

## Dowsett Tract – 20<sup>th</sup> Century Subdivision

By the end of the 19th century, Honolulu's population was 39,300 people. As a result of overcrowding and unsanitary living conditions, as well as consequences of the 1900 plague and Chinatown fire, residents began moving away from the city core and into the surrounding valleys to escape from the density and seek quiet and serene rural areas.

The introduction of public transportation systems and construction of new roads made accessibility between the valleys and the city easier. Trolleys linked Waikiki to Manoa Valley and another from town, along Nu'uaniu Street, travelled into Nu'uaniu Valley. In 1897, plans for the construction of Pali Road were initiated; connecting downtown Honolulu via Nu'uaniu Street with the windward side of the island.

As the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century neared, additional infrastructure and utilities stretched beyond the urban core. With two reservoirs in place in Nu'uaniu Valley, a third one was under construction by 1890 and plans for a fourth reservoir were underway after the 1891 drought, ultimately commencing construction in 1905.

The development of improved roads and transportation allowed for greater accessibility into Nu'uaniu Valley, and along with the development of water systems, these advances supported the lifestyles of those living in the valley area and spurred additional non-agricultural development.

On the northern side of Nu'uaniu Street, O'ahu Country Club, the island's oldest private country club, was founded in 1906 with its golf course officially opening in 1907. In 1849, King Kamehameha III conveyed fee title of the land to T.C.B. Rooke and in 1905 a group of men led by Wade Warren Thayer obtained a long term lease from Rooke; ultimately purchasing the property in 1910.

On the southern side of Nu'uaniu Street, improvements in the valley supported development of one of Oahu's early residential subdivisions outside the city center: Dowsett Tract.

Dowsett Tract was named after the family that once owned the land. James Isaac Dowsett was born in Honolulu to Samuel James Dowsett and Mary Bishop Dowsett (both from Kent, England) in December 1829. Following James Dowsett's death in 1899, his heirs formed The Dowsett Co., Ltd. to help manage his extensive Hawai'i property, including the Dowsett Tract lands.

The Dowsett Tract was 273 acres of land in Nu'uaniu Valley, not far above Queen Emma Summer Palace and Pu'iwa Street. On October 4, 1912, The Dowsett Company subdivided the property into two lots. Four years later, the property was further subdivided into 57 lots.

The subdivision was accessed from Nu‘uanu Avenue via Dowsett Avenue, which was a loop road on the periphery of the subdivision, and Edward Street (now Wood Street). Alike Avenue was an interior road perpendicular to Edward Street. The street layout preserved some ‘auwai segments that run through the development, thereby maintaining flow to the many lo‘i that still existed downstream.

Hawaiian Trust, the sales agent for The Dowsett Co., Ltd., marketed the lots to the upper-middle class. The Honolulu Star-Bulletin advertisements in 1917 promoted the uniqueness of the neighborhood, its elevation and coolness, adjacency to the stream, and proximity to Honolulu’s business district. The ads also emphasized the “asphalt covered concrete streets, concrete sidewalks, curbs and gutters; water and gas to every lot, electricity and telephone at the edge of the tract ready for connections; and building restrictions that provide for homes of beauty and refinement.”