

Hulihee Palace  
Alii Drive  
Kailua-Kona  
Hawaii County  
Hawaii

HABS No. HI-49

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HI,  
1-KAIKO,  
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PHOTOGRAPHS

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HULIHEE PALACE

HABS No. HI-49

Location: Alii Drive, Kailua-Kona, Hawaii County, Hawaii.  
Occupant: The Daughters of Hawaii.  
Owner: State of Hawaii.  
Use: Hawaiian Museum.

PART I. HISTORICAL SUMMARY

Hulihee Palace was built in 1838 by John Adams Kuakini, using native labor. Local materials, including lava rock, coral mortar, ohia for structural timber, and native koa wood for interior woodwork, were used in the building.

Kuakini, one of the early governors of the island of Hawaii, was the brother-in-law of King Kamehameha I. He seems to have encouraged the work of the early missionaries in both educational and religious fields, having at one time conducted a school in his own yard. He was also instrumental in the building of Mokuaikaua Church (1836), which still stands across Alii Drive from the Palace.

Upon his death in 1844, the property passed to his adopted son, the husband of Princess Ruth Keelikolani, and eventually to the Princess. She was the great-granddaughter of Kamehameha I, and became governor of the island for fourteen years. The heir to her extensive land holdings, Princess Bernice Pauahi (Mrs. Charles) Bishop, established the Bishop Estate and Kamehameha School, both well-known names in modern Hawaii.

After the death of Princess Ruth, the property was acquired in 1884 by King Kalakaua, who made Hulihee his summer residence. Modernization by Kalakaua included stuccoing the exterior, plastering the interior, relocating the one-story kitchen wing (which was attached on the north), and widening the gallery (lanai). The photograph of the exterior of the Palace taken prior to 1884, which is included in this report as HI-49-1, shows the raw lava rock exterior walls, the kitchen wing and an entirely different lanai on the west, facing the sea.

Through various successions and purchases, the property was acquired by the Territory of Hawaii in 1925 and placed under the care of the Daughters of Hawaii for a Hawaiian Museum by Executive Order 299, dated October 27, 1927. (A copy of this order is in the HABS Field Records accompanying this HABS documentation).

Time and a period of neglect and disuse in the early twentieth century had left the Palace in a general state of disrepair. These have been corrected through the efforts of the Daughters of Hawaii. The extent of damage is described in an October 18, 1927 report by Rothwell, Kangeter and Lester, Architects, who were engaged to rehabilitate the Palace. (A copy of this letter is in the Field Records accompanying this HABS documentation).

The next major restoration seems to have occurred in 1953. This was carried out by the Department of Public Works, Territory of Hawaii. Drawings for this work are on file today in the Public Works Office (Job #5653). This work included new structural framing, including the roof trusses, and the replacement of deteriorated woodwork and trim.

REFERENCES

Hulihee Palace, monograph compiled by Ann M. Hicks for the Daughters of Hawaii, undated.

Minutes of the Daughters of Hawaii, various dates. 1924-1957: located at Queen Emma's Summer Palace, Honolulu, Hawaii.

Honolulu Advertiser: located in Hawaii State Archives, Honolulu, September 11, 1921, Special section, p. 1; March 29, 1925, Soc. section, p. 9; April 19, 1927, p. 5; June 24, 1953, p. 5.

Jane L. Winne, Kuakini and Hulihee (Honolulu, 1928) p. 7.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. Detailed Description of the Exterior:

1. The rectangular building contains a basement, two stories, and an unfloored attic. It measures 62' - 4" across the front and 32' - 10" in depth, excluding the rear gallery (lanai). The peak of the gable is 32' - 6" above the wash of the water table.
2. Foundations: The exposed foundation walls on the interior of the basement are unplastered rubble lava rock set in coral mortar. They are approximately 2' - 9" thick, and are finished on the exterior with dashed cement. There are two small rectangular vents on the east front and three on the west wall--opening to the crawl space under the lanai.
3. Wall construction: The exterior bearing walls, which are 2' - 6" thick, are rubble lava rock. They are presently finished with a dash coat of cement and are painted grey. The paint has virtually obliterated a former scoring simulating stone coursing. A projecting keystone lintel over the first floor openings and a projecting flat band cornice at the top of the east wall are the only adornments remaining on the wall surface.
4. Structural system, framing: Beginning in the basement with the exposed framing for the first floor, there are two, rough-cut 12" x 13" girders located under the transverse partitions of the first floor. These space the entire 28' and bear on the east and west walls. They are supported at mid-span by 7" x 7" ohia wood posts set on truncated concrete bases. These girders have evidence of termites and general deterioration. Notched into

the girders at midspan is a 10" x 12" longitudinal beam which, in turn, is notched to receive floor joists, 2' on center. These are fashioned for the most part from logs, with the upper surface planed flat to receive the flooring above. Perimeter beams of the same size rest on the foundation walls. The above-mentioned framing, if not original, could possibly date from the 1884 modernization by Kalakaua. This obviously early framing has been reinforced by the introduction of new 6" x 10" beams and 6" x 6" posts at the midpoints of each joist span.

It is presumed that the original second floor framing was replaced and/or strengthened during the 1953 restoration, as called for in the drawings for that project.

In the attic, the second floor ceiling is framed by 6-1/2" x 10" wall plates and similar longitudinal beams space 11' - 3" from each wall. 2" x 7" ceiling joists, 1' - 5" on center, are notched into these beams. All of this framing appears to be very early ohia wood and is still in good condition.

The roof framing is new, in accordance with the drawings mentioned above.

5. Porches, stoops: The entrance porch, facing Alii Drive on the east, is one story with concrete steps and a floor of octagonal tiles set in a natural concrete border. The steps consist of four treads, each 14" wide, and five risers, each 7" high. The flat, built-up roof, surrounded by a wooden balustrade, is supported by two square 8" x 8" corner posts and corresponding engaged pilasters at the wall. The edges of the posts are chamfered. The 7-1/2" plinth is unmolded. The shaft of the posts extended beyond the capitals, which measure 13" across, to receive decorative wood scrolls, cut from 1-3/8" stock. A balustrade cut from 7/8" material encloses the two sides of the porch. The flat ceiling is wood. It should be noted that there are several scrolls of a different design stored in the basement.

The entrance porch on the south has a gabled, corrugated aluminum roof, painted white. The floor and steps are concrete, the latter having four treads, each 11" wide, and five risers, each 7" high. All but the lower step are enclosed by cheek walls, which form the bases for the corner posts. These chamfered posts are 7-1/2" square, and rest on 7-1/2" molded plinths. The shafts extend beyond the molded capitals, which measure 1' - 3-1/2" across, to receive decorative scrolls identical to those on the entrance porch. A molded astragal occurs 6" below the lowest molding of the capitals.

Although these posts differ from those on the front, they seem identical to those shown in the early photograph mentioned above. This photograph also shows a gabled roof, but with arched panels instead of the existing scroll work at the ceiling line.

On the north, there is a concrete stoop with four treads, 14' wide, and five risers, 7" high. All of these steps are enclosed by a cheek wall. There is no roof at this entrance. Concrete steps to the basement are adjacent on the west of this stoop.

The existing two-story gallery (lanai) on the west (makai) is quite different from this feature as shown in the above-noted photograph. In the photograph, the first floor appears to be just slightly above grade, instead of the 2' - 10" above grade that it now measures. There were four posts, or columns, supporting the gallery on the second floor, and there was a frame kitchen wing with a gabled roof projecting on the north. Today the lanai is divided into five bays, each approximately 12' - 3" wide. The balustrade is on both sides and on the front, except at the center bay. The wooden posts, balusters and scrolls match the details on the south porch, although there were formerly arched panels at the head. On the first floor, existing floor and ceiling are wood. The sloping ceiling is plastered on the second floor. In the south-west corner of the porch is a new exterior wood stairway with storage space below the landing. The wide central steps from first to grade have three treads, each 12" wide, and four risers, each 7" high. These land at a concrete platform on grade with a tile surface similar to the front porch on the east. A wooden lattice encloses the crawl space below the lanai. The eave of the roof at the second story projects approximately 2' - 6" beyond the posts. The existing dimensions of this lanai seem to have been established by Klakaua's modernization in 1884.

6. Openings:

- a. Doorway and doors: The opening at the front entrance is treated in a decorative Victorian Gothic manner. The rectangular opening is set back into the reveal of the masonry 1' - 6" and is framed with a very narrow molding. There is a transom with thirty-eight 4" x 7" lights across the opening, separated from the single door and flanking side panels by a molded transom bar. The koa wood door, 1-3/4" thick, is treated with diagonal panels forming a chevron design on both faces. To each side, projecting beyond the plane of the door, there is a single panel below the glazed sidelights. The glazed portion consists of twelve 7-1/4" x 9-1/2" rectangular lights sub-divided by simulated "leading" on the exterior face. The entire doorway is raised on a concrete sill 5-1/2" high.

On the balcony above the entrance door is another decorated opening which is set 5-1/2" into the masonry reveal. Under a molded transom bar the double doors are flanked by aside lights. Above them are three pointed arches which correspond to the division below; the side arches being lower than the center one. These arches have a Gothic muntin pattern. The double doors and the side lights are glazed in the upper portion with eight 7" x 9" rectangular lights, subdivided in a pattern similar to the main entrance door. There are two vertical panels below the glazing of the doors, and a single wood panel below the side lights. The interior reveal is paneled in koa wood at both jamb and soffit.

Other exterior doors on the north, south, and west are 1-3/4" ten-panel koa wood. The 1-3/4" x 7" exterior wood trim is set in the reveals of the openings and painted with a grey sand finish to match the painted masonry walls. On the interior, the reveals are splayed and paneled in koa at jambs and soffits. Sills conditions vary from solid wood at the door between the entrance hall and lanai to a combination of concrete and wood with wood thresholds at the other doors.

- b. Windows and shutters: On the exterior, the wooden window frames, which are painted green, are set 3-1/2" to 4" in the reveals of the openings. There are three distinct profiles for these frames. The typical window frame has three tracks for sash, suggesting a third sash or a pocket for the former shutters. Other frames on the second floor lanai also have three tracks. Here, however, the exterior track is much narrower. The third condition is the two-track jamb piece, obviously a later replacement. The existing window sashes on the two main floors have two-over-two lights that measure 1' - 6-3/4" x 3' - 3-1/2" in the upper sash, and 1' - 6-3/4" x 2' - 1" in the lower. The early photograph shows double-hung sash which are painted white, with dark shutters on both floors. One or more shutter pintles are still in place at most windows. Windows in the gable ends of the attic are double-hung, six-over-six lights.
7. Roof - shape, covering: The gabled roof is covered with modern corrugated aluminum, painted white. On the west rear, the pitch of the roof breaks, to continue over the lanai.

8. Cornice, eaves: The east front wall terminates in a flat projecting band 7" high, above which is a multi-membered wood cornice and concealed wood gutter measuring 15" over-all. In addition, wooden modillion blocks are spaced 5' - 6" on center across the cornice.

At the lanai on the west, the wide overhanging eaves are supported by brackets jig-sawn out of 3/4" stock. These brackets do not appear in the early photograph mentioned above.

B. Detailed Description of the Interior:

1. Floor plans: This simple rectangular building is divided into three rooms on both floors by two interior partitions, which extend through from the east to the west exterior walls. The center room, which is the entrance hall on the first floor, is approximately 1' wider than the rooms on each side. Two turned wood columns are placed on axis with the entrance door on the first floor. The stairway is in the southwest corner of the entrance hall. Exterior door and window openings are symmetrical on the east and south walls only.

In the basement, a cistern is located at the south end, and a modern wooden partition forms a storeroom in the northwest corner.

2. Stairways: The koa wood stairway has 13 treads, each 11-1/2" wide, a corner landing and 15 risers, each approximately 9" high. The square newel posts are 3" x 3"; the balusters are 1" x 1/2"; the handrail is rounded. There is a closet with a paneled door under the landing. The stairs were replaced several years ago.

The exterior stair in the southwest corner of the lanai is modern.

3. Flooring: All floors on both stories are 5-1/8" pine, nailed and sealed. In the basement, there is a modern cement floor in the north end and a dirt floor in the south end.
4. Walls and ceiling finish: Walls are plastered and painted light cream. The plastered ceilings are painted white and on the first floor are decorated with plaster moldings 2' - 1" from the face of the wall.
5. Doorways and doors: The doors have been removed on the lower floor. On the second floor, they are ten-paneled, 1-1/2" koa. Door trim on both floors is molded. Jambs begin at the floor without plinth blocks.

6. Decorative trim: In addition to the dark varnished koa paneling at the reveals of the openings, the interior is enhanced by the plaster cornice-ceiling cove moldings which are identical in profile in the end rooms of both floors. The profiles of the center room on both floors are also identical, but differ from the end rooms. In addition, the ceilings of the first floor have plaster moldings.

There are molded plaster rosettes (3' diameter) in the center of all ceilings of both floors. The crystal chandeliers, imported from Germany in 1953, are suspended within them. On the first floor, the decorative details combine acanthus and puttimotoifs around the center pendant. The outer band consists of a band of shell and floral motifs. On the second floor the center pendant, which consists of radiating leaves, is surrounded by a ring of spools and globular mutules. The extreme outer band of beads is broken by alternating shells and floral pieces.

7. Notable hardware: There is no notable hardware in the house. However, in the basement is an old paneled wood gate, the top rail of which is a concave quarter circle. A large rusted strap hinge at the top follows the contour of the rail.
8. Lighting: Modern electric.
9. Heating: None.

C. Site:

Hulihee Palace is now in the heart of Kailua-Kona, amid the bustle of hotels and tourist shops. Facing east, it is situated between Alii Drive and the sea on the west. The property is enclosed by a low dry-joint stonewall on the east, curving on the north to join the stone sea wall, which wraps around on the west. There is a wide chained opening in the wall on the curved north corner, and a main entrance gateway with high stone gate-posts on the east. An iron gate has replaced the paneled wood gate now stored in the basement.

There are several out-buildings on the site. A small, modern frame structure in the northeast corner contains a kitchen and restroom facilities. Just outside of the south entrance of the Palace is a grass pavilion, representing Kamehameha's original hut, which is claimed to have been here. Immediately south of the pavilion is a one-story frame caretaker's cottage, which replaces an earlier two-story guest house.

At the foundation of the Palace are low planting beds defined by rock borders. Beyond this bed on the north, east, and west is a narrow sidewalk consisting of small black rocks embedded in cement and bordered with smooth cement.

Various tropical plants are scattered informally around the green grass lawn. The most common trees and plants are Hau, Monkeypod, Coconut Palm, Hala, Lauae, Hibiscus, Ti, Plumeria, Red Ginger, Cactus and various Ferns.

In the southwest part of the sea wall is a deep stone-walled pool, apparently once used as a fresh-water pool for guests. It now contains several varieties of fish.

Prepared by: Woodrow W. Wilkins  
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