



NEWS RELEASE

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MERCHANTS, MISSIONARIES, AND WHALERS Diverse groups and a changing landscape

MAUI, Hawai'i – The radical change that swept through the Islands during the 1800s brought whalers, missionaries, plantation immigrants, and others. Each group also brought distinct and not always compatible values. Across Maui Nui, their stories sprinkle the land with sites that symbolize often forgotten aspects of culture and community.

Between 1825 and 1860, hundreds of whalers eager to recuperate after rugged years on wild, open seas came to balmy Lāhaina. They were lonely men seeking women and liquor with plenty of cash to spend. A whole economy developed to cater to them. The Whalers Village Museum in Kā'anapali illustrates this legacy with Hawai'i's largest collection of harpoons, whaling tools, sea chests, journals, ship logs, photos, movies, and audio tours. You must see the scrimshaw—the seafarer's lonesome art practiced at sea with whale bone and razor-sharp knives.

A year after the Hawaiian religion collapsed in 1819, the fledgling Monarchy of Hawai'i fell under the influence of missionaries sent by the American Board of Foreign Missions. Antithesis to the whalers, they were to establish Christian civilization in Hawai'i and brought not just religion but western education and medicine. Affecting all aspects of plantation life and Hawaiian culture, they also decided on governmental affairs. In historic Wailuku, Bailey House Museum offers a fascinating picture of those missionary times. The house was built in 1833 to serve as the mission station for the Wailuku Seminary for Girls and became the home of artist and missionary teacher Edward Bailey, whose paintings can be seen to this day.



First built in 1835 for Reverend Dwight Baldwin and his family with coral and limestone, the Baldwin Home in Lāhaina has been carefully restored with period furnishings, Hawaiian quilts, and photographs. A practicing physician, Baldwin helped save the people of Maui Nui from a devastating small pox epidemic in 1953.

Waiola Church in Lāhaina served as Maui's first missionary church and was first dedicated in 1823 as "Waine'e Church" by Reverend William Richard. Richard, who helped draft the first Island constitution, also established a learning center at Lāhainaluna. It was here that the first written Hawaiian language found shape and the first publication in Hawaiian, the Bible, saw print. He and other missionaries are buried in the Waiola Cemetery alongside Hawaiian ali'i. You'll find a small monument at Waiola in memory of Queen Keōpūolani, the sacred wife of Kamehameha. In the Hawaiian hierarchy of people and gods, she had been considered divine, and yet, she was among the first to accept the new Western religion.

Several other early 19th century Congregational churches dot the Maui map, all continuing to draw active congregations, gathering communities. Their locations reflect the settlement patterns of the native Hawaiians – seaside villages.

In 1832, a mission in Wailuku formed, with at its center a simple grass church, eventually replaced with stone, and, in 1876, by neatly spired Ka'ahumanu Church. In Huelo off Hāna Highway, the Kaulanapueo Church was built in 1853 and quietly shimmers against the backdrop of the Pacific. Just east, on the taro growing peninsula of Ke'anae, you can study the trim and thick walled architectural style of the era at Lanakila Ihi'ihi O Iehova O Na Kaua Church. In 1838, volcanic stones said to have been taken from an ancient Hawaiian heiau were used for the construction of Wānanalua Church in Hāna. Travelers exploring verdant Kīpahulu may want to stop at Palapala Ho'omau, a limestone coral church built in 1857. The famous aviator Charles Lindbergh lived his last days in Kīpahulu, and was buried on the church's grounds. On the southern end of East Maui at Kaupō, you'll find basic and sweet Huialoha Church. In sunny Kīhei, where high-rises shout of modern times, Keolahou Church continues to reflect yesteryear.

In the late 1830s, the Catholic faith also started to spread. Dismayed, the Protestants outlawed Catholic practices and, in 1843, several Hawaiian women in Kaupō were arrested for their Catholic prayers. The women were tied together with sennit and led on a 90-mile march to face justice in Wailuku. Wearing their best clothes, villagers along the way voluntarily joined the march. The judge dismissed the charges.

In 1846, the first formal Catholic mission was established soon afterward. At first it centered around Maria Lanakila Church in Lāhaina. Soon after, Saint Anthony in Wailuku called upon Catholics from across the large Makawao district. Before 1927, at



least 28 other churches arose across Maui Nui, among them octagonally shaped Holy Ghost Church in Kula, built by Portuguese immigrants in 1894. Little Saint Gabriel in Wailua in East Maui is locally nicknamed the “miracle church” for its coral blocks which apparently were blown to the site from a nearby Protestant church.

The Catholic mission of Maui Nui became most famous through Father Damien de Veuster, who in 1873 moved to the peninsula of Kalaupapa in Moloka‘i to devote his life to the islands’ exiled victims of Hansen’s disease. A carpenter at heart, Father Damien expanded the existing Saint Philomena Church and invited his parishioners to paint the interior in a rainbow of colors. In June 2008, the Vatican allowed for the priest’s canonization to sainthood.

Thousands of plantation labor immigrants who came to Hawai‘i from Asia converted to western missionary beliefs, but Japanese Buddhist Hongwanji missions and Chinese Tong societies also emerged. The Tong temples served as social centers providing financial aid and proper funerals. At one time Maui had six of these ornate wooden clubhouses. Only two remain. Lovingly restored is Wo Hing Society in Lāhaina and Kwock Hing in upper Kula. The Hongwanji missions kept the Japanese laborers connected to Japanese family traditions and provided schooling. Visit them during the annual O-Bon Festival, when colorful ceremonies are held to honor the deceased and to celebrate life with Japanese folk dance.

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