

HONOLULU'S PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS: A BRIEF HISTORY

Historic Hawai'i Foundation

With Research by Wendie McAllaster & Don Hibbard

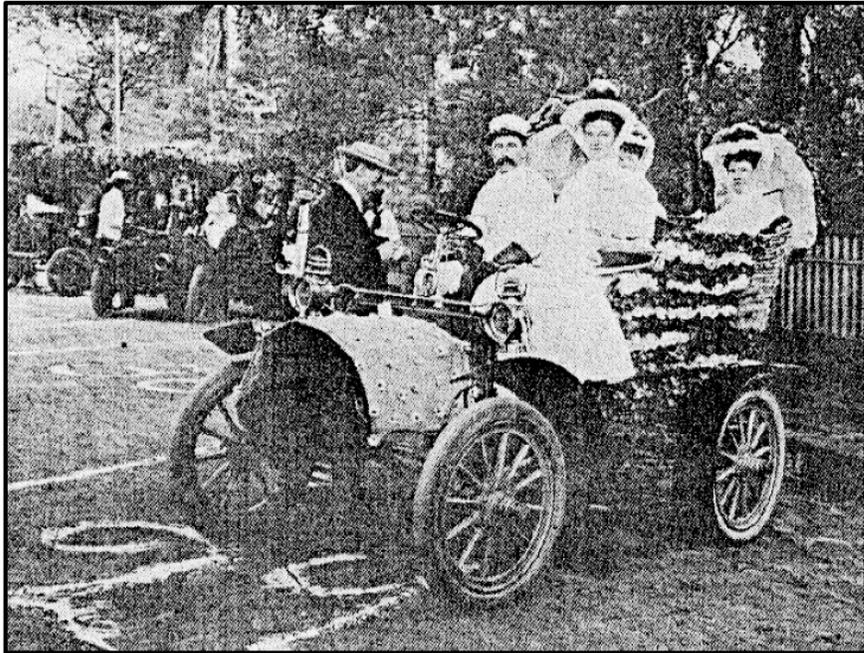
November 2017

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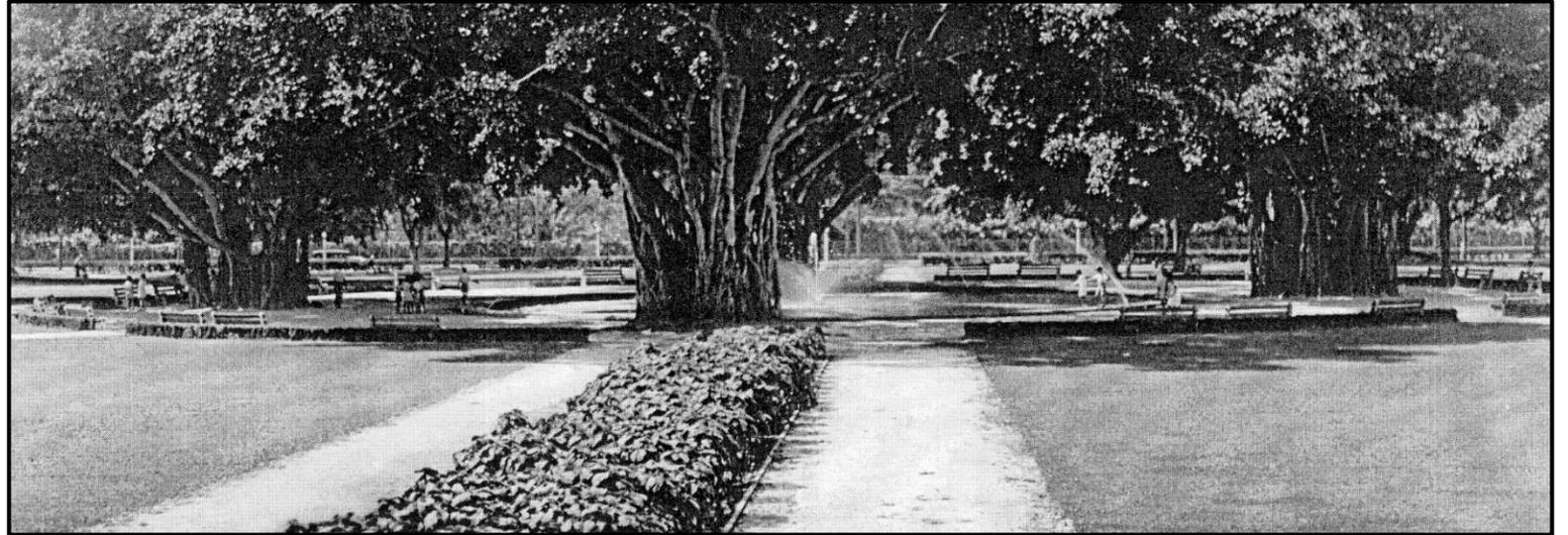
HISTORIC HAWAI'I FOUNDATION

Founded in 1974, Historic Hawai'i Foundation is a membership-based, statewide non-profit organization that encourages the preservation of historic buildings, sites, objects and districts relating to the history of Hawai'i.

Thomas Square, 1843



Preparation for Gala Parade (Hawai'i State Archives)



ca 1950 (Hawai'i State Archives)

Thomas Square, 1843

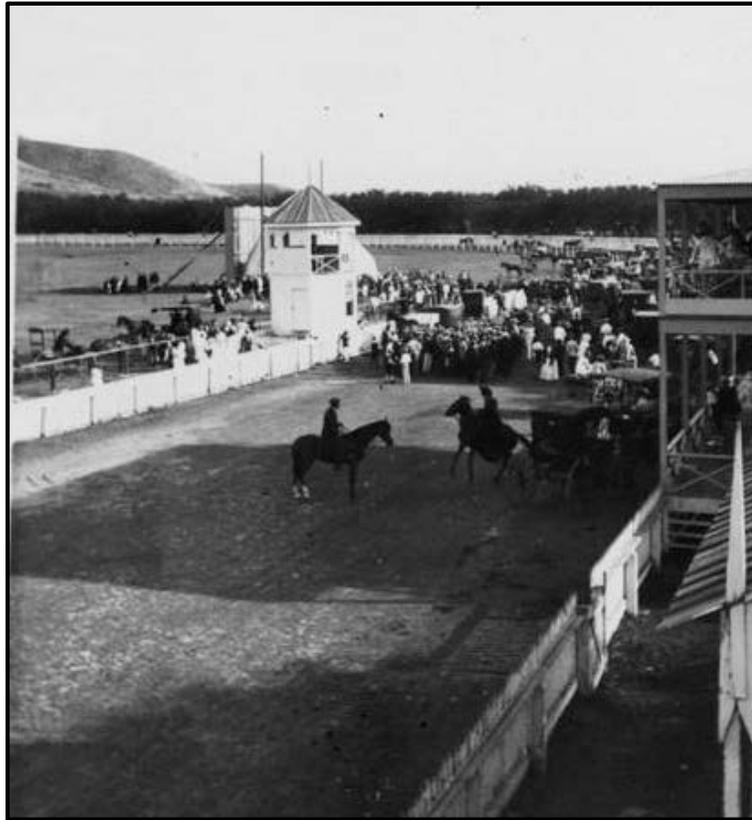


Thomas Square, 1843

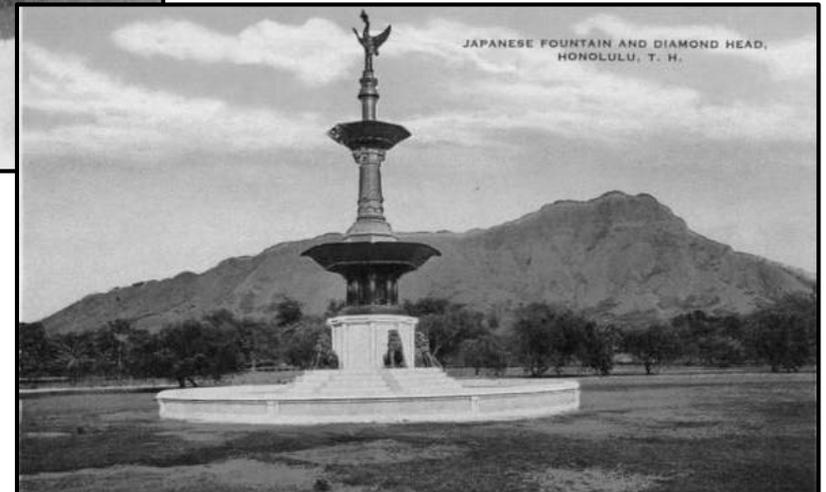




Kapi'olani Park, 1877



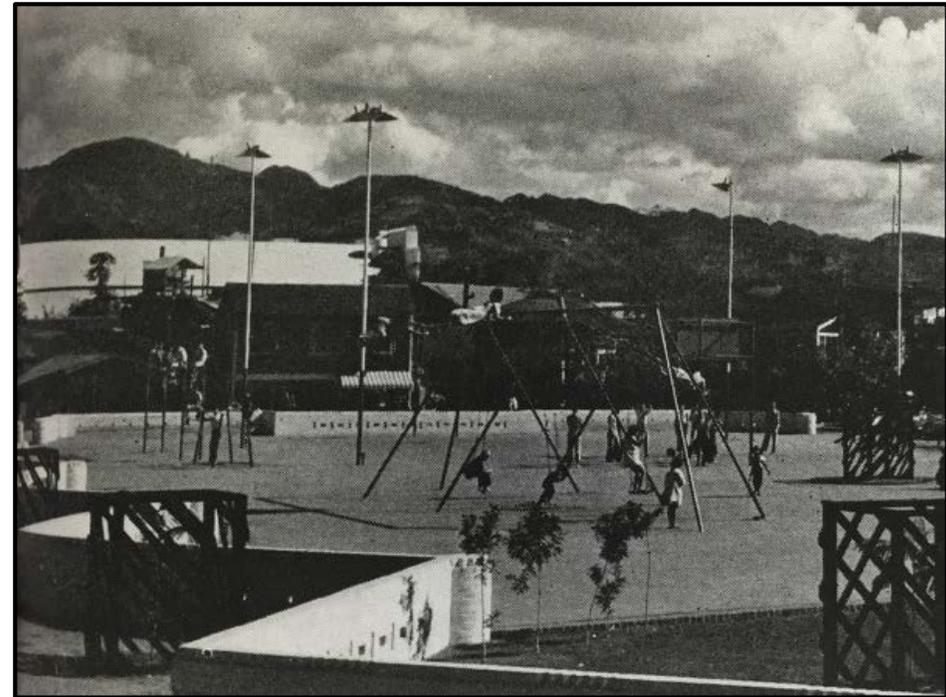
(Hawai'i State Archives, nd).



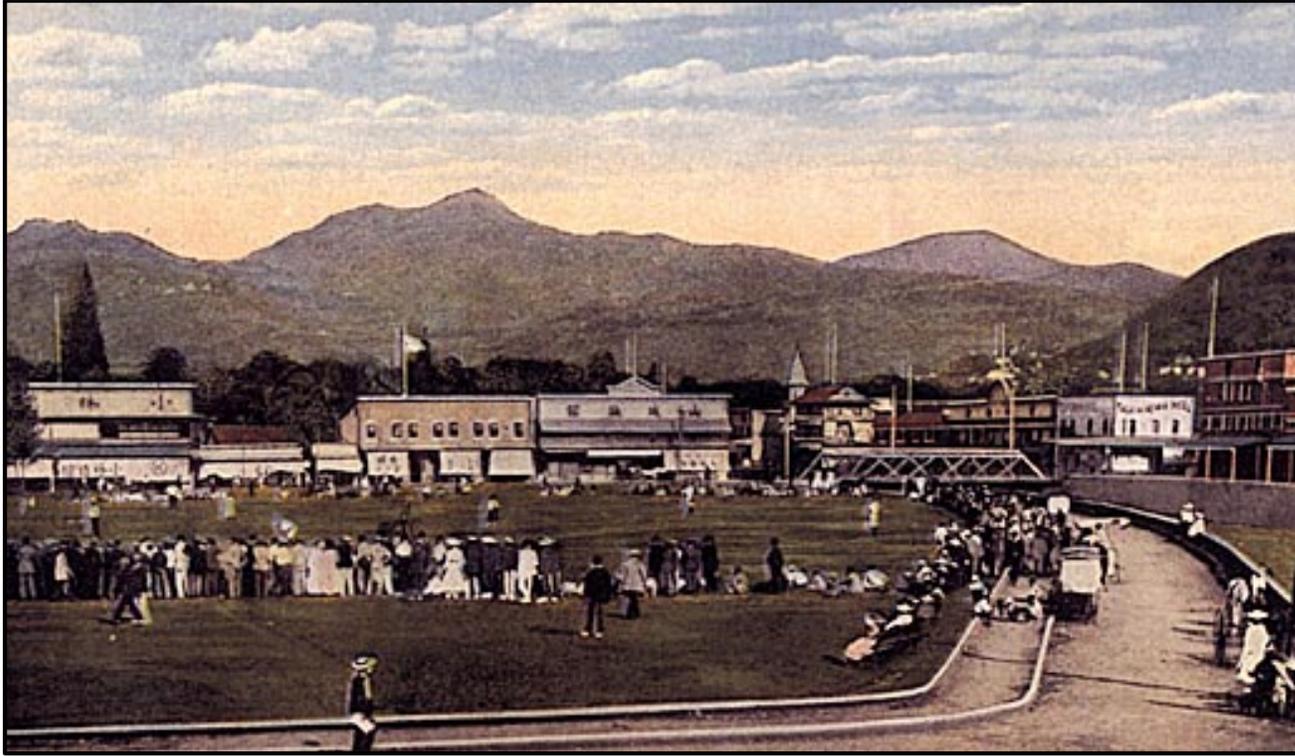
Playground Movement in Hawai'i, 1896 – 1930s

Free Kindergarten and Children's Aid Association

- A'ala Park (1900-1904)
- Smith & Beretania Playground (1911)
- Kamāmalu
- Atkinson



'A'ala Park, ca 1904



Baseball 1915, postcard from "Streetcar Days in Honolulu,"
Honolulu Advertiser 3/2002; photo courtesy of MacKinnon Simpson



Parade, ca 1951-52

Honolulu Recreation Commission, 1922



Playground at Atkinson Park, Kaka'ako, 1916

City established a Recreation Commission with Julie Judd Swanzy (president of the Free Kindergarten Association) as Commission Chair

Kindergarten Association turned its 4 playgrounds over to the City. Another 5 playgrounds opened in other urban areas.

Recreation Commission merged with the Parks Board in 1946

Honolulu Park Board & Territorial Park Board, 1930s

New Deal

- Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA)
- Civil Works Administration (CWA)
- Works Progress Administration (WPA)
- National Youth Administration (NYA)

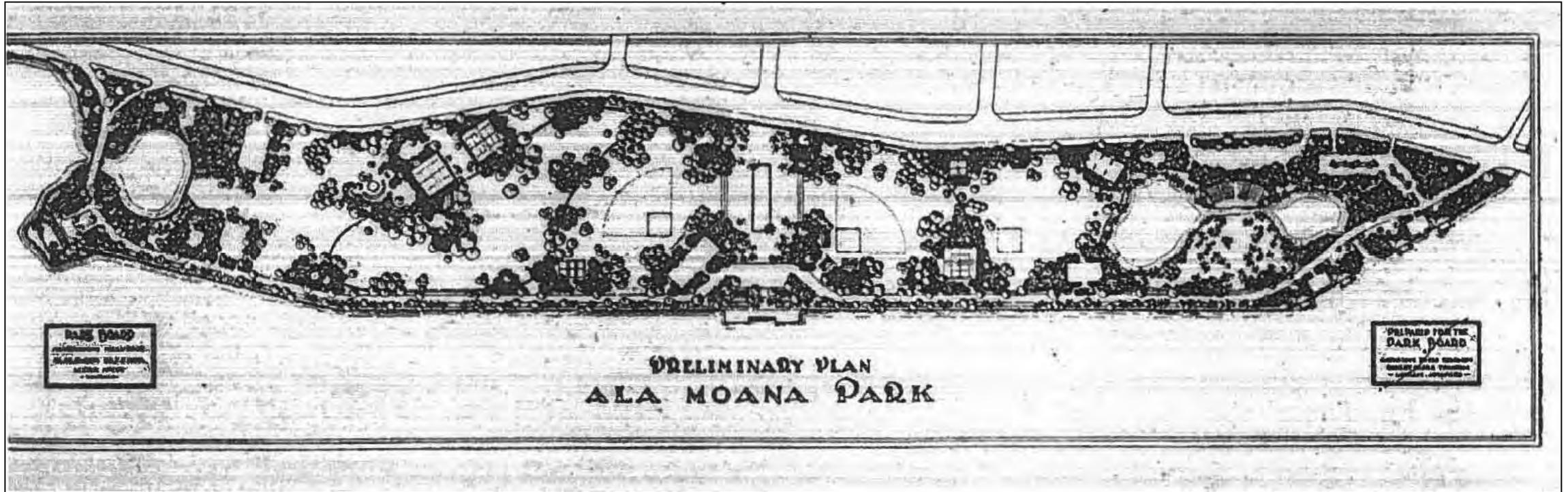


Payroll line at Ala Moana (Hawai'i State Archives)



Construction of Banyan Court (Hawai'i State Archives)

Ala Moana Park, 1934



Preliminary Plan for the Park Board, 1931

by Catherine Jones Richards and Robert Thompson

Ala Moana Park



Early Construction, 1932 (Hawai'i State Archives)

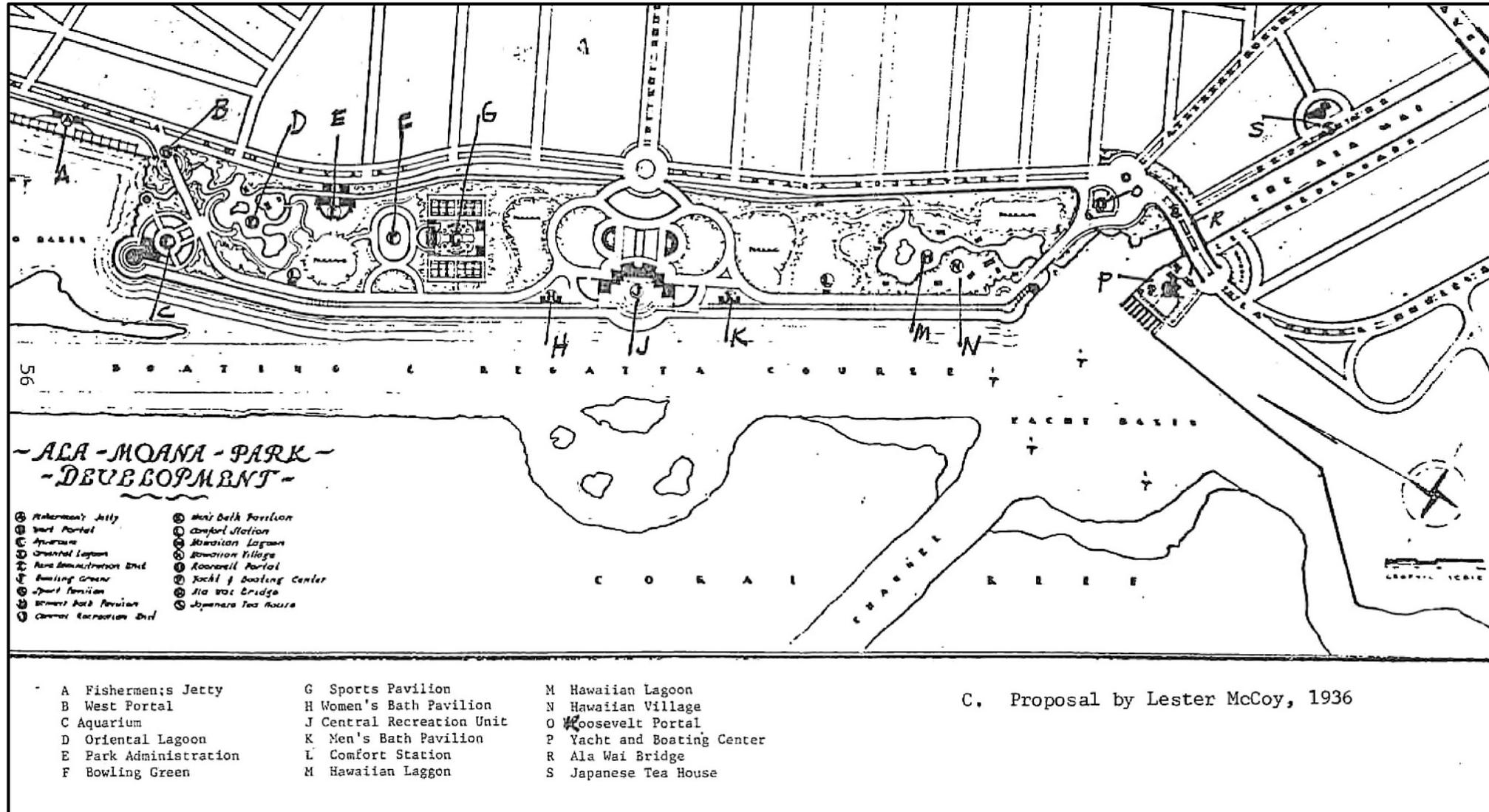


Ala Moana Park



(Hawai'i State Archives)

Ala Moana Park



Harry Sims Bent, Honolulu Park Architect

Major Parks

- Ala Moana Park
- Mother Waldron Playground
- Kawānanakoa Playground
- Haleʻiwa Beach Park
- Ala Wai Park Clubhouse



Design elements:

- Angular zigzags
- Curvilinear shapes
- Repetitive patterns
- Smooth concrete surfaces
- Flat roof lines
- Open pergolas
- Influenced by Art Deco and Moderne design styles
- Incorporated playfulness into sturdy, utilitarian structures

Ala Moana Park



Roosevelt Portal Dedication
(State Archives)



(K. Kido, 2014)



Ala Moana Park

Bridle Path Bridge



(Hawai'i State Archives)



K. Kido, 2014

Ala Moana Park



Banyan Court and Sports Pavilion, 1935

(State Archives)

Ala Moana Park

Sports Pavilion



(State Archives)



Ala Moana Park

Banyan Courtyard



(State Archives)



(K.Kido, 2014)



Ala Moana Park

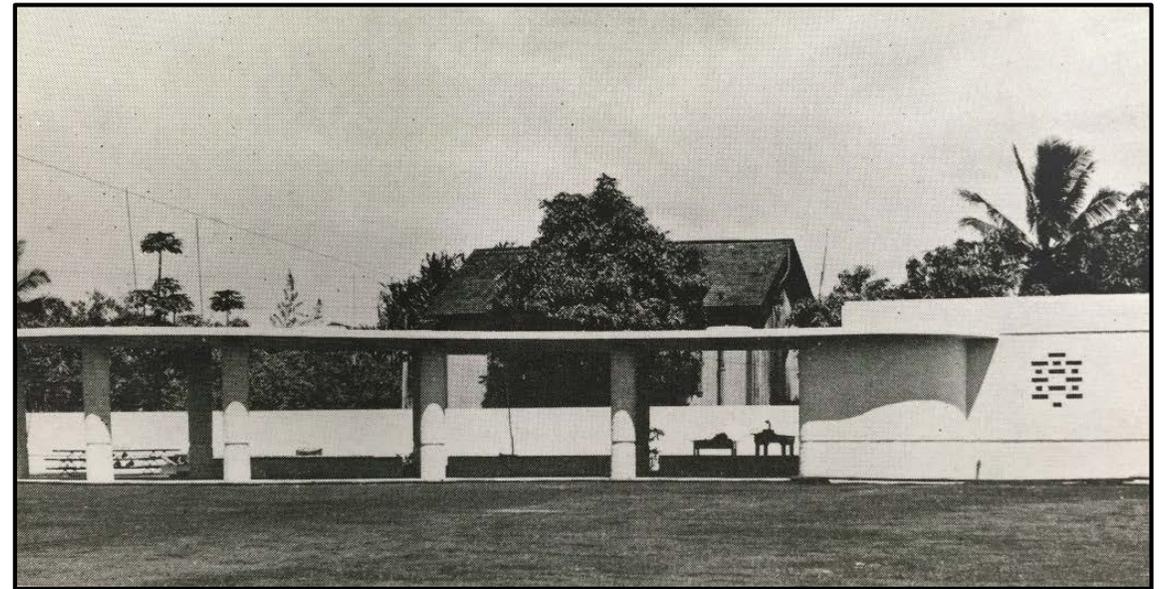


Tennis Courts (State Archives)

Mother Waldron Playground, 1937



Zigzag brick wall



Central Pavilion

Kawānanakoa Playground, 1937



Kawānanakoa Playground



Boulder concrete comfort station

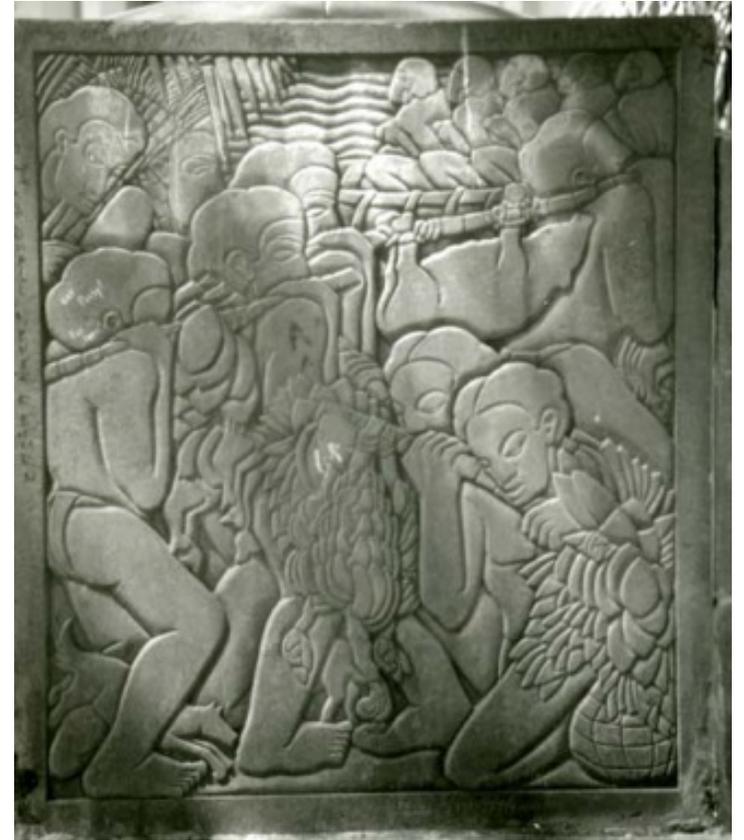


Built-in benches



Lava rock terrace wall

Kawānanakoa Playground



Blasingame Fountain

Hale'iwa Beach Park, 1938-39



(Kathleen Walling Fry)

Ala Wai Clubhouse, 1937



Irwin Park, 1931



1935 (U.S. Army Museum Hawaii)



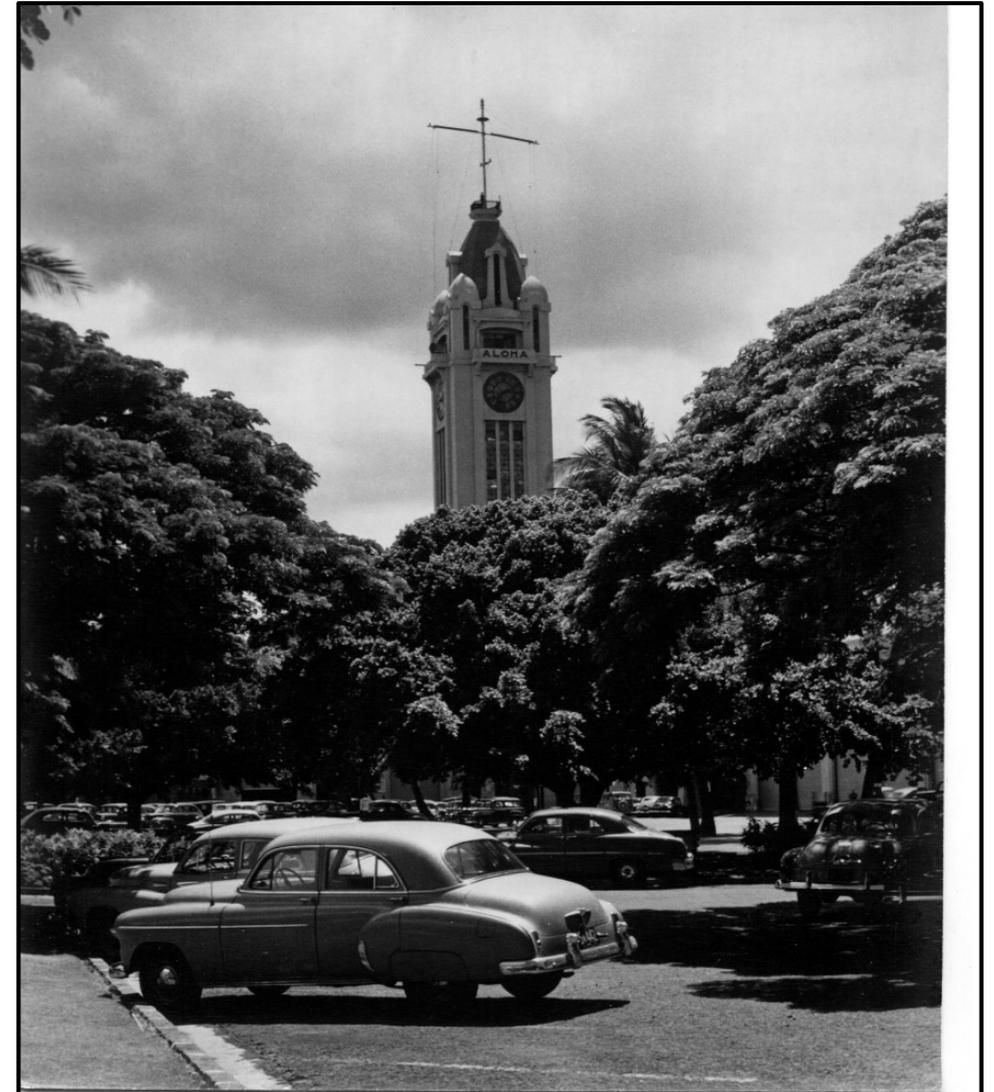
1938 (USAMH)

Irwin Park



1950s

Aviation.Hawaii.gov



1951
(USAMH)

World War II

Parks still suffered from “the profound displacement of war”





Post-War Park Development

As late as 1947, 85 of the Board's 338 pre-war positions remained vacant.

Parks Department administered 101 properties encompassing over 2,000 acres:

- 25 beach parks
- 38 playgrounds
- Foster Botanical Garden
- Koko Head Park, and
- 17 seventeen strips and triangles.

Post-War Park Development



Hanauma Bay



Lili'uokalani Gardens

Post-War Park Development

Zoo

Following the conclusion of World War II a gift of animals to the city included:

- an elephant,
- a Bactrian camel,
- a pair of chimpanzees,
- two monkeys, and
- a pair of axis deer



Post-War Park Design

Pre-War:

- Conventional planting schemes, intertwining natural features and more formal plantings
- Formal gardens and features
- Naturalist oases

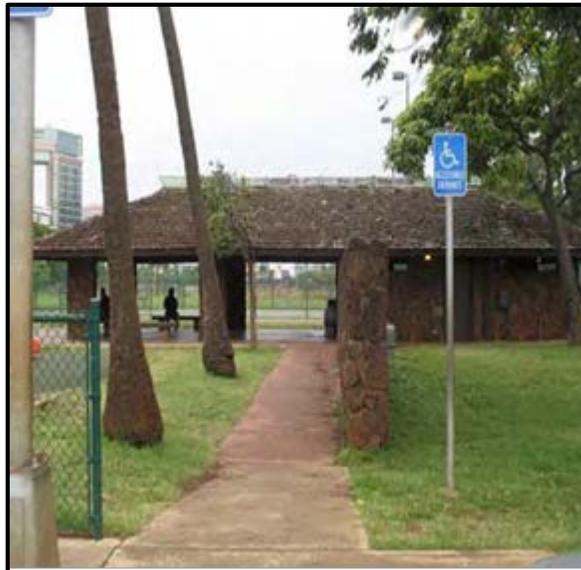
Post-War:

- Active centers for recreation.
- Use of tropical plants and the continued exploration of new plant materials.
- Increasingly informal gardens, abandoning the more maintenance-ridden formal features of earlier times.
- More hardscape features, including concrete planters, paved walkways and usable space

Post-War Park Development



Kahana Bay



Pavilion at Ala Wai Park



Nu'uau Valley



Lili'uokalani Gardens

Post-War Park Development



Kualoa Beach Park



Swanzy Beach Park



Punalu'u Beach Park

Department of Park & Recreation 2017

The mission of the Department of Parks and Recreation is to enhance the leisure lifestyle and quality of life for the people of O'ahu through active and passive recreational activities.

DEPARTMENT MOTTO: *We add quality to life!*

For the fiscal year, the Department of Parks and Recreation has approximately 750 regular employees and 1080 Personal Services Contract employees. The department's Operating Budget for the fiscal year is \$75.9 million. The department manages nearly 300 named parks on over 5,100 acres of land.

BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION

There is an advisory Board of Parks and Recreation of nine members who are appointed by the Mayor and are confirmed by the City Council. The Board advises the Mayor, the City Council and the Director on matters relating to recreation and cultural activities and associated facilities.

Preservation of Historic Parks

National or Hawai'i Register of Historic Places:

- Ala Moana Park
- Foster Botanical Garden
- Hale'iwa Beach Park
- Honolulu Zoo Entry
- Irwin Memorial Park
- Kawanānakoā Playground
- Kapi'olani Park
- Mother Waldron Playground
- Thomas Square

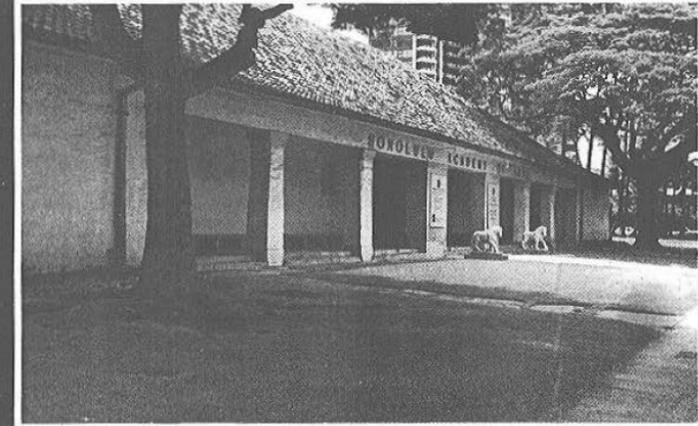
Thomas Square

Special District Design Guidelines:

The surrounding district was designated a Special District “for the protection and enhancement of Thomas Square and the Honolulu Academy of Arts”

Special
District
Design
Guidelines

THOMAS
SQUARE/
HONOLULU
ACADEMY
OF ARTS

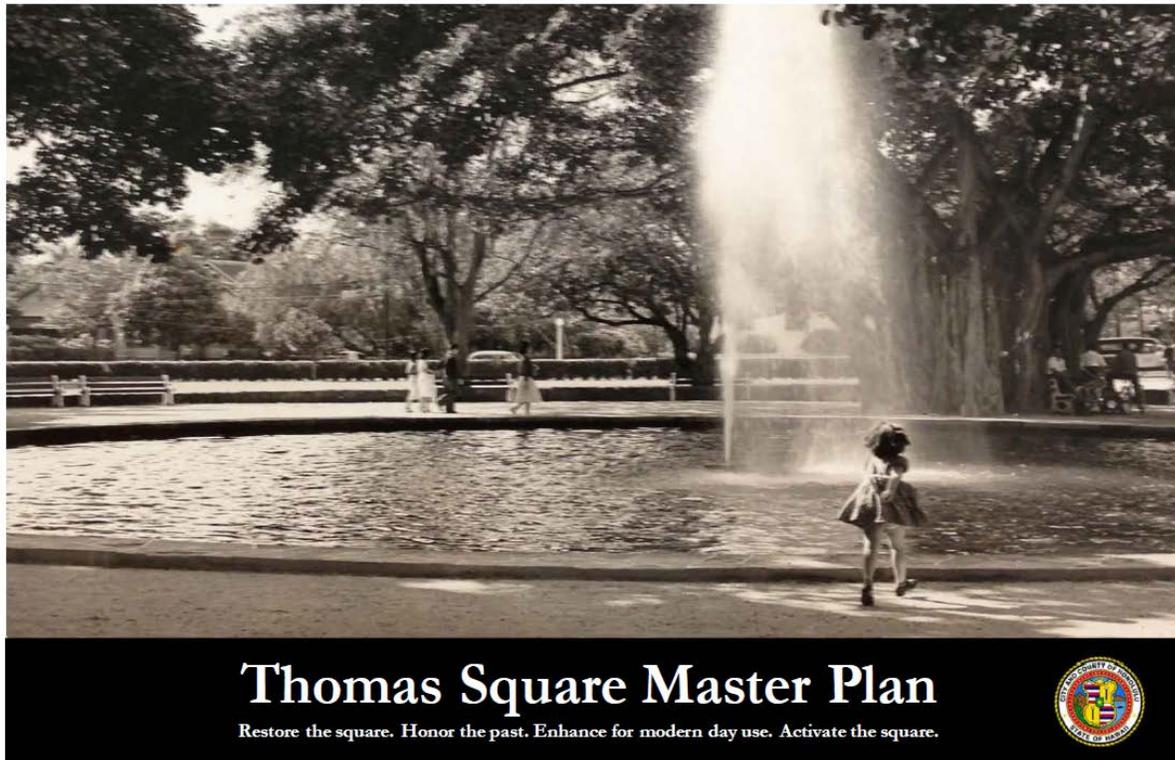


Department of Land Utilization
City and County of Honolulu
June 1995



Thomas Square

City Master Plan



THOMAS SQUARE PARK RENOVATION

*Draft Environmental Assessment –
Anticipated Finding of No Significant Impact*



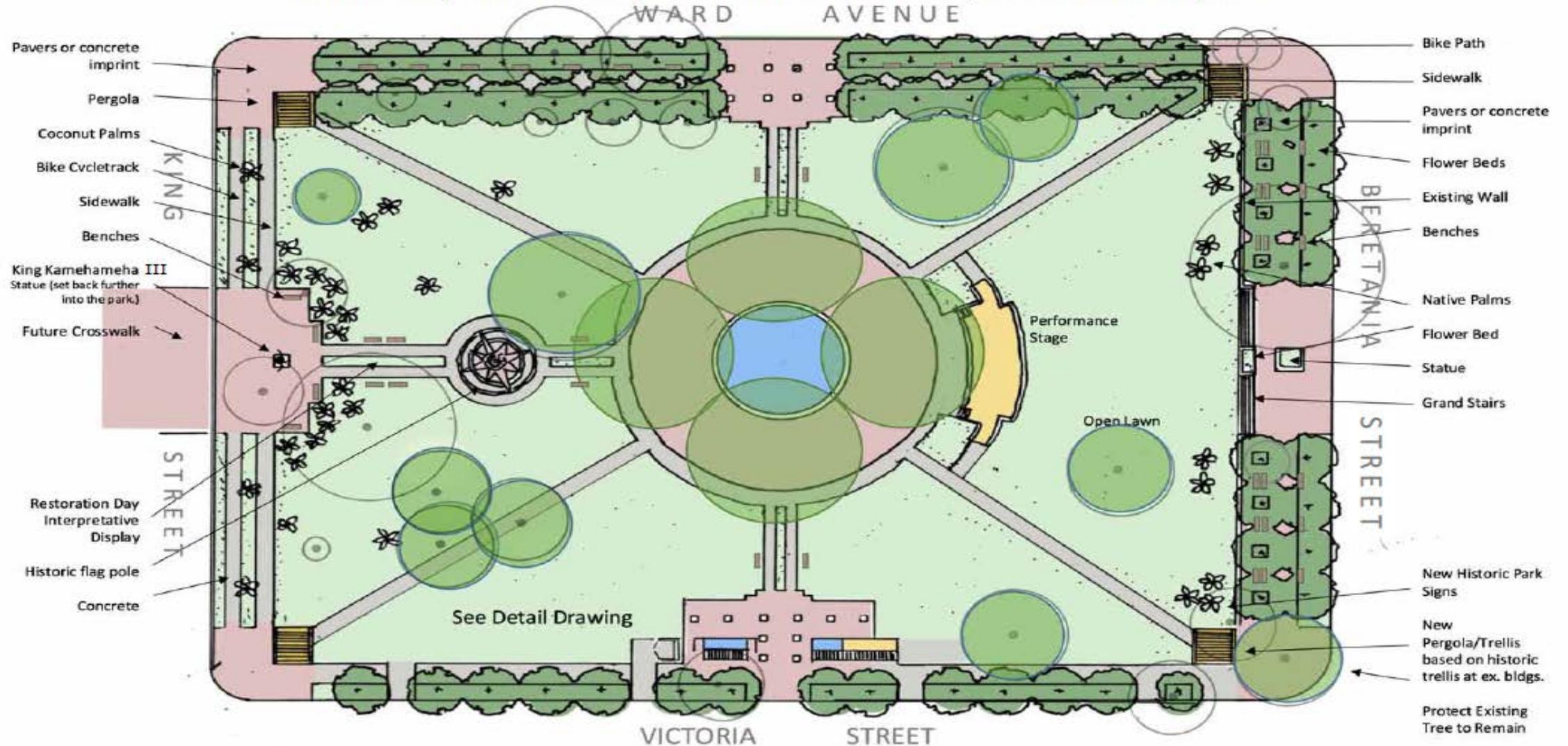
Prepared For:
City and County of Honolulu

Prepared By:
 **PBR HAWAII**
& ASSOCIATES, INC.

September 2016

Thomas Square Master Plan

Restore the square. Honor the past. Enhance for modern day use. Activate the square.



Thomas Square

HHF Comments on Master Plan:

- **Supportive of efforts to restore, rehabilitate and maintain historic parks ... provided that the improvements preserve historic features and any renovations are in harmony with the historic character and significance. This generally means using a light touch, and not a wholesale redesign or rebuild.**
- Include a section **describing the intent and goals for historic preservation**, including which elements are to be retained/preserved; which elements are to be rehabilitated and how; and which elements are to be removed.
- Evaluate proposals to **determine the potential effect** on historic properties.
- HHF's **preliminary findings** : 'no effect' from the King Street bike path; 'no adverse effect' for installing new irrigation/grass and undergrounding utilities; and an unknown effect from specialty paving and perimeter pathways, construct bathroom and café, design splash pad, and lighting the banyans. **These could be determined to have a 'no adverse effect with conditions,' if preservation guidelines and standards are followed, but would be 'adverse' if done poorly.**

Kapi'olani Park

October 25, 2017



Original Entry, Honolulu Zoo

Dear Trustees of the Kapiolani Park Trust,

I am writing to call your attention to the deplorable condition of the Honolulu Zoo entrance designed by famous Honolulu architect Alfred Preis. The building is on the State's Register of Historic Places.

From the attached photographs, one from 2016 and one from 2017, you will note that a portion of the eave of the historic Zoo Entrance was removed during the first quarter of 2017.

The Zoo Entrance structure designed by Alfred Preis is, without a doubt, the finest designed building within Kapiolani Park and has an important connection with his signature design of the Arizona Memorial. Some years ago the city undertook the misguided effort to build a new zoo entrance in order to have a larger gift shop. At that time KPPS worked with the city administration to repurpose the Preis building's interior while preserving its lovely exterior. The new zoo entrance lacks restrooms which could be sensitively installed in the administrative portion of the Preis entrance. In the old gift shop it was envisioned that an exhibit of lovely photographs of Hawaii's endemic fauna and flora would enhance zoo visitors' experience. The lovely entrance opening would remain visually open through a security mesh to reveal a lovely zoo exhibit – such as the flamingo pond – as a hint of the glories to be found within.



The Environmental Notice

A Semi-Monthly Bulletin pursuant to Section 343-3, Hawai'i Revised Statutes

Waikīkī War Memorial Complex Project

The Waikīkī War Memorial Complex consists of the natatorium, the adjacent memorial park and Kaimana Beach Park. The Waikīkī War Memorial Natatorium was constructed in 1927 to honor the people of Hawai'i that served during World War 1.

The Natatorium's pool and bleachers have been closed to the public since 1979; however the restroom facilities and office space under the bleachers remain open. The City and County of Honolulu is proposing the creation of a new beach situated at the present site of the Natatorium. The new beach will be fronted by a replica World War 1 memorial arch in alignment with the existing Roll of Honor Plaque and hau tree arbor.

The proposal also involves additional improvements within the park area including constructing a new bathhouse, removal of an internal roadway, and construction of a consolidated parking lot. This is preferred action that will be evaluated in the forthcoming Environmental Impact Statement along with the alternatives to: 1) reconstruct and restore the Natatorium or 2) take no action.

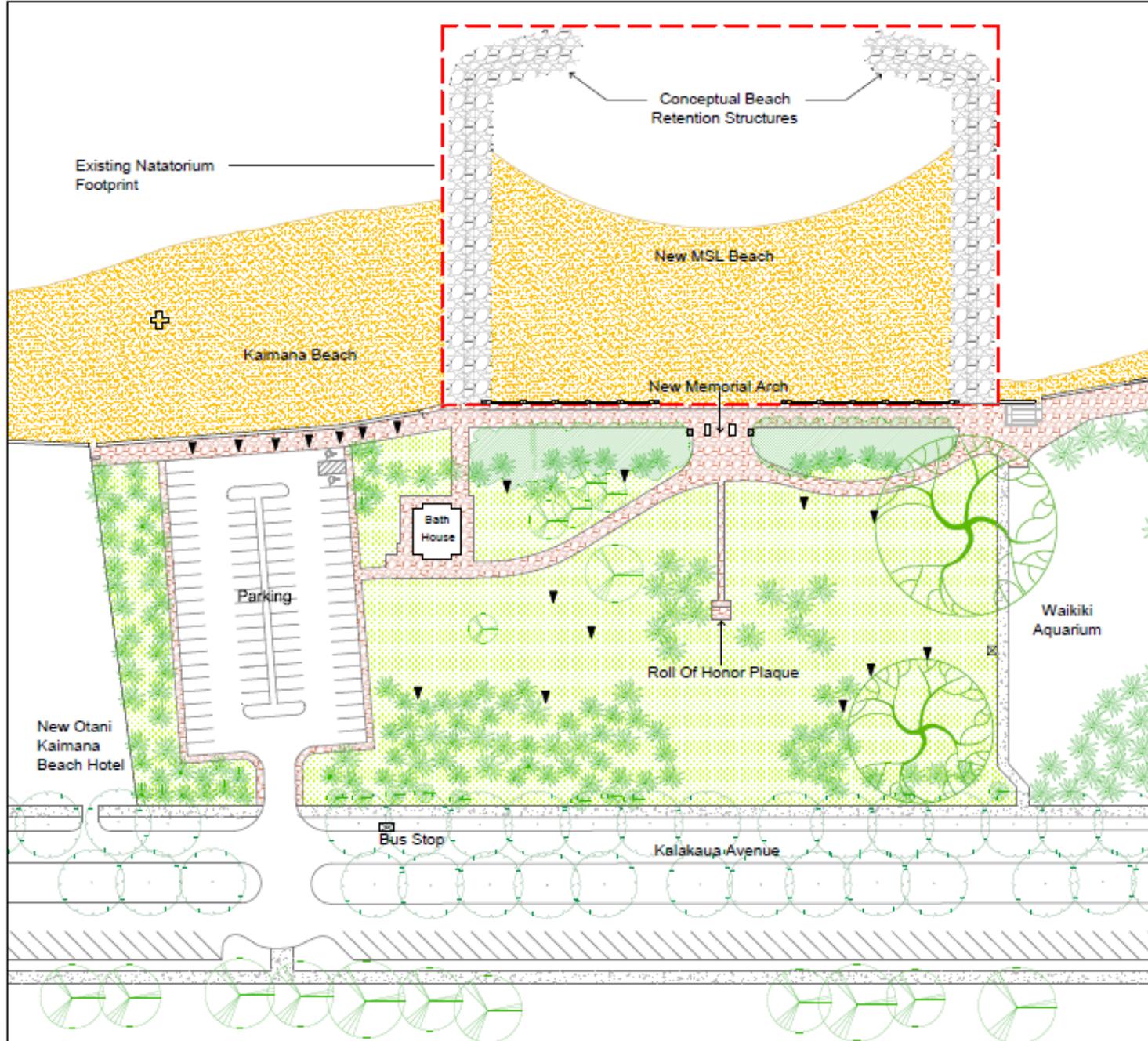
Please submit your comments on this project to the City and County of Honolulu by August 22, 2014.



Replica Memorial Arch
(City and County of Honolulu photo)

Waikiki War Memorial Complex

Figure 1: Proposed Action
New Memorial Beach



LEGEND

-  Exceptional Banyan Tree
-  Ironwood Tree (representative)
-  Existing Tree (representative)
-  Coconut Tree
-  Palm Tree
-  Hau Trees
-  Public Sidewalk
-  Paved Walkway
-  Lifeguard Stand (location approximate)
- Benches/ Picnic Tables (location approximate)

June 2014



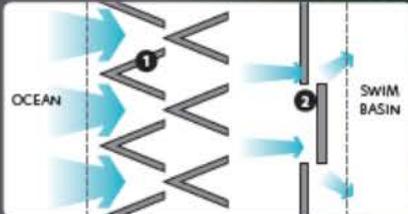
Note: Illustration represents general, preliminary concepts only and will be refined during the EIS process.

MODERNIZED DECK

The existing deck will be re-built with a new high-performance concrete that offers better strength and durability.

MORE WATER IN

Staggered rows of new concrete chevrons and walls allows ocean wave energy to fully replace water in the swim basin an estimated six times per day. As a result, water quality in the Natatorium will be akin to ambient coastal waters.



1. Angle and positioning of the concrete chevrons will allow water to flow into the swim basin and restrict water flowing out.
2. For safety, inlet openings between the concrete walls to be a maximum of 6 inches. Although not necessary, screens can be considered for added safety.

Steel grates provide access below the deck

KEEP IT CLEAR, KEEP IT SAFE

To ensure safety, the swim basin will be dredged and new high-performance concrete slabs placed over gravel at the bottom of the basin. This will prevent build-up of organic matter and permit lifeguards to see the bottom at all times.



1. Modern high-performing concrete slabs over gravel
2. Re-grade basin bottom creating a shallow end to make entry more accessible for children, elderly, and handicapped.

MORE WATER OUT

Openings at both Diamond Head and 'Ewa corners improve circulation. Openings to be covered with metal screens for safety. Locating the outflow nearer to the intake will help to preserve the shoreline at Kaimana Beach

Ala Moana Park



Ala Moana Park

HHF Comments on Master Plan:

- include a **specific description of the historic features** and characteristics that contribute to the historic significance of the park as a whole.
- An **architectural inventory survey** may need to be done... of a quality and contain enough information about each feature to **provide an adequate basis for making historic preservation decisions**. Assessment of historic integrity for the features, including materials, design, workmanship, location, setting, association and feeling
- include a discussion about the **period of significance**, and whether later additions to the park have attained historic significance in their own right, even if designed and built later than 1934 (the significant date listed in the historic register nomination form).

Mother Waldron, Irwin, Walker Parks

HHCTCP Programmatic Agreement
Final – January 2011

PROGRAMMATIC AGREEMENT

Among the
U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration
The Hawai'i State Historic Preservation Officer
The United States Navy
and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
Regarding the
Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project
in the City and County of Honolulu, Hawai'i

WHEREAS, the FTA, in consultation with the SHPD, has determined that the following historic properties will be adversely affected by the Project: Honouliuli Stream Bridge; Waikele Stream Bridge and Span over OR&L Spur; 1932 Waiawa Stream Bridge; Waimalu Stream Bridge; Kalauao Spring Bridge; Kalauao Stream Bridge; United States Naval Base, Pearl Harbor NHL; CINCPAC Headquarters Building NHL; Makalapa Navy Housing Historic District; Ossipoff's Aloha Chapel, SMART Clinic, and Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society; Hawai'i Employers Council; Afuso House; Higa Fourplex; Teixeira House; Lava Rock Curbs; Six Quonset Huts; Kapālama Canal Bridge; True Kamani Trees; Institute for Human Services/Tamura Building; Wood Tenement Buildings; Oahu Rail & Land Co. Office and Document Storage Building; Oahu Rail & Land Co. Terminal Building; Nu'uuanu Stream Bridge; Chinatown Historic District; Merchant Street Historic District; HDOT Harbors Division Offices; Pier 10/11 Building; Aloha Tower; Irwin Park; Walker Park; HECO Downtown Plant; Dillingham Transportation Building; and Mother Waldron Playground; and

Mother Waldron, Irwin, Walker Parks

HHCTCP Programmatic Agreement
Final – January 2011

B. The City shall complete Cultural Landscape Reports (CLR) related to historic properties along the Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor.

1. Within ninety (90) days of execution of this PA, the City shall develop a draft scope of work for the CLRs describing the cultural landscapes to be studied, research methodology, report format, photography specifications, and project schedule. All work shall follow NPS guidance and standards, as appropriate, including National Register Bulletin 30, *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes* and National Register Bulletin 18, *How to Evaluate and Nominate Designed Landscapes*, as well as relevant information presented in NPS, *Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*. The City shall circulate a copy of the draft scope of work to the consulting parties.

D. Improvements to Adversely Affected Parks

1. The City will invite consulting parties, property owners, and other stakeholders to participate in a kick-off meeting to discuss improvements to adversely affected historic parks: Based upon design standards contained in Stipulation IV, and considering comments offered at the kick-off meeting, the City will develop and circulate a draft park improvement plan to consulting parties. The City will consider all comments received within thirty (30) days while preparing the final plan in consultation with the SHPD.
2. The City shall consider *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, 36 C.F.R. pt. 68, and make every effort to avoid adverse effects on historic properties.
3. The City will ensure completion of the park improvement plan before construction is complete.
4. Project funds in the sum of seven hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$750,000) shall be budgeted for implementation of the parks improvement plan. Should the City, following consultation with consulting parties, property owners, and stakeholders, determine that circumstances preclude improving these parks, Project funds budgeted for parks shall be transferred for use to the Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project Historic Preservation Committee (Stipulation IX.B).

References

- Fung Associates Inc., “Hawai‘i Modernism Context Study” for Historic Hawai‘i Foundation, 2011
- Don Hibbard, various National Register Nominations for 1930s Art Deco Parks, 1988
- Robert Weyenth and Ann Yoklavich, “1930s Parks and Playgrounds in Honolulu, An Historical and Architectural Assessment,” 1987
- Michelle Matson, NR Nomination for Irwin Park, 1999
- Kim Kido, Ala Moana Park presentation, 2014

MAHALO!

Landscape Architects

The husband and wife team of **Catherine (Jones) Thompson and Robert Oliver Thompson** became among the most prolific landscape architects in the late 1920s and 1930s.

Large specimen trees, open spaces, and the use of indigenous plants were the chief hallmarks of their work during this period.

Among their most notable interwar projects were the grounds for the C. Brewer Company's new headquarters on Fort Street, Thomas Square, the Honolulu Academy of Arts, Washington Place, Irwin Park, Ala Moana Park and the grounds of the Honolulu Water Supply Pumping Stations in Makiki.

They also provided professional guidance to Doris Duke in her designs for Persian gardens at her 1930s home in Diamond Head.

Landscape Architects

Richard Tongg graduated with a degree in horticulture from the University of Hawaii. He also received a master's degree in landscape architecture from the University of California at Berkeley.

Returning to the Territory of Hawaii in 1928, Tongg opened a plant nursery and began his own design practice. In 1935, as the Landscape Architect for the Territory of Hawaii, Tongg worked extensively on highway beautification.

He also designed Hawaii exhibits at trade fairs and expositions on the mainland. Tongg began to incorporate naturalistic features into his garden designs that were influenced by Chinese and Japanese garden ideals, including unusual stones, winding pathways and pea-stone beds.

Among his legacies from this period included the palm tree dominated landscape of the Alexander and Baldwin Building on Bishop Street and the grounds of Honolulu Hale, Honolulu's city hall. Other commissions included work on the Doris Duke estate of Shangri-La, the grounds of the Halekulani Hotel and the Gloria Baker house.

Landscape Architects

New Mexico native **Harry Sims Bent** also made significant contributions to the Territory's landscapes. He came to Hawaii from California to work on the Honolulu Academy of Art and completed the work after architect Bertrand Goodhue's death in 1924.

Shortly afterward, he became the designer for the C. Brewer Building, working closely with Catherine Thompson on the complex's extensive gardens.

The architect to the Honolulu Parks Board in the late 1930s, Sims was responsible for many of the department's designs from county parks through schools and governmental buildings. Bent was responsible for many of the Territory's park structures as well, most famously the Art Deco-Modernistic bridges and gateway for Ala Moana Park and the Mother Waldren Playground of 1937.

A similar modernism, blended with a respect for regional tradition, entered into his private commissions including his design for the Pineapple Research Institute at the University of Hawaii, beginning in 1931.

Landscape Architects

Local boy **George Walters** returned to Hawaii in 1958 following a stint in the army and several years experience in the San Francisco Bay area. Educated at Roosevelt High School and at Berkeley, where he earned both architecture and landscape architecture degrees, George opened the office of G.S. Walters and Associates, recruiting his wife **Juli** , a cellist with the Honolulu Symphony, as a collaborator.

Walters's work followed the new vocabulary of the "California Style," relying on clean architectural forms and distinctive "hardscape" features. A staunch defender of coconut palms at a time when many in the profession favored more recently introduced Manila palms (*Veitchia merrillii*), Walters utilized modular forms and introduced Asian themes into his work.

Among his most notable projects were the roof garden for the Topa Financial Center of 1971, Queen Emma Gardens, Victoria Ward Offices, the Kona Airport, A'ala park, the Blaisdell Center, the Princess Ruth Keelikolani State Office Building on Punchbowl Street and the McCarthy Mall at the University of Hawaii.

Landscape Architects

Washington State native **James Hubbard** began his career in Hawaii in 1960 as an employee of the University of Hawaii. Trained in “Home Economy” at the University of Washington — a precursor to the university’s landscape architecture program — he began a private practice in 1968.

His work relied on the use of plant materials to define spaces and employment of earth contouring and solid structures to create separate spaces.

Among his better known projects were designs for the grounds of the Bishop Museum, Foster Botanical Gardens and work for the Hawaii Botanical Gardens System. He also completed the landscape design for Queen Emma’s Summer Palace, Tamarind Square in downtown Honolulu, the Contemporary Museum Gardens and the Banyon Court apartments, in addition to many private gardens.

His knowledge of horticulture was evident through his joint authorship, with Horace F. Clay and Rock Golt, of the classic reference volumes *The Hawaiian Garden: Tropical Shrubs* and *The Hawaiian Garden: Tropical Exotics*, published in 1977 and 1987.

Landscape Architects

Landscape architect **Paul Weissich** was also a West Coast transplant to Hawaii. Trained at U.C. Berkeley, he worked in private practice for seven years until 1957 when he became Head of Planning and Construction for the City and County of Honolulu.

Working very much in the public arena, he headed the Beautification Division for the city, devoting his energies to the care and planting of street trees. Weissich introduced new efficiencies in maintenance, began a detailed inventory of trees and organized the Street Tree Council.

He also designed and supervised many city projects, including the installation of the outdoor seating area at the Waikiki Shell. He began the City and County Division of Botanical Gardens, working to help expand and protect the Foster Botanical Gardens and to bring the Waiawa Gardens into the county system. Koko Crater became part of the system as a result of his efforts.