.’ On Labor Day, 1949, a group of us went out there with a picnic lunch and we looked at that big building and the beautiful trees and plantings and so forth, and we were really excited. We said, ‘This is it! Let’s recommend that we buy this property for a camp.’”

The September-October issue of the *Hawaii Baptist* announced the acquisition of PKCC for use as a “Territorial camp”. The article gives a few details about the purchase. “The original price asked for the land and buildings was \$50,000. This was reduced to \$37,500 when there was evidence that Baptists were interested. The final sale price was \$31,000.” Three buildings are described on the 16 acre parcel: a gardener’s cottage, a house for the assistant manager, and the manager’s house. Bunk beds, a dish washing machine, a steel kitchen and a large gas stove were early donations. From then on, all camps sponsored by the Hawaii Baptist were to be moved to the new facility. The Baptist Student Union was the first group to use PKCC. They held a retreat February 2-4, 1950.

In June of that same year the eighth annual Bible conference sponsored by the Baptist Bible School was held here with 136 registrants.

On May 8, 1950, R. E. Peterson was contracted as the “camp custodian” and as such was provided a “house and garden, a hot water heater, and sufficient water for all domestic purposes. Mr. and Mrs. Peterson would provide their own fuel, telephone and electric service. The job description spelled out in the contract is not much different than that of PKCC present manager.

January 19, 1951, the Petersons began a Bible class for children at their home which was the present Peterson dormitory. Viola Peterson had a deep love for the children of Waianae. The story is told that she caught some children stealing fruit from some of the numerous fruit trees located near the house. Instead of confronting them or going to their parents she invited them to come back and bring their siblings and friends for a Bible club. She promised them they could eat a lot of fruit and have a lot of fun. This was the beginning of the Waianae Baptist Church which was organized February 22, 1953, with twenty-nine charter

members. Portions of the Camp were purchased in 1953 and 1957 by the Waianae Baptist Church for the construction of a parsonage and the worship center.

Following the Peterson's twenty-one years, many individuals have served as the manager of the facility but none for so long. The following list is incomplete and may not include those who served in an interim capacity. The dates associated with those listed are the dates of their appointment: June 1, 1971, William Russell; October 17, 1975, Jim McLucas; 1977, Gary and Karen Parnell; [Karen was the daughter of the Petersons.] 1979, Lloyd Priddy; 1982, Ralph Glenn; 1987, Mike Cooper; 1990, Howard Hooper.

Hooper left the position in 1993 and for the next ten years the Convention utilized almost exclusively volunteers in the managerial role. Indeed, the life blood of Pu'u Kehea has been from the start volunteers: individuals, couples, teams; short term and long term, literally thousands from just about every state in the Union! Convention business manager Stanley Togikawa was the staff member who was essentially the point person. The January 31, 1997, Executive Board report stated, "Puu Kahea has now broken even but they need a maintenance person instead of a manager." Among those who served on a longer basis that are mentioned in the Executive Board reports are Zola Brown, the "main cook" in 1992, Ray and Ann Danner, Cotton and Kathy Hale, Fred and Martha La Croix, Arthur and Mary Miles, and James and Shirley Chambers. Furman and Faye Toney were on the scene in an uncertain capacity from 2005-07. It is uncertain because Bobby and Jane Copeland were hired as managers May 13, 2006, although Toney was making requests to the Executive Board in May, 2007. Denver and Debbie Copeland served as managers beginning December 1, 2008. He resigned in 2011 to become pastor on the Big Island. Darrell and Lou Ann Price served for an interim period. On May 18, 2013, Andy and Ramona Stevens became managers after having served as volunteers the preceding year.

When the property was purchased by Hawaii Baptists, there were only three buildings standing: the plantation manager's mansion, the assistant manager's house (Peterson) and a gardener's dwelling. The latter, which stood near Peterson Hall, was demolished in the 1970's because of termite damage. The former two are still very much standing and in use. A number of other capital improvements have been made utilizing both professional and volunteer labor, financed in many ways. Whatever information that can be gleaned regarding their construction follows.

In 1953, Barker Hall was erected by volunteers. The structure was named in honor of Mr. W. A. Barker, a layman from Denton, Texas. He was stationed in Oahu during the war and assisted several Baptist churches on the island. He provided the funds for the building and volunteer help to keep the cost of labor minimal. A bath house was built soon thereafter which was converted in 1996 to a duplex for volunteers called "Mauka," the Hawaiian word for "toward the mountain."

In October, 1956, Ellen Harris Memorial Family Duplex was completed at a cost of \$4,776.91. Mrs. Harris was the mother of Miss Josephine Harris who served in several Oahu churches and the Baptist Bible School in Honolulu. She passed away while visiting her daughter in Hawaii.

October 14, 1976, the Executive Board approved \$2,580 for improvements at the present manager's house (Peterson). In 1977 Kam Hall [uncertain as to this unit] was constructed and Makai, "toward the sea," unit was built as a snack bar and work shed. It also was converted to a duplex for volunteers in 1996. On May 19, 1978, Hawaii Baptist foundation advanced up to \$12,000 to complete construction on the new manager's house. Upon completion of the new manager's residence, a new entrance off Ala Hema Street was created to serve as the main entrance to Pu'u Kehea. The K-cottages were constructed in 1980 in conjunction with the Town and Country Development Co and work teams at a cost of \$45,800 per unit to be financed through "Together We Build Pu'u Kahea" pledges. Teams from Washington, Oregon and Canada re-roofed and repainted Barker Hall. In 1983 Baptist men from Texas replaced the roof, sided and repainted Peterson Hale. On August 21, 1985, Hawaii Baptist Academy began renting the K-cottages for \$500/month, 50% of the water bill for PKCC, and 100% of the electricity for the K-cottages. A shallow well was drilled to irrigate the grounds; however, the well water was too salty to use on the lawns. In 1985 the Leeward campus of the Hawaii Baptist Academy is constructed on part of PKCC property, 2.4 acres. That facility is currently used by the Kamehameha School system. March 1, 1985, the Board of Water Supply limited the use of water at PKCC to 12,200 gallons per day. During the year the Highland Park Baptist Church of Edmond, Oklahoma donated a sprinkler system.

In 2000, two structures were built to provide more flexibility in the kinds of groups that wished to use the facility. The new structures provided for private rooms and a conference room. These new buildings were constructed of materials

that were cut and shipped to Hawaii and assembled on-site by volunteers. The conference building was named “Komohana” or “west” and the four-plex private-room building was named “Hikina” or “east.”

Other significant events should be noted for many of them are a truly significant in the legacy of this beautiful place. Not long after the purchase of the property in November, 1954, the Executive Board reported that the indebtedness incurred for the purchase of PKCC had been retired.

The Kaupuni Stream flood control canal was constructed by the City and County of Honolulu in 1964. More than two acres of land were purchased from the Convention for the sum of \$27,760 for the project. In 1968 about an acre was bought back, probably the area between the canal fence and retaining wall.

In 1965 a long range planning report suggested a four part recommendation: “a) That the assembly and camp operation be developed on a self-supporting basis. b) That the present assembly site be improved and beautified. c) That capital improvements be limited on the present assembly site. d) That relocation on a more adequate site be fully explored.”

On July 24, 1978, the plantation house at PKCC was placed on the Hawaii Register of Historical Places by the Hawaii Historic Places Review Board (80-07-9993). The application was actually made and approved on August 22, 1972. It is uncertain why it took six years for the official action to take place. The minutes of the meeting of the Hawaii Historic Places Review Board, August 22, 1972, is fascinating in itself. Staff member Bob Fox commented:

“Architecturally it is not a great piece of architecture, but it does represent a way of living that no longer exists. Basically designed for entertaining people and would deserve a local significance as far as the Waianae area is concerned. It is more important historically than architecturally. Only three or four of these plantations remain. Grounds are important in that they maintain a certain type of area that surrounds these houses. It still has a double row of palms along the driveway.”

A member of the review board, Herb Mark, made a visit to the plantation house and his impressions were not very favorable:

“Mr. Mark visited the site and reported that it was exceptionally uninteresting and undistinguishing. Mr. Mark said that it is folly to pass on structures without on-site review, and thorough investigation.

“Dr. Hormann [also a Board member] reported having spoken to Mrs. Fricke, widow of the plantation manager, who said that it wasn’t really important.

The Ballroom was used as housing for the Meyer family, and plantation families used it for dances. She said that the building has been changed and is no longer the way it was.”

In spite of this rather dismal report, adding the Waianae Plantation House to the Register of Historic Places in Hawaii was approved. The final vote is not recorded. Note that nowhere in the application is the site called Pu’u Kahea.

In the Executive Board minutes, March 2, 1984, is the first appearance of the present name of facility: “Pu’u Kahea Conference Center.” More importantly, the operation of the facility was adopted as an official Convention program which would include a three year phase-in of providing the Camp Manager’s salary. At the time the conference center had an indebtedness of \$70,000.

In 1984 the conference center was in danger of closing because of declining revenue. That same year, the Hawaii Baptist Academy established the Leeward campus and used the K-cottages for classrooms until the buildings for the school could be built. The revenue from HBA helped to keep the camp afloat.

In October, 1989, PKCC benefited from a rather unusual source; a made for television movie, “Parent Trap Hawaiian Honeymoon,” a third Disney sequel of the original movie, starring Haley Mills was partially filmed at the plantation house. Compensation for use of the property made possible painting and renovations of the Plantation Hale.

In June, 1998, the Hawaii Baptist Academy ceased its operation at the Leeward annex elementary school adjacent to the PKCC campus. After twenty years of providing private school alternative for area youth declining enrollments forced the Academy to consolidate its educational efforts at the Nuuanu campus where enrollment was greater than 400 students. The two buildings occupied by the Academy were returned to the Hawaii Baptist Convention and have been leased by the Kamehameha Schools since 2000.

In 2004 the Executive Board approved an extension on Harris Hall, a new volleyball court and the resurfacing of the basketball court.

The future of Hawaii Baptist’s gem is very promising. The grounds and buildings have never looked better. For several years the Conference Center has operated in the black. A young, mission-minded family with vision and enthusiasm are on the verge of becoming new resident managers, succeeding the highly successful and effective leadership of the Stevens. Bookings are consistent with many organizations returning annually. Volunteers to assist in running the

operation appear to be plentiful with a waiting list for some seasons. PKCC will continue to be a place of beauty and inspiration until Jesus comes, a place where many will continue to encounter the awesome creative power and presence of Almighty God.

The last stanza and chorus of the song written back in the 50s provides an appropriate benediction for this piece:

“When the soft night winds whisper through towering trees,
And exquisite perfumes waft by on the breeze.
When the moon tops the mountain where the Waialele spills
I’ll be walking with Jesus through Echoing Hills.

Echoing Hills, sweet Echoing Hills,
Your beauty and grandeur my soul ever fills.
To the old, old sweet story my longing heart thrills.
When I hear your voice calling sweet Echoing hills
Puu kahea, Puu kahea, Sweet Echoing hills.”

*Author’s Note: Very little of what is written above is new information, but is rather a compilation of all the material that was scattered here and there, mostly from the files of the Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention, 2042 Vancouver Drive, Honolulu, HI 96882, Hawaii Office of Historic Places, 601 Kamokila Blvd., Suite 555, Kapolei, HI 96707, and Pu’u Kahea Baptist Conference Center, 85-199 Ala Hema Street, Waianae, HI 96792. Information regarding Waianae Sugar Plantation came from two secondary sources: Edward J. McGrath, Jr., Kenneth M. Brunner and Bob Kruss, *Historic Waianae, Place of Kings*, Norfolk Island, Australia, 1973 and Jesse C. Condi and Gerald Best, *Sugar Trains*, Glenwood Publishers. Fulton, CA, 1973. The Conference Center has three copies of the former. The latter book can be found at the Waianae Public Library. There are surprisingly few primary sources available in Oahu archives and historical collections that relate to the Waianae Sugar Plantation. Records must have been destroyed years ago when the plantation closed. Collections of the Bishop Museum, the Hawaii Historical Society and the Hawaii State Archives were consulted.

There is one additional manner that should be addressed. It has been suggested that Queen Liliuokalani, the last queen of Hawaii, deposed in 1893, may

have visited the manager's house on more than one occasion. Unfortunately, there is no historical basis for this claim. It is not impossible because the Queen died in 1917 seven years after Fred Meyer built his mansion. This writer, however, does not think the visits happened for several reasons. First, had the Queen been a guest at the plantation house, grandson Fred Meyer would have certainly mentioned it in his reminiscences noted earlier. The only person he mentions as visiting the Meyer's was Prince Kuhio, certainly a Hawaiian notable and the only blood relative of the aforementioned Queen. Apparently, Kuhio and Meyer had more than a casual relationship. In the latter years of her life, Queen Liliuokalani, who owned a sizable estate which included valuable land in Waikiki, established a trust that would benefit Hawaiian children. Prince Kuhio was excluded from her assets altogether. In 1915 he filed suit to break the Trust on the grounds that the Queen was mentally incompetent when the Trust was established. The claim was denied by the courts and Kuhio received nothing from the Queen's estate when she died in 1917. It is unlikely that the Queen would want to be socially entertained by a known crony of her cousin, Prince Kuhio. The Queen was a prolific diarist, but this writer could not ascertain if she kept a diary during her last years, much of that time she being in an infirm condition.

J. David Book, Vermont Volunteer, winter, 2014