Remembering the Royal Residences of Kapālama: The Homes of Princess Ruth Keʻelikōlani and Queen Liliʻuokalani

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Loaʻa ka hale i ke aliʻi.
The chief has a house.¹

Mayor Wright Homes, a public housing project, now marks the King Street gateway to Kapālama, but a century and a quarter earlier the area formed a suburb for the elite of Honolulu. Simon Kaloa Kaʻai, finance minister under King Kalākaua, hosted parties for visiting dignitaries there. James Isaac Dowsett, a member of the House of Nobles, built his compound just makai of King Street at Dowsett Lane, now renamed Akepo Lane. The preeminent residents of the area, however, were royalty—Princess Ruth Keʻelikōlani and then Princess Liliʻuokalani built houses on opposite sides of what today is Pua Lane. Today, the sites of the royal residences of Kapālama are unmarked and unremembered, unlike Mount Vernon, George Washington’s Virginia home, or Monticello, Thomas Jefferson’s masterpiece.

Few records remain today to remember the location or even the existence of the Kapālama residences of Princess Ruth Keʻelikōlani and Queen Liliʻuokalani. The available fragments regarding the

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houses offer tantalizing glimpses into the lives of two of the most powerful women of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i. The use of the houses by the royal women and later by other notables help tell the story of the latter days of the monarchy through the early years of the Territory of Hawai‘i.

The dearth of photographic records of their Kapālama homes reflects the change in what was considered important in the Republic of Hawai‘i and subsequent Territory of Hawai‘i. Though also razed, numerous interior and exterior photographs help preserve the memory of the home of Sanford Ballard Dole, the first president of the Republic of Hawai‘i and first governor of the Territory of Hawai‘i. Remarkably no photographs or drawings of the Kapālama houses of two members of royalty exist in the preeminent repositories of Hawai‘i visual images—the Hawai‘i State Archives and Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum. What is lacking in the major photographic records may be recovered in part from publications and in photographs from smaller collections. Maps from 1881–1950 record the changing property uses. Newspaper and magazine accounts help piece together the rich historic legacy of their Kapālama homes. Not meant to record the royal residences themselves, images from smaller collections preserve glimpses of the houses in the background of photographs taken for other purposes.

Kapālama Residence of Ruth Ke‘elikōlani at Mauna Kamala

The first mention of the Kapālama residence of Princess Ruth Ke‘elikōlani at Mauna Kamala appears in the Pacific Commercial Advertiser in a September 1878 account of a “house-warming on Saturday last [August 31], at her new residence on King street, beyond Liliha street, which was attended by a large number of personal friends and others, who thoroughly enjoyed themselves.”² Mauna Kamala was bounded by Asylum Road (now called Pālama Street) on the northwest, King Street to the southwest and what today is Pua Lane on the southeast. Kanoa Lane today bisects the Mauna Kamala site, though it did not extend to Pālama Street when Princess Ruth’s house was located there. The earliest depiction, in an 1881 map titled “Main Part of Kona District Oahu” by R. Covington (Figure 1), shows the
outline of a roughly square structure with a rectangular wing attached to the northern corner. It is labeled “R. Keelikolani’s.”

The builder of Ruth Ke’elikōlani’s Kapālama home was S.D. Burrows, owner of Burrows’ Planing Mill on Fort Street. His 1881 obituary notes: “Monuments of his skill exist in and around this city, specially in the suburban residences of Her Royal Highness Ruth Keelikolani and the Hon. Simon K. Kaai, on the Palama road [now King Street], and also in the mansion of her ladyship on Emma Street.” The royal residence had its own water supply. On April 8, 1882: “The ortesian [sic] well of Princess Keelikolani, at Palama, struck flowing water at 10 o’clock on Saturday morning.”
Royal Deaths

Princess Ruth would live in her Kapālama home for just under five years. She died on Thursday, May 24, 1883. Her will gave most of her Kamehameha lands, including her Kapālama home, to Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop. With the subsequent death of Bernice Pauahi Bishop on October 16, 1884, Ruth Ke‘elikōlani’s former home became part of the inventory of Bishop Estate properties leased to provide income for the Kamehameha Schools. Two January 1886 advertisements offered: “House to Let or Lease. At Palama opposite the Reformatory School, the house formerly occupied by Her Royal Highness the late Ruth Keelikolani.”

Nāwahī Place

When Joseph Kahoʻolule Nāwahī started living at Mauna Kamala is not precisely known, though his main residence remained in Hilo, on Hawai‘i island. He served in the legislature from 1872 to 1892 representing that island in the House of Representatives. He was living in Kapālama at least by 1892. That year the city directory lists him as “Nawahi Joseph, atty at law, r King, Palama.” By 1893 Princess Ruth’s former home was referred to in the Daily Bulletin as “the residence of J. Nawahi, opposite the Reformatory School.”

Following the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in January 1893, Nāwahī sought to prevent the annexation of Hawai‘i by the United States. As a key leader of the opposition, his Kapālama home was searched for weapons on the evening of Saturday, December 8, 1894. The Daily Bulletin, in an article titled “Treason and Conspiracy: The Government Does Not Wait for Overt Acts,” described his arrest and the results of the search:

When both [John E. Bush and E.C. Crick] had been locked up [for treason] Jos. Nawahi started for his home at Palama. On the way he was met by Lieutenant Holi, who with Captain Rosehill had been searching Nawahi’s house for arms. The officers had a warrant for Nawahi’s arrest on a charge of conspiracy. Nawahi was taken to the Station and locked up. No arms of any description were found, at his home.

Despite the lack of evidence, the Republic of Hawai‘i imprisoned him for three months. Two years later, Nāwahī went to San Francisco
to treat the tuberculosis he contracted during his imprisonment and died there on September 14, 1896. After the *Australia* brought Nāwahī home on Tuesday, September 29, 1896, and thousands of supporters showed their aloha for the Hawaiian patriot, the earthly remains of Joseph Nāwahī returned to his residence in Kapālama. The *Hawaiian Gazette* recorded the overwhelming response to the death of Nāwahī:

> During the afternoon hundreds of visitors called on the Mrs. Nawahi and said their respects, and at night the avenues leading to the house were lighted with torches as a mark of respect to the deceased. The grounds were filled with people throughout the night.¹⁰

The memorial service for Nāwahī took place the following day, on Wednesday, September 30, 1896, at his home located at “ka pā o Mauna Kamala”¹¹ [the yard of Mauna Kamala]: “The funeral services of the late Joseph Nawahi were held in the family homestead, Palama, shortly before 1 o’clock.”¹² The march from his home included “two societies of women to the number of 500, and another, the Aloha Aina, of men. The hearse, drawn by sixty-four of the friends of the deceased, was next in order.”¹³ The mourners would not see his burial, for his final resting place would be in Hilo.

**Pālama Chinese School**

Following the death of Nāwahī, Seventh Day Adventist missionary H.H. Brand and his wife opened “in 1897, a boarding school known as the Palama Chinese School, which later became the Anglo-Chinese Academy.”¹⁴ Seventh-day Adventist elder Hideo Oshita wrote of the predecessor of Hawaiian Mission Academy: “In a mansion, called ‘Nawahi Place,’ which was formerly occupied by a Hawaiian princess, Mr. and Mrs. H. H. Brand started a boarding school, called Palama Chinese School, with fifteen Chinese boys.”¹⁵ Oshita also gave the street and landmark associated with the property: “This school was located at the end of Banyan Street in Palama. The old Banyan tree under which the students played still stands (in 1961 and fifty-two years later in 2013) in the center of Banyan Street.”¹⁶ The background of a photograph of the faculty and students (Figure 2) shows a one-story building with a dual pitch, hipped roof, and a veranda, or lānai, on the front face and
around the right corner. The building has a wing stretching to the left of the main structure that also features a lānai.

The school’s principal, W.E. Howell, gives the most complete description of the royal residence in his account, “Among the Chinese in Honolulu,” in the December 21, 1897, issue of *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*:

> Accordingly, after careful searching, Brother Brand secured a place outside the business part of town, formerly the residence of a native chief named Nawahi (Nā-wā-heé), and now known as “Nawahi Place.”

Howell confirms the continued presence of the artesian well drilled in 1882: “In one corner of the grounds an artesian well furnishes an abundant supply of the best water obtainable in Honolulu.”

Howell also noted the use of neighboring properties: “Adjoining our lot is the residence of the British consul [formerly Lili‘uokalani’s palace, Mu‘olaulani]; on the opposite side of the street is the government reform school; a little beyond is the Chinese hospital recently erected;” He also gives the only description of the extensive plantings at Mauna Kamāla:
The driveway is lined on both sides by eighteen stately royal palms and thirteen smaller ones. Alternating with these are oleander bushes from ten to fifteen feet high, some bearing red and some white blossoms. Near the main building, on each side of the entrance, is a banian-tree, whose branches measure about eighty-five feet from tip to tip, affording abundant shade for our boys to enjoy the open air. Still nearer the building are two Norfolk pines, imported from the Norfolk Islands, straight and slender, reaching thirty or forty feet skyward. In other parts of the grounds are six ponciana regias, two small magnolias, and one native plum-tree. Directly in front of the entrance is a small fish-pool encircled with foliage plants and ferns.20

Constructed less than two decades earlier, the royal residence was already in poor condition in 1897. Howell gave the following assessment: “The buildings are very old and badly run down, though once, doubtless, the main one was a mansion.”21

Howell also provides the dimensions of the house, the “main part thirty by forty feet in size,” with a wing “thirty-seven by fifteen feet.” He also notes that: “Three sides of the main part and one side of the [wing] contain a veranda seven feet wide.”22

By the 1900–1901 school year the Palama Chinese School had relocated from Kapālama necessitating a name change to the Anglo-Chinese Academy.23

Subdividing Mauna Kamala

From October 1900 to August 1901 Bishop Estate undertook a project to fill the portions of Mauna Kamala that were used for growing rice and sweet potato. The principal of the Palama Chinese School provided a description of the extent of the wetlands at Mauna Kamala:

About the most unfavorable feature of our situation is that we are surrounded on four sides by rice-lots and sweet-potato patches, the only outlet being a driveway about three hundred feet long by thirty-six feet wide, leading to the street in front. Rice-lots have standing water in them constantly, except a short time before the grain ripens and during harvest.24

The estate paid Hawaiian Ballasting Co., H.R. Hitchcock and R.M. Duncan, for more than 24,000 wheelbarrow loads of fill for Mauna Kamala.
A 1900 Bishop Estate map of Mauna Kamala shows the former residence of Princess Ruth Ke‘elikōlani with two staircases on the southwest side, one staircase to the southeast, and two curved bays and a staircase on the northeast exposure, the most detailed drawing of house.25

By 1901 Ruth Ke‘elikōlani’s house had changed hands to a local real estate agent: “Mr. [Paul E.R.] Strauch bought from the Bishop Estate the home immediately behind the banyan tree in 1901 . . . .”26 The Bishop Estate receipts for September 1901, under the category “Sale of Improvements” include one for $100 to “Mrs. F. [Fanny] Strauch, old buildings at ‘Mauna Kamala,’ Hon.”27 A structure, labeled as “Old House” in a 1901 map titled “Mauna Kamala Premises” by J.A. McCandless (Figure 3), sits in the middle of a planned extension of Kanoa Street.

The Trustees of the Bishop Estate were pleased to report in 1902 that: “the laying out and fencing of the property at King Street and Asylum Road known as ‘Mauna Kamala’, begun last year has been fully completed this year; and this section is now ready for occupancy.”28 The property was divided into quadrants: Block A to the southwest, B to the southeast, C to the northwest and D to the northeast. The 1902 report of the Bishop Estate’s activities noted: “The Trustees have agreed to accept from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions the old Kaumakapili Church site in the District of Kamanuwai” in exchange for Mauna Kamala lands.29 The original plans of the trustees to lease the subdivided lot at Mauna Kamala in Kapālama did not experience any demand, so they decided in 1903 to “offer the lots for sale, in fee, at schedule prices.”30

**Political Rally Site**

The location of the former royal residence, a large open space, served as a venue for several political rallies in 1904: “Under the branches of a large banyan tree on the old Ruth Keelikolani premises out Kapālama way and almost directly opposite the Kaaulani school, the Republicans held forth to quite a goodly crowd of spectators.”31 A month later they met again: “Republicans . . . Fifth District, ‘under the banyan tree’ across the way from the Kaaulani school, King Street, at the former residence of Princess Ruth Keelikolani.”32
More Sales

The sale of the lands surrounding the former site of the Kapālama residence of Princess Ruth Keʻelikōlani began in earnest in 1904. The largest purchases were by the trustees of Kaumakapili Church and the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Hawaiian Islands. In 1906, the swap of the former site of Kaumakapili Church at the mauka end of Smith Street for 72,251 square feet of Mauna Kamala property was finally completed. On May 7, 1910, Kaumakapili
Church broke ground at its new site in Block A of Mauna Kamala. The Protestant Episcopal Church in the Hawaiian Islands also continued to increase its presence in the area by another 33,000 square foot portion in 1911 and 23,000 square foot parcel in 1912. Daizo Sumida and E.L. Schwarzberg also bought 11,500 and 33,532 square feet of Mauna Kamala respectively in 1912. By July 29, 1912, Ching Chow and Lum See had bought the property from Schwarzberg and subdivided it into sixteen lots ranging in size from 1,850 square foot to 2,264 square feet. They called the subdivision Banyan Tract after the banyan tree anchoring the southwest end of the street named for the same tree. Chinese revolutionary Sun Yat-sen stayed in Ching Chow’s home there at 1127-C Banyan Street.

**Relocated House**

A description of the original location of Princess Ruth Keʻelikolani’s house at Mauna Kamala and the site of the relocated royal residence comes in a 1934 interview by Gwenfread Allen of real estate agent Paul E.R. Strauch. Strauch said that he: “moved it from its location near what would now be the corner of Kanoa lane and Banyan Rd. to the end of Banyan St. near N. Kukui St. Here cut into two buildings and remodeled it still stands and is used by the American-Hawaiian Soy Co.”

In the September 23, 1905, edition of the *Evening Bulletin*, a “For Sale” advertisement appeared: “Two houses and lot, 100 x 130, at Kapalama, near Kaiulani School, formerly residence of H.R.H. Ruth Keelikolani. Two lots, 50 x 130, adjoining same. At a Bargain. P.E.R. Strauch, Walty Bldg. No. 74 King St.” Contemporaneous maps agree with the real estate agent’s account of the relocated residence. The house at the end of Banyan Street at N. Kukui Street in the 1906 Dakin Fire Insurance maps (Figure 4), numbered 461, and the dwelling behind it labeled 462, fit the description of the relocated house referred to by Strauch. The larger building includes verandas on three sides of the house’s main room. The long rectangular wing separated from the house also has a lanai.

The 1914 Sanborn Fire Map further confirms Strauch’s 1934 account of Ruth Keʻelikolani’s relocated home. At the end of Banyan Street on the map is the American Soy Brewing Company Ltd. The
site referred to as the “American-Hawaiian Soy Company” in a 1934 interview of Strauch includes a building labeled Office and Dwelling (758 N. Kukui) and a building labeled Storage (758B N. Kukui) which fits his description of the two parts of the house relocated from the site at Kanoa and Banyan streets. The larger structure in 1914 has part of the open lānai, shown in the 1906 Dakin Fire Insurance map enclosed, (Figure 4), which agrees with Strauch’s use of the term “remodeled.” The 1927 Sanborn Fire map shows the two struc-

![Figure 4](image.png)

**Figure 4.** Princess Ruth Keʻelikōlani’s house was relocated to the mauka end of Banyan Street and split into two dwellings as shown in this inset of 1906 Dakin Fire Insurance Map 21. Public Domain. Map courtesy of Map Collection, Government Documents and Map Department, Hamilton Library, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa.
tures still standing. The northeast face of the relocated wing of Ruth Keʻelikōlani’s home, featuring four casement windows, appears as the backdrop in a 1932 photograph (Figure 5) of the Palama Settlement gardens. The two buildings are gone in the 1950 Sanborn Fire Map, the American Soy Brewing Company replaced by the Hayashi Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii.

Muʻolaulani

Princess Ruth Keʻelikōlani’s Kapalama residence would be joined in 1885 by Princess Liliʻuokalani’s palace called Muʻolaulani. She acquired the land for her Kapalama residence on December 3, 1884, for $8,000 from a couple who had bought the property from the widow of Simon K. Kaʻai. She first mentions her Kapalama residence in a diary entry on Friday, February 6, 1885: “Took a drive with Mrs U & Mrs Wilson to my new house.” On Friday, February 13, 1885, she commented on the progress of the construction: “4 p.m. went to
Kapalama—found carpenter and painters work almost complete.”

The subsequent diary entry, however, recorded a delay: “Came out here was disappointed the carpenters did not come out—planted trees before going home.” On Tuesday, February 24, 1885, she commented on the start of part of her gardens: “Went to Kapalama to plant roses.” On Sunday, March 8, 1885, she again noted progress on her residence: “Mr Wilson says they will be through painting my house at Kapalama—welcome news.” His report was accurate, for on March 12, 1885, Lili‘uokalani recorded: “was pleased to find painters had got through with large house—Mr Wilson says I must not move in till next week—How slowly everything seems to progress.”

On Sunday, March 15, 1885, she wrote about her preparations for moving in: “King called & warned me about new house. . . . Mary Ailau Kaee Kaipo went with me to Kapalama—Matting al [sic] ready—Must move in Wednesday [March 18]—Two fish to get Manewanewa for gate Mananalo for piko hale. M. dine—must drive in side gate. Komo mai maka welau hopa [sic] oka hale a hiki ika humu oka hale —Mai poina.” A note to the transcription of the diary translates the Hawaiian as: “Enter at back of the house up to the tabu enclosure of the house—Don’t forget.” The appointed day for her to occupy the house came and went, and on Saturday, March 21, 1885, Lili‘uokalani wrote in her diary: “I am getting despondent—for one reason or another I cannot move into my house.”

Finally, on Sunday, March 29, 1885, Lili‘uokalani moved into her Kapalama home. She recorded in her diary that day: “This is the day that I am supposed to take possession of this house— I think that I shall call it Muolaulani.” Mu‘olaulani may have been named in honor of Princess Ruth Ke‘elikōlani. Mu‘olaulani is the name used for her in an 1861 set of songs titled “He Inoa Ka Haku o Hawai‘i,” listed with her half-brothers Kapuāiwa [Kamehameha V] and ‘Iolani [Kamehameha IV] and half-sister Kalohelani [Kamalau].

The residence consisted of two single-story wings forming an L-shaped footprint. The wing facing King Street featured a ten-foot deep veranda that stretched across the 100-foot wide front face of the building (around the same width as the Diamond Head face of ‘Iolani Palace) and a similar one on the back face. The other wing, set at a right angle to the main wing, ran perpendicular to King Street. It, too, was 100 feet in length with a veranda facing southeast toward Diamond Head.
Locating Mu’olaulani

Despite detailed diary entries about the timing of the completion of the residence and plantings, the location of Mu'olaulani is plagued with confusing references. The earliest depiction of the L-shaped outline of Lili‘uokalani’s residence appears on an 1887 map titled “Honolulu and Vicinity” by W.A. Wall. That map inaccurately labeled the site: “R Keliikolani,” a misspelling of “R Keelikolani,” who had died four years before the creation of the map. The location of Mu’olaulani is also obscured by modern written references to it. *Place Names of Hawaii* indicates: “[Robello] lane was the site of Queen Lili‘uokalani’s Pālama home.” Further adding to the confusion is another reference in *Place Names of Hawaii* to Mu’olaulani: “Site of the Queen Lili‘uokalani Children’s Center, Kapālama section. Honolulu. Lili‘uokalani had a home here. *Lit.*, innumerable royal buds.” Although sharing the name of the original King Street site, the Hālona Street location of the children’s center, eight-tenths of a mile to the north, was not the site of Queen Lili‘uokalani’s Kapālama home.

Soon after its opening, Lili‘uokalani composed a song in May 1885, simply titled “Nohea I Mu‘olaulani,” to praise her new suburban home:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{He mea nui ke aloha} & \quad \text{This great love of yours} \\
\text{Ke hiki mai i o‘u nei} & \quad \text{Has come here to me} \\
\text{Mehe‘o ku‘u lei kaimana ala} & \quad \text{It is like my diamond necklace} \\
\text{Kāhiko o ku‘u kino} & \quad \text{To adorn my person} \\
\text{Ku‘u lei popohe i ka la‘i} & \quad \text{My lei so shapely in the calm} \\
\text{Nohea i Mu‘olaulani} & \quad \text{Handsome at Mu‘olaulani} \\
\text{Ka beauty lā he mau ia} & \quad \text{It is a beauty, always a thing forever} \\
\text{No nā kau ā kau} & \quad \text{For all seasons}^{57}
\end{align*}
\]

Shifting Locus

By May 21, 1885, Lili‘uokalani had already started relocating the site of her royal duties to her Kapālama home. The *Hawaiian Gazette* noted the inaugural event: “H.R.H. Princess Liliuokalani held the first reception at Palama on the afternoon of the 21st inst. The Band was stationed on the grounds and played a number of choices selec-
tions during the reception hours.”58 The site also provided a venue for meetings of the Liliuokalani Educational Society, whose aim was the “care and education of needy orphan children.”59 The hospitable Kapālama home and gardens also provided an ideal social gathering spot to support Lili’uokalani’s newly formed charitable venture. The Daily Bulletin described the “ice cream sociable” that the society held on Tuesday evening, August 3, 1886:

The cool atmosphere of the evening, the refreshing greenery surrounding the premises, the subdued light reflected from the Japanese lanterns disposed around the verandahs and garden, the informality of the gathering, and the genial affability of the royal lady who presided, all combined to make the occasion extremely pleasant and delightful, the memory of which will mark a sunny spot in the past of every participant.60

In contrast to the “informality” of the August gathering, the home also served as a site of more formal visits a month later. She made a special invitation to the “first and second divisions of Liliuokalani Educational Society, Hookuonoono Society and Nihoa Society”61 to visit her “at home” at Mu’olaulani at 2 p.m., September 2, 1886. Then, that evening, Lili’uokalani hosted nobles and representatives at a lūau at Mu’olaulani. The Pacific Commercial Advertiser reported: “The Palama residence of the royal lady was beautifully decorated with maile and fern wreaths, and bouquets of flowers, and during the early part of the day was thronged with visitors, who called to congratulate the Princess and pay their respects.”62 King Kalākaua made a special presentation there in honor of his sister’s forty-eighth birthday:

Princess Liliuokalani, by request of His Majesty, presented herself before him, and thereupon, after a short introductory address by His Majesty, whilst kneeling, was invested with cordon and decoration of the Royal Order of Kapiolani, the insignia of which Order was also displayed by His Majesty.63

Besides the ordinary, regularly scheduled occasions, the home would also serve as the site of a number of major events in Lili’uokalani’s life. It was there that Lili’uokalani was asked by James I. Dowsett, Jr., if she would replace Kalākaua as sovereign if he was dethroned.64 Lili’u-
Kalani also received, in 1887, while at Mu'olaulani, her invitation to accompany Queen Kapi'olani to Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee, celebrating the fiftieth year of the British monarch’s reign.65

The large home also allowed Liliʻuokalani the opportunity to show hospitality to one of her supporters, Robert Wilcox, and his new bride upon their return to Hawai‘i in October 1887: “I gave them comfortable rooms in the long building attached to the main house at my Palama residence.”66 Theresa Wilcox would later name her daughter Muʻolaulani as a favor to Liliʻuokalani.67

The last major receptions given by Liliʻuokalani at Muʻolaulani marked her birthday and that of her brother, the king. The fiftieth anniversary of Liliʻuokalani’s birth, held September 2, 1888, was attended by more than 200 well-wishers. The Hawaiian Gazette reported: “Princess Liliuokalani was dressed in cream colored satin with silk trimmings and was generally congratulated upon her hale and hearty appearance in turning the half century of life.”68 Two months later, in November 1888, Liliʻuokalani feted her brother: “The King’s Birthday was ushered in by native serenaders in different quarters. There was a fine concert in the wee sma’ hours on the veranda of Princess Liliuokalani’s residence at Palama.”69 By 1888, Liliʻuokalani’s place of residence was firmly established in Kapālama. The 1888 Hawaiian Directory and Hand Book of the Kingdom of Hawaii lists: “Lileuokalani [sic] HRH, the Princess Regent, res Muolaulani, King.”70 All that would change the following year.

Upon the death of her mother-in-law, Mary Dominis, on April 25, 1889, Liliʻuokalani returned to live with her husband, John Owen Dominis, at Washington Place. Despite her move from Muʻolaulani, her Kapālama home continued to play a historically significant role.

**Muʻolaulani and the Rebellion of 1889**

In the spring of 1889 Robert Wilcox returned to Hawai‘i from San Francisco and once again resided at Muʻolaulani. Liliʻuokalani relates in her biography, *Hawaii’s Story by Hawaii’s Queen*:

> As the rooms formerly occupied by him and Mrs. Wilcox were not at that time used, and I was then living in Washington Place, I told him that he was welcome to go to Palama, and remain there until such time
as he should be able to provide for himself elsewhere. I could not foresee that my kindness and hospitality to these persons in need would be used by suspicious parties to connect my name with a foolish and ill-organized attempt subsequently made by Mr. Wilcox to restore some part of the authority of which the missionary party had deprived the king.”

Upon her return from a trip to Kaua‘i in July 1889, Lili‘uokalani visited Mu‘olaulani to inspect the house and grounds. She provides an account of her encounter with Wilcox at Mu‘olaulani:

I had finished my examinations, and was just on the point of leaving, when I heard steps on the front staircase; and knowing that some person was without, I advanced to the door, which I did not open, but drew down the grating, and met the gaze of a young man with haggard, anxious countenance. It was Mr. Robert W. Wilcox who was standing before me, trying with all his self-control to appear calm, but evidently much excited. He told me in a few words that he was ready to release the king from that hated thraldom under which he had been oppressed, and that measures had already been taken.

In an interview just after the rebellion, Lili‘uokalani indicated that “she ordered [Wilcox] away from the house and he took up his quarters in the servants’ cottages in rear.” Nevertheless, the presence of Wilcox at Mu‘olaulani implicated Lili‘uokalani by association. One of the headlines for the Daily Bulletin story following the revolution was clearly designed to imply the link: “Residence of the Heir Apparent the Starting Point of the Rebel March.” The ties continued in the article: “The rebels met at Princess Liliuokalani’s Palama residence Monday evening, and in the early morn of Tuesday marched from there, 180 strong, right along King Street to Richards Street, from there along Palace Walk to the rear gate of the Palace yard.” Chief Justice of the Hawai‘i Supreme Court, Albert Francis Judd, also made the connection: “Liliuokalani disavowed to me her knowledge or connivance with Wilcox’s plans, but the fact that the armed party under Wilcox assembled at her own house in the suburbs and started from there to the Palace, gives credence to the belief that she knew of it.”

Such a belief was the basis of a question posed by a Daily Bulletin reporter to Lili‘uokalani during an interview at Washington Place:
“Reports being around that you were implicated with Wilcox in his designs, and that he held secret meetings at your Palama residence which you attended, will you say whether or not such is the case?”

Lili‘uokalani denied involvement in the plot:

The Princess replied that she knew nothing whatever of Wilcox’s intentions until the Ministers informed her after her return from Hilo in June; that after being so informed she at once told Wilcox she did not approve of his designs if such was his intention, and told him he should desist without further delay; that she had never been present at any of his meetings.

The Lease of Mu‘olaulani

Lili‘uokalani further distanced herself from Mu‘olaulani with a six-month lease of the property starting October 10, 1890, to Ernest Hutchinson. By 1892 Hutchinson is listed as living in Makiki. An empty Mu‘olaulani provided now Queen Lili‘uokalani with a venue for an 1892 gathering that brought together various proponents for a new constitution. Lili‘uokalani recounts: “Accordingly a meeting was called to be held at Muolaulani Palace, at which there was to be an opportunity for them to compare their opinions and discuss them in my presence.” Mention of Mu‘olaulani temporarily ceases following Lili‘uokalani’s overthrow on January 17, 1893, her imprisonment at ‘Iolani Palace on January 16, 1895, and her subsequent house arrest at Washington Place.

Mu‘olaulani would once again come into the society spotlight when Lili‘uokalani leased her Kapālama residence to British Commissioner and Consul-General Albert George Sidney Hawes. An announcement appeared in the July 13, 1895, issue of the Hawaiian Star: “Maj. A.G.S. Hawes, the British Commissioner, has taken Liliuokalani’s Palama residence for five years.” With a diplomatic representative in residence, the halls of Mu‘olaulani once again provided a venue for social gatherings. On Tuesday, December 23, 1895, Hawes “gave a delightful musicale and dance at the Legation, Palama.” The formal lease was signed in May 1896 for $65 a month. A year later, in May 1897, Hawes would announce a major event: “The Britannic Majesty’s Commissioner and Consul-General extends a general invita-
tion to the celebration of Queen Victoria’s birthday on May 24th from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. at his Palama residence. The events in Hawai’i celebrating Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee, recognizing the sixtieth year of her reign, rose to a crescendo on Friday evening, June 25, 1897, when music and merry-making once again graced the rooms of Mu‘olaulani:

The reception and ball given by the Commissioner were a proper end of the Jubilee festivities. . . .

The Commissioner occupies the Palama residence of Queen Liliuokalani and the handsome rooms of that dwelling were decorated in a very artistic manner by lady friends of the genial host.

A magnificent floral structure, representing the crown of Hawaii in emblematic colors had been sent to the Commissioner by the retainers of Queen Liliuokalani, at her special request, and had a prominent place in the library. . . .

Exquisite refreshments were served during the evening and when the doors of Mr. Hawes residence closed he was again voted by all his guests the host par excellence of Hawaii-nei.

His role as host would be tragically cut short when Hawes died little over a month later on August 6, 1897, from an infected abscess related to a shipboard fall. The genial host, who had opened his leased home for diplomatic functions, was fondly remembered for his social gatherings: “At his establishment at Palama he entertained royally, and his door was always open to the cultured people of the Islands.” He had two months earlier proposed to Miss Eliza Gay, granddaughter of the owner of Ni‘ihau, and planned to continue to reside at Muʻolaulani after his wedding. Instead the residence was the site from which his body was borne to his funeral at St. Andrew’s Cathedral. “Death so untimely,” wrote Paradise of the Pacific, “coming in the wake of the Jubilee festivities impressed one sadly that in the midst of life we are in death.”

The popular Hawes was replaced by W. J. Kenny, Esq. who served as acting British Commissioner and Consul-General. The passing of Hawes also resulted in a renegotiation of the lease of Muʻolaulani. The Evening Bulletin reported on Friday, November 12, 1897, that Kenny would “likely occupy the premises of the late Commissioner Hawes at Palama. Negotiations to that end were practically concluded
today. Mr. Hawes’ lease of the place will run nearly four years longer, it having been originally made out for five years.”\textsuperscript{92} The 1898 *Husted’s Directory and Hand-Book of Honolulu* listed Kenny’s address as “King opp Dowsett lane.”\textsuperscript{93} This address agrees with contemporaneous maps of the area. A 1897 Monsarrat map (Figure 6) has Lili’uokalani’s name attached to the residence as well as the outline of the house of Princess Ruth Ke‘elikōlani.

The extensive grounds of Mu‘olaulani provided Kenny with a

![Figure 6](image_url)

**Figure 6.** An 1897 map by M.D. Monsarrat shows the location of Mu‘olaulani, marked as Liliuokalani (*sic*). The rectangular building across King Street from the Reform School indicates the unlabeled location of the house of Ruth Ke‘elikōlani. The small circle indicates the location of the artesian well. Registered Map 1910, Department of Accounting and General Services, State of Hawai‘i.
resource to support the British national sport in Hawai‘i. The Honolulu Cricket Club thanked its patron at a meeting in February 1898 “for his hospitality in preparing and placing at the use of the Club a practice ground at Palama . . . .” A reception on May 24, 1898, celebrated Queen Victoria’s seventy-eighth birthday. “The home in Palama was beautifully decorated, the flowers sent in by kind lay friends playing a most important part. A picture of Queen Victoria held a place of honor in the library of the Commissioner.”

That year Hawai‘i was annexed to the United States on August 12, 1898. The annexation resolution specified that the “existing treaties of the Hawaiian Islands with foreign nations shall forthwith cease and determine, being replaced by such treaties as may exist, or may hereafter be concluded between the United States and such foreign nations.” In January 1899, President William McKinley “granted the first exquartus to foreign Consuls to discharge their functions in the Hawaiian Islands. In the list of Consular officers recognized for such purposes appeared to-day the [name] of William Robert Hoare to be British Consul at Honolulu.” Hoare would not arrive in Honolulu until February 16, 1899. The journey of several thousand miles from London took its toll on Hoare, who, the Hawaiian Gazette reported: “did not yesterday consult with Commissioner Kenny regarding the time for the transfer of the Consulate, but Mr. Hoare states that the transfer will be made within a few days.”

With the passage of the Organic Act, Hoare became H.M. Consul for the Territory of Hawai‘i in 1900. The 1900-1901 Honolulu city directory lists “Hoar [sic] W R, Consul Great Britain, Office King opp Dowsett’s lane.” With the new consul in residence the entertaining of guests once again resumed. Queen Victoria’s birthday celebration in May 1900 provided Hoare an opportunity to draw Honolulu’s elite to Mu‘olaulani:

The reception at the British Consulate, Palama, in honor of Queen Victoria’s birthday was largely attended. Many ladies were among the callers. Consul Hoare and Miss Hoare received the guests in the parlor. . . . The government band played on the grounds during the reception. “God Save the Queen” was timed for high noon, when the Queen’s health was drunk on Judge Stanley’s proposal. A fine collation was spread in the lanai.
The turn of the century would soon sadly mark the end of Victoria’s long reign. Hoare made special arrangements at Mu‘olaulani to commemorate the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, inviting British residents “to attend a meeting to be held at the British Consulate 651 King Street Honolulu on Saturday next the 2nd February at 2:30 p.m.”

Japanese Hotel

A July 8, 1901, inventory of the Kapālama property helps identify the various rooms and parts of the residence that included a veranda, three parlors, a music room, dining room, kitchen, three bedrooms and three closets. The inventory marked the end of the lease to the British Consulate, for on July 8, 1901, Lili‘uokalani leased to Nakata “that lot of land on King street at Kapalama known as Mu‘olaulani lately occupied by W. Robert Hoare” for five years at $780 per annum. Nakata, in turn, subleased Mu‘olaulani to K. Koyasu on July 30, 1901. In August 1901, The Honolulu Republican announced the new use for the property: “The old British Consulate, opposite the Dowsett homestead on the Palama road, is now being used as a Japanese hotel.”

Territorial Political Activity

Mu‘olaulani, a site for revolution a decade earlier, became a center for political activity during the early years of the Territory of Hawai‘i. The large residences of Kapalama provided meeting sites for political parties. “A Republican meeting will occur at the Achi residence in Kapalama, and a Home Rule one also at a near-by place, at Muolaulani, at the servants’ quarters of the Queen.” Another 1902 political rally of Home Rulers at Mu‘olaulani drew 300 to 500 persons and speakers, including Delegate Robert Wilcox “held their attention to a late hour bordering on to midnight.” Another large gathering of the Home Rule party took place at Mu‘olaulani the next year. The site of the planning of the Wilcox Rebellion of 1889 had become the rally place for Wilcox’s party in 1903. In early 1904, Mu‘olaulani, a gathering place for the Home Rule party, saw the formation of a new precinct
club of the rival Democratic party “at the present abode of F. J. Testa at Muolaulani.”¹⁰⁸ An October 12, 1904, list of political meetings included the Home Rulers in the Fifth District “at Muolaulani, Queen Liliuokalani’s premises.”¹⁰⁹ Three days later, on October 15, 1904, the Democrats once again held their meeting at Mu’olaulani.¹¹⁰ References to events at Mu’olaulani cease in 1904.

Tenements

By 1906 Mu’olaulani was divided into fourteen separate residences and labeled as a tenement. Although used in the pejorative today, the term “tenement” was used to refer to any property rented to multiple families. The 1906 Dakin Fire Insurance Map (Figure 7) gives the most detailed drawing of the residence, which featured a pair of curved staircases on the King Street face of the building. A veranda ran along the entire King Street side of the house. Another curved staircase connected to the veranda from the southeast side. The northeast side of the building also featured wide verandas and two rooms with curved bays. From the north corner a long narrow wing stretched northeast. A veranda ran along the entire southeast face of the wing. On the 1906 map the residence is given two addresses. The five-room wing that parallels King Street is numbered 430 King Street; the nine-room wing parallel to Pua Lane is 438 King Street.

On September 14, 1908 Lili’uokalani signed a lease with Nobuichi Oshima for a three-year period from April 1, 1908.¹¹¹ Later that year, in November, a $70,000 mortgage was taken by Lili’uokalani in 1908 from Claus Spreckels that included “the land at Kapalama known as Muolaulani.”¹¹² A little over a year later, in December 1909, Lili’uokalani created a deed of trust that gave in part: “Loe, of Honolulu, the house and premises, now occupied by her at Muolaunli, Kapalama, Honolulu, and $180 a year [Lo’e was the maternal grandmother of Lili’uokalani’s hānai daughter Lydia Kaonohiponiponiokalani Aholo]; Hakau and his wife Kainalu, of Honolulu, the lot of land enclosed and occupied by them at Muolaulani, and $150 a year.”¹¹³

In 1911 the Hawai’i Territorial Senate received a resolution from the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of Honolulu propos-
ing: “that those premises situate at Kapalama, lying on the Waikiki side of Pua Lane, and known as ‘Liliuokalani Premises’, should be made a park for the use of people living in that locality.” The request was ultimately tabled by House of Representatives, ending any further consideration.

The residence appears in the 1914 Sanborn Fire maps labeled as “Tenements.” The addresses are changed to 642A and 642C King Street. A kitchen building mauka of the King Street wing is labeled 642B King Street.
Lili‘uokalani died at Washington Place on November 11, 1917, and Mu‘olaulani passed to her trust.

Only the wing parallel to Pua Lane remains in the 1927 and 1950 Sanborn Fire maps. The King Street wing was replaced by six buildings in two rows of three each. The only picture of Mu‘olaulani (just the remnant wing) is part of a 1939 aerial photograph of the Hawaiian Housing Commission Tract (Figure 8). A map of Parcel 1 of Mayor

Figure 8. An aerial photograph of the Hawaiian Housing Commission Tract in 1939 shows the last remnant of Mu‘olaulani, the L-shaped building just left of the six identical buildings behind the King Street storefronts. Courtesy of Palama Settlement Archives.
The map of Parcel 1, Mayor Wright Homes, Hawaii Housing Authority, dated August 27, 1940, contains the outline of the buildings contained in Figure 7, including the remnants of Mu'olaulani: a long wing attached to almost square building with a semicircular bay facing northeast. Public Domain. Map courtesy of Land Survey Division, Department of Accounting and General Services, State of Hawai‘i.
Wright Homes dated August 27, 1940, shows the same structures on the property (Figure 9). The wing disappears entirely in the 1956 Sanborn Fire Map, supplanted by a public housing development that replaced many of the tenements mauka of King Street between Pua Lane and Liliha Street.

A Rich Heritage

Today, no physical trace of the royal residences of Kapālama remains. That the houses were not preserved during the years of the Republic of Hawai‘i or the annexed Territory of Hawai‘i is not surprising. In addition to being the houses of Hawaiian royalty, both residences served as locations of resistance against the American interests that overthrew the Kingdom of Hawai‘i: Mu'olaulani as the planning venue for the Wilcox Rebellion of 1889 and Mauna Kamala as the home of Hawaiian patriot and anti-annexationist Joseph Nāwahi. Both locations met ignominious ends. The extension of Kanoa Street eliminated the site of Princess Ruth Ke‘elikōlani’s home near Banyan Street. Instead of a park marking the location of the Mu‘olaulani, Building 2 of Mayor Wright Homes sits on the former site of the Kapālama residence of Queen Lili‘uokalani. A service station and building supply store now occupy the King Street frontage of the queen’s property and is still owned by her trust. Though gone, the remembered royal residences of Kapālama point to the rich heritage of the ahupua‘a and the instrumental role that the homes played in hosting major events in Hawaii’s political and social history.

Notes

2 Brief Mention, PCA Sep. 7, 1878: 3.
3 Registered Map 1382, Department of Accounting and General Services.
4 Island Locals, HG Sep. 21, 1881: 3.
5 DB Apr. 10, 1882: 1.
7 Directory and Hand-Book of Honolulu and The Hawaiian Islands (San Francisco: F.M. Husted, 1892) 201.
8 Local and General News, DB Feb. 24, 1893: 3.
16 Oshita, “Hawaii Conference-Conference History.”
18 Howell, “Among the Chinese in Honolulu,” 815.
20 Howell, “Among the Chinese in Honolulu,” 816.
22 Howell, “Among the Chinese in Honolulu,” 816.
25 Bishop Estate Map Registered No. 287. Endowment Group, Land Assets Division, Kamehameha Schools, Honolulu, Hawaii.
26 Gwenfread Allen, “Banyan Tree is Center of Old District,” HSB Oct. 6, 1934: sec. 2, 10.
remembering the royal residences of kapālama

34 EB June 3, 1904: 7.
38 PCA May 8, 1910: 1.
42 Yansheng Ma Lum, Raymond Mun Kong Lum, Sun Yat-sen in Hawaii: Activities and Supporters (Honolulu: U of Hawai‘i P, 1999) 82.
43 Gwenfred Allen, “Banyan Tree is Center of Old District,” HSB Oct. 6, 1934: sec. 2, 10.
45 Lili‘uokalani, Diary, Feb. 6, 1885, BPBM Archives.
46 Lili‘uokalani, Diary, Feb. 13, 1885, BPBM Archives.
47 Lili‘uokalani, Diary, Feb. 17, 1885, BPBM Archives.
48 Lili‘uokalani, Diary, Feb. 24, 1885, BPBM Archives.
49 Lili‘uokalani, Diary, Mar. 8, 1885, BPBM Archives.
50 Lili‘uokalani, Diary, Mar. 12, 1885, BPBM Archives.
51 Lili‘uokalani, Diary, Mar. 15, 1885, BPBM Archives.
52 Lili‘uokalani, Diary, Mar. 21, 1885, BPBM Archives.
53 Lili‘uokalani, Diary, Mar. 29, 1885, BPBM Archives.
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56 Pukui, Place Names of Hawaii 158.
58 Island Locals, HG May 27, 1885: 4.
61 Island Locals, HG Aug. 17, 1886: 5.
64 Lili‘uokalani, Hawaii’s Story by Hawaii’s Queen (Boston: Lothrop, Shepard & Lee, 1898) 186.
Liliʻuokalani, *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen* 116.


“After the Battle,” *DB* July 31, 1889: 3.


*Compilation of Reports of Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, 1789–1901*, VI (1901): 800.


Liliʻuokalani, Lease, Oct. 10, 1890, Liliʻuokalani to Ernest Hutchinson. Manuscript Collection, Liliʻuokalani Trust, M-397, Land Records, Leases 1883–1899, box 6, folder 6, AH.

*Directory and Hand-Book of Honolulu and the Hawaiian Islands* (San Francisco: F.M. Husted, 1892) 155.

Liliʻuokalani, *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen* 230.


Liliʻuokalani, Lease with inventory of property, May 1, 1896, Liliʻuokalani to A.G.S. Hawes. Manuscript Collection, Queen Liliʻuokalani Trust, M-93, box 1, folder 10, item 80, AH.


*Husted’s Directory and Hand-Book of Honolulu and the Hawaiian Islands* (San Francisco: F.M. Husted, 1892) 100.


“Consul Selects a Home,” *EB* Nov. 12, 1897: 1.


“Many Called,” *HG* May 27, 1898: 2.

*Husted’s Directory and Hand-Book of Honolulu (1898) xlii.

REMEMBERING THE ROYAL RESIDENCES OF KAPĀLAMA  177

100  “Victoria Day Reception,” EB May 24, 1900: 1.
102  Lili‘uokalani, Inventory of Goods and Furniture at Mu‘olaulani, July 8, 1901. Manuscript Collection, Queen Lili‘uokalani Collection, M-93, box 1, folder 10, item 75, AH.
103  Lili‘uokalani, Lease, July 8, 1901, Lili‘uokalani to Nakata. Manuscript Collection, Lili‘uokalani Trust, M-397, Land Records, Leases, 1900–1905, box 6, folder 7, AH.
105  The Political Field, Independent Oct. 28, 1902: 3.
107  Local and General News, Independent Oct. 6, 1903: 3.
110  Political Meetings, Independent Oct. 15, 1904: 3.
112  “Liliuokalani gives $70,000 Mortgage,” HG Nov. 13, 1908: 3.
114  Senate Journal, Sixth Legislature, Regular Session, Territory of Hawai‘i, 1911, 12.
115  House Journal, Sixth Legislature, Regular Session, Territory of Hawai‘i, 1911, 1050–1051.