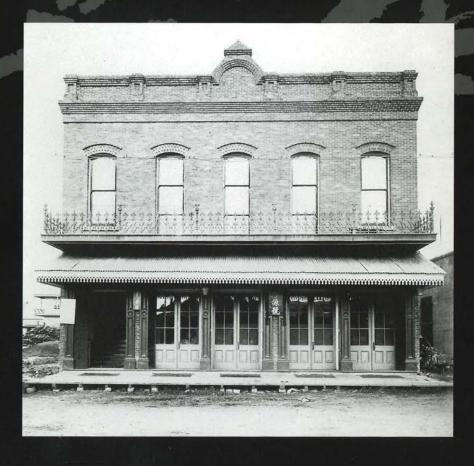
ACLOSE CALL SAVING HONOLULU'S CHINATOWN



NANCY BANNICK
SCOTT CHEEVER and DAVID CHEEVER



NANCY BANNICK

with

SCOTT CHEEVER and DAVID CHEEVER

A production of Hawaii Architectural Foundation & Historic Hawaii Foundation

Chinese shop in the Winston Block at 165 King Street near River Street, Chinatown, Honolulu, circa 1910.



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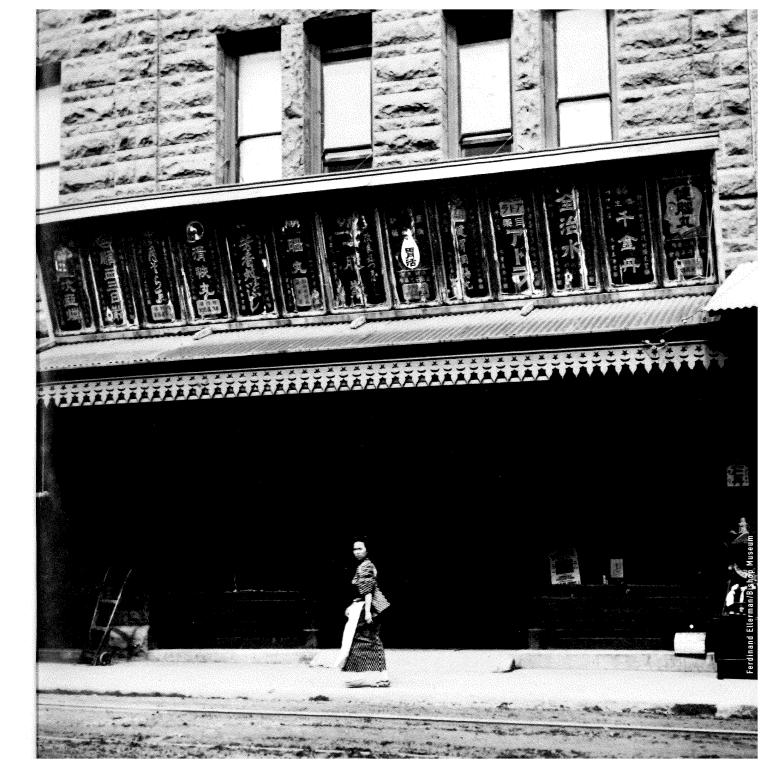
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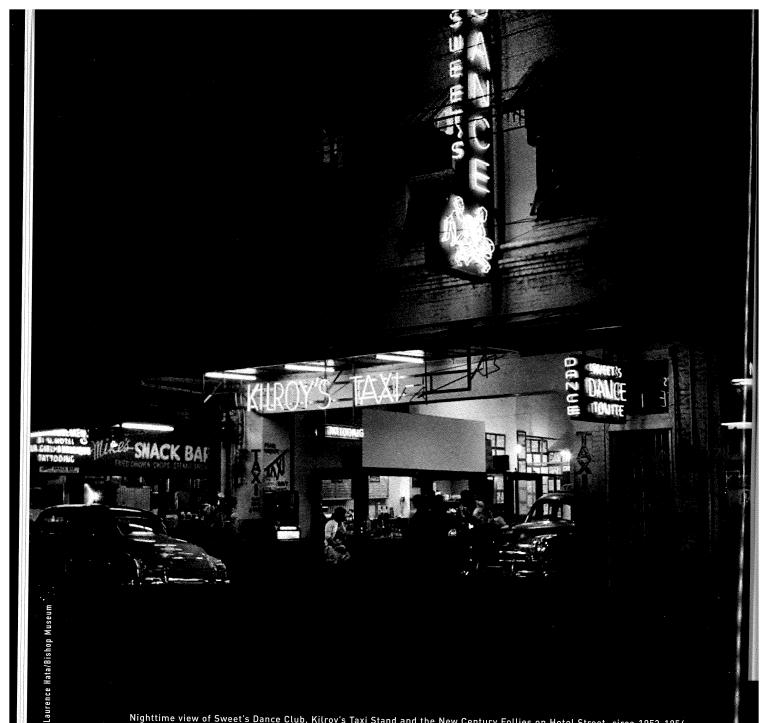
Commercial building, Hop Yune store at right, Chinatown, pre-1900, destroyed in the 1900 fire. Bishop Museum.

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Nighttime view of Sweet's Dance Club, Kilroy's Taxi Stand and the New Century Follies on Hotel Street, circa 1953-1954.

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"THAT'S WHAT STARTED IT ALL."

An exploration of the key figures—and especially one person—who stood in the way of developers, government figures and many others to preserve what is considered Honolulu's most historic community.

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"CHINATOWN IS A POTPOURRI."

Gradually after it was saved, property owners and developers began work to restore some buildings and develop some other parcels, with mixed results according to some of Honolulu's notable restoration architects.

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"RECAPTURE THE SPIRIT OF CHINATOWN."

After all that work, what is Chinatown like today? Was it really worth the effort? And further, what can Chinatown become? Has it lost its spirit? Or has the spirit changed?

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INTRODUCTION

he is small in size, weighing less than 100 pounds. But the tenacity she brought to saving Chinatown in the 1960s and 1970s makes her seem a giant.

Nancy Bannick pushed, prodded and skillfully used the media to stop what could have been the total destruction—all in the name of "urban renewal"—of one of Honolulu's most historic areas.

Like a lot of them, these government programs sounded good, but what they really meant was bulldozing down the old, the historic, to make way for multiple high-rises that probably would have been of little significance from a design point of view.

What motivated Nancy to go all over Kukui and Chinatown discovering the handsome old buildings and talking to people being displaced? What made her take hundreds of pictures of old structures and use these to cajole countless people into joining her in her preservation efforts? What made her almost single-handedly take on the City & County of Honolulu and the feds to stop the destruction?

It wasn't money. Her efforts were all volunteer and she is a self-described born cause-fighter. If you look at what she has done and continues to do in this community, it is clear she is a sincere and committed preservationist. She headed a Historic Buildings Task Force for 10 years, then became a charter trustee of the Historic Hawaii Foundation that for the past 30 years has worked tirelessly to preserve Hawaii's historic buildings, objects, communities and sites.

Nancy calls herself a journalist/historic preservationist. As the Hawaii editor of *Sunset* magazine for some 20 years, she explored these islands and wrote in-depth travel stories and guidebooks as well as stories on Hawaii's homes, gardens and food.



INTRODUCTION

So, the **First Section** of this book is about a petite haole woman and how she went about preserving Chinatown. Once the 40-block area of Chinatown was essentially saved from the wrecking ball and the entire district placed on the National Register of Historic Places, Chinatown property owners steadily hired preservation architects to restore and rehabilitate their historic properties.

The **Second Section** of this book gives voice to a number of key preservation architects. To give you an idea of how important their stories are, one architect in particular has worked on the restoration of 11 buildings in Chinatown.

Government came on board slowly at first and then more vigorously to improve traffic flow, put in new sidewalks, improve the safety of the area and generally make it attractive for a wider range of people.

With all the early work by Nancy Bannick to save the area, followed by restoration of many of the district's buildings, the question then becomes, what is Chinatown today?

There is a lot to Chinatown today, and the **Third Section** of this book attempts to capture the vibrancy that is apparent on every street and around every corner of this historic district.

Chinatown still has its rough edges in places, while in other sections it has become somewhat gentrified. Two lady artists saw the potential of the area and bought historic buildings for their studios in the early '80s. Perhaps that was the beginning, because today Chinatown sports multiple galleries.

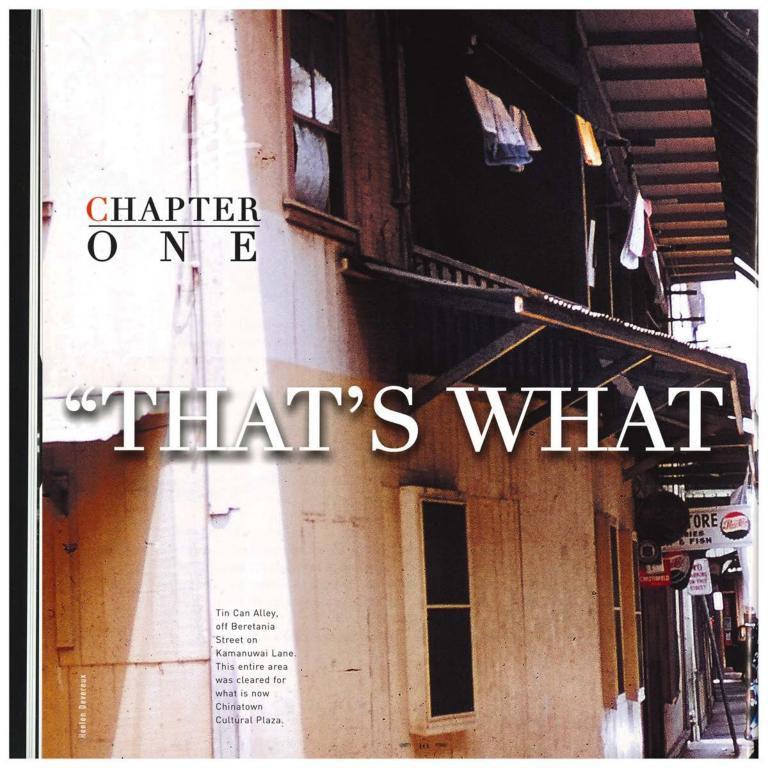
The historic Hawaii Theatre, which some consider in Chinatown and others say is on the fringe, has gone through a \$32 million restoration. That sizable presence has spawned what is called the Honolulu Culture & Arts District with more galleries and performance spaces.

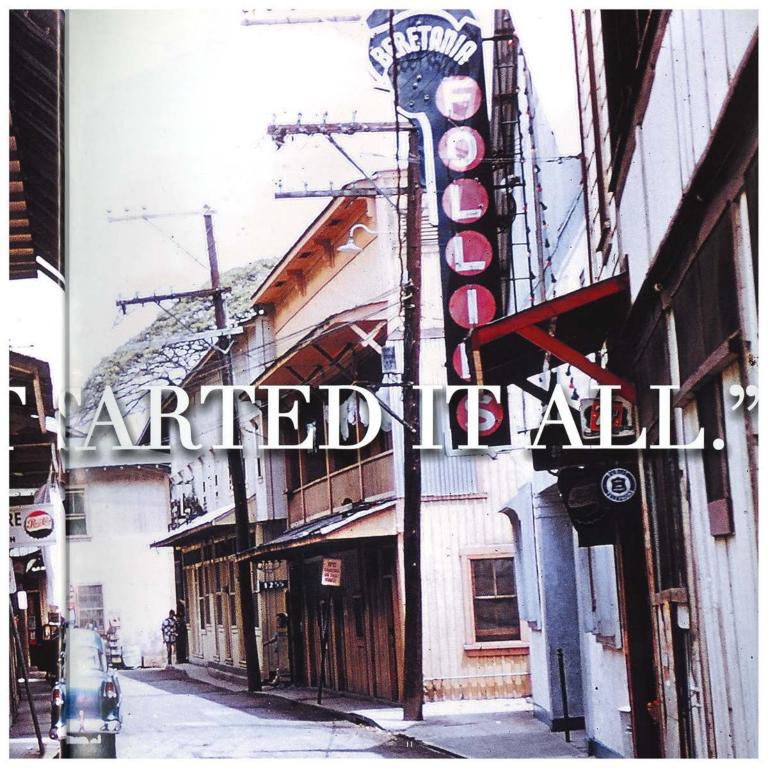
Legislation has been passed to encourage building owners to rent their upstairs floors for artists' lofts. The idea was to bring residents to the area and build a community of artisans, but that concept has not caught fire with the property owners. Time will tell if lofts will become a vital part of Honolulu's Chinatown.

Food has always been a mainstay of Chinatown. It still is and it seems more terrific restaurants spring up every week. The retail shops sell everything from Chinese herbal medicines to cheap knock-offs of expensive purses and clothing.

All in all, Chinatown today is still as fascinating as it always was. Thank goodness it was preserved.

DAVID CHEEVER
Historic Hawaii Foundation







ABOVE: Waikahalulu Lane in 1963, off School Street and the entrance of Liliuokalani Garden and Falls. Single-walled cluster houses are typical of the areas adjacent to Chinatown that were razed for urban renewal. This cluster is now gone.

RIGHT: The Queen Emma Gardens, by architect Minoru Yamasaki, late 1960



ancy Bannick's pioneering preservation work in the 1960s was partially kick-started by some vast federally funded urban renewal projects administered by the city's Honolulu Redevelopment Agency. The HRA called for indiscriminately leveling wide swaths of old Honolulu, Ewa and mauka of Chinatown and central downtown.

"The redevelopment bureaucrats were clearing slums, but they also were wiping out traditional and necessary mixed-use zones," Nancy says. "They were paying little heed to the history and culture and lifestyles of many people."

First came the nearly 74-acre Queen Emma District where, Nancy says, the HRA destroyed a friendly neighborhood of old style plantation-like wooden houses. "They called it sub-standard, but those owners had their gardens, their little shops, shrines, temples and ethnic societies."

It was being replaced by a district of big-scale superblocks, rigidly zoned for separate functions: churches and temples, large stores, mortuaries, houses and apartments. "Only the Queen Emma Gardens complex by well-known architect Minoru Yamasaki had some architectural quality," according to Nancy.

Honolulu Redevelopment Agency sign offering commercial land for sale, August 21, 1966.





Nancy Bannick's January 1963 cover story for *Sunset* magazine.

Researching the article inspired her to seek out the undiscovered parts of Honolulu, including Chinatown.



Still to come were similar plans for the 75-acre Kukui District just makai, and the adjacent 39-acre Kauluwela and four-acre Aala Triangle—all on the Ewa side of Nuuanu Stream—and eventually Chinatown.

A key component to saving Chinatown was the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce's City Beautification Committee of which Nancy was a member. It was started by Alfred Preis, designer of the Arizona Memorial. This committee drew several other notables such as the late landscape architect George Walters and well-known Island photographer Bob Wenkam with citizen activist Dorothy Lindley as committee chair.

It should be noted that Nancy, who calls herself a journalist/historic preservationist, was for many years the Hawaii editor of the very popular *Sunset* magazine. Her early interest in Chinatown and her knowledge of the area came from that journalistic role as she prowled this part of town for a big cover story in a 1963 issue of the magazine. That was long before Chinatown was discovered by tourists.

ALFRED PREIS



It seems the height of irony that the architectural designer of the Arizona Memorial, so revered by millions and millions from around the world, was actually hauled off to a Sand Island detention center after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941.

Alfred Preis, who fled Nazi Germany and came to Hawaii in 1939, was detained for three months along with other Europeans from Germany. His son Jan-Peter Preis, also an architect, said, "People just came to their home and arrested them."

Jan-Peter reports his father felt "the memorial was a dedication to everything America stands for: peace and freedom and prosperity." He also says he never observed any resentment in his father.

Alfred went on to a very distinguished architectural career in Hawaii. But more than that, he left an indelible mark on Hawaii with his groundbreaking program for art in public places, which began with the establishment of the Hawaii State Foundation on Culture and the Arts in 1965.

Among the buildings he designed during his architectural practice, besides the Arizona Memorial, were the First Methodist Church on Beretania Street, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) auditorium and the entrance to the Honolulu Zoo.

In 1980, he retired as executive director of the State Foundation. He died in 1993.



The Beautification Committee was concerned about the urban renewal scene and it went to bat for a plan for the Kukui District designed by Arthur Gallion, director of planning for Harland Bartholomew & Associates. Gallion's credentials included his former role as professor of planning at the University of Southern California and author of a college textbook on planning.

According to Nancy, his plan called for continuing mixed land uses that were compatible, allowing the shrines, temples, Japanese theaters, Chinese schools and society headquarters to stay put and connecting them with walkways and roads through a largely residential district of two and three story walk-ups housing about Kukui's same number of people.

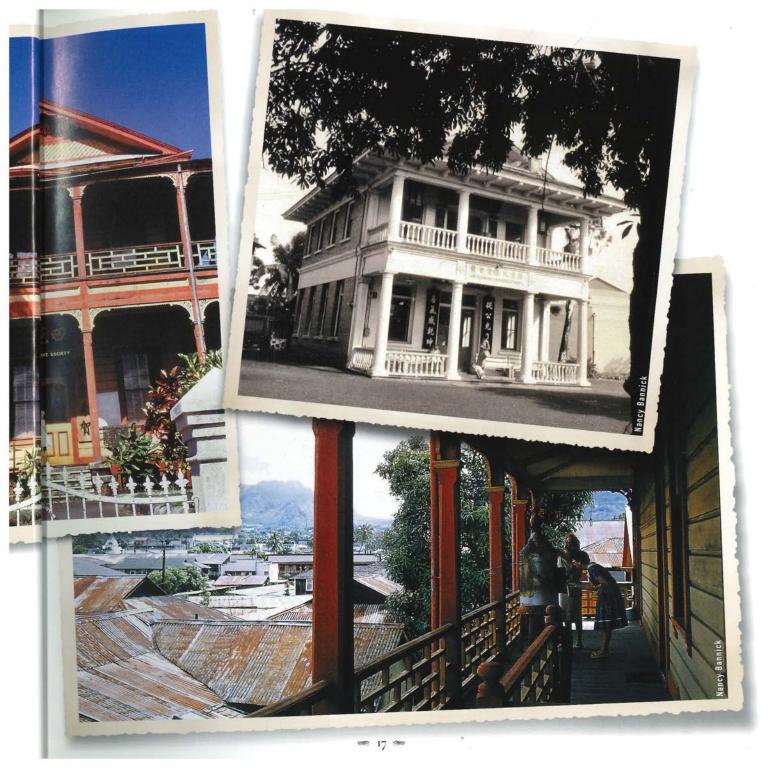
There would be no high-rises on the order of Kuhio Park Terrace or big commercial blocks to compete with Chinatown and the Central Business District.

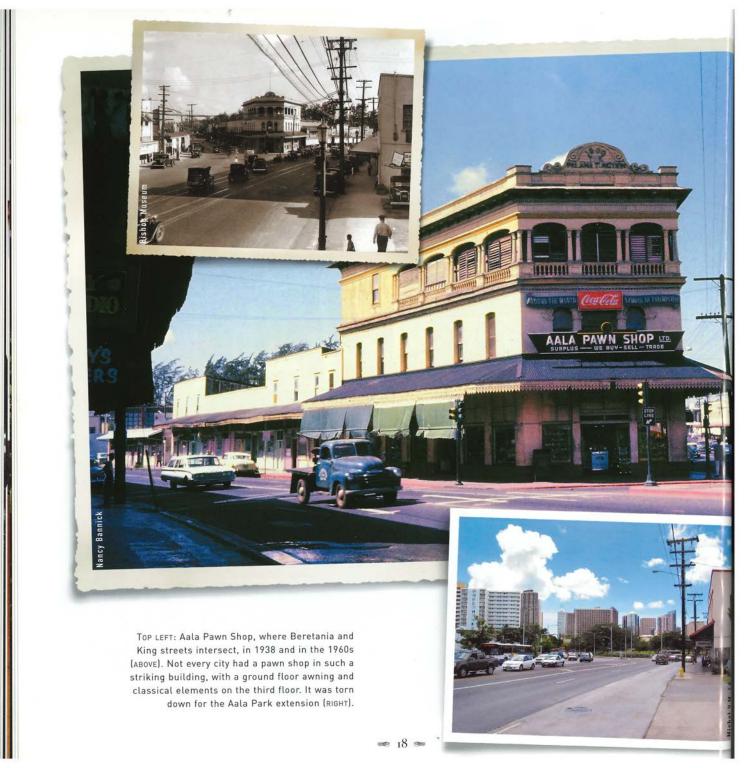
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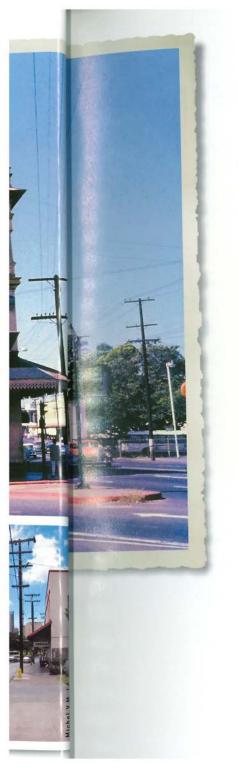
The See Yup Benevolent Society Building, a Victorian with handsome Chinese detailing, was torn down because it was in the wrong place in the urban renewal plan.

Lung Doo Benevolent Society Building in the Aala area. Bringing this classic Asian-Victorian styled building up to code was too expensive for the society to do on its own and the HRA had no funds to aid restoration, so members took the payment for their property, demolished this building and built new headquarters. Now buildings on the Hawaii State Register of Historic Places are often given building code exemptions.

Looking from the second story portico of the See Yup Building, 1962.







"Here I was, just a little green kid taking on City Hall and I didn't even know it."

Nancy had done architectural-historical research on the landmarks of Kukui and Aala Triangle. In talking to their owners and many residents, she learned that HRA was forcing them out, in most cases years before the vacated land would have different buildings and new owners. The agency (using mostly federal funds) paid the appraised value of the property, but for many of the social or religious institutions, it was not enough to enable them to rebuild in a new location and re-start small businesses that had helped support them. What's more, HRA was moving out the walk-in customers of Chinatown and central downtown.

Nancy gave all the stories on the historic buildings to HRA with the request that they incorporate these landmarks in the plan so the renewed Kukui and Aala Triangle would have a connection with the past and the rest of the city. The agency did not respond, so she went to George Chaplin, editor of *The Honolulu Advertiser*—with the support of her committee colleagues—and volunteered to write a story on how urban renewal was destroying the heart of our city that made Honolulu unique, using her interviews with owners of historic buildings that would be wiped out. Chaplin said yes, and the resulting story ran as a week-long series and caused so much reaction she was asked to continue with a second week of stories and photographs on several of the individual endangered buildings.

The articles led to an hour-long TV show on the pros and cons of urban renewal. With some mirth Nancy says, "The HRA officials who were supposed to debate with Dottie Lindley and me wouldn't show up so the camera focused on empty chairs for them. Here I was, just a little green kid taking on City Hall and I didn't even know it."

Expert Says Landmarks May Not Be Worth Saving

Some of the historic downtown buildings conservationist Nancy Bannick wants to preserve are not worth salvaging, a planning expert from New Haven, Conn., said here yesterday at Mayor Blaisdell's annual urban renewal conference.

Quizzed about Miss Bannick's recent series in the Advertiser, L. Thomas Appleby, New Haven development administrator who is supervising \$147 million worth of slum clearance in his city, replied: "Frankly,

I'm not sure that some of them (the buildings) you're talking about are worth saving."

He said that "a structure has to have more than historical value to be saved."

Another speaker at yesterday's conference at the Hilton Hawaiian Village Hotel—George Izuta, local representative of the Federal Housing and Home Finance Agency-said that ethnic societies in the downtown slum clearance areas must carry

want to save their buildings.

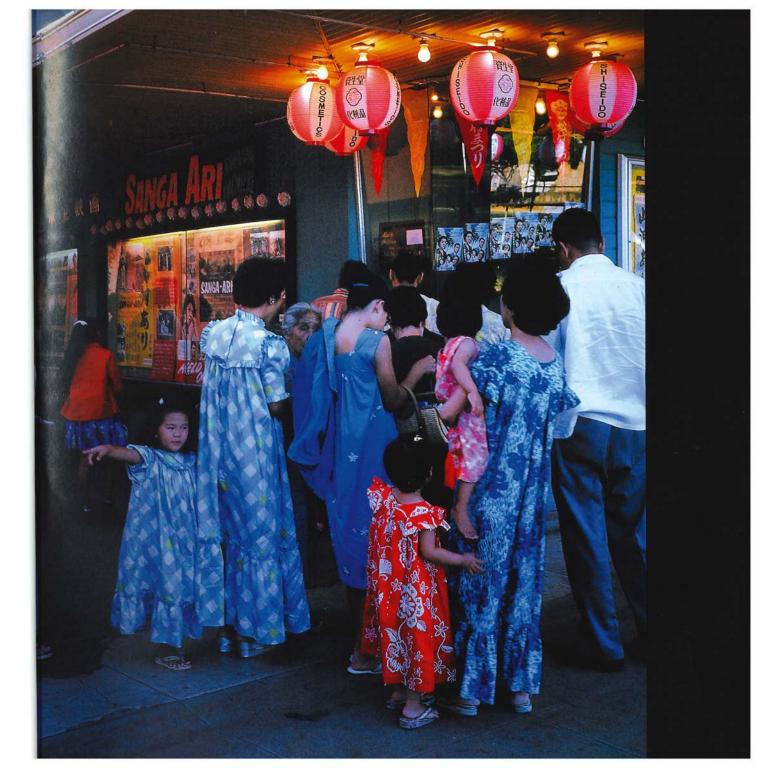
"The people (societies) themselves must have a desire to preserve these things since there is no federal aid for preservation projects," he said. "The people must raise the money themselves . . . They have to show that they have the money and that it is feasible to save the buildings."

He said the historic buildings would also have to fit into the general redevelopment plan for the areas in which they are located.

Nancy had help from Charles Peterson, notable restoration architect and architectural historian from Philadelphia, in Honolulu to help with the restoration of Iolani Palace and the Mission Houses. She took him to see some of the buildings—where he peered through windows of those not open. He got her to write about the See Yup Society and the Izumo Taisha Kyo Mission for his American Notes section of the Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians. She began her May, 1963, article: "The charming old buildings illustrated here are two of more than half a dozen architectural treasures and curiosities

ABOVE: In the June 14, 1963, Honolulu Advertiser, officials disclose lack of support for preservation.

RIGHT: At the Nippon Theater in 1962, residents flock to see Japanese films. The Nippon was an Aala Triangle project victim.





ABOVE: Izumo Taisha Kyo Mission was designed by local architect Hego Fuchino and built without nails in 1923 on Leleo Lane (the street no longer exists). This photo was taken as it was moved in 1966 to an approved site in Kukui's redevelopment scheme.

 $$\rm Right\ AND\ FAR\ Right:\ Izumo\ Taisha\ Kyo,$ after it was rebuilt on the Ewa bank of Nuuanu Stream.





AGNES CONRAD



Long considered one of the best known preservationists in Hawaii, Agnes Conrad served as the state archivist from 1955 until 1982.

Her reputation was enhanced when famed restoration architect Charles Peterson came from the mainland in the '60s to work with Iolani Palace and the Mission Houses restorers and said of Agnes, "She's the only archivist in the country who really cares about historic preservation."

Agnes graduated from the College of the Holy Names in 1939 and received her degree in library science from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1940.

She has been very active in many community organizations, and during her long career has been a director of the Friends of Iolani Palace and an adviser to the Hawaii Chinese History Center. She has been president of the Hawaiian Historical Society, Hawaii Museums Association, Hawaii Library Association and the Conservation Council for Hawaii.

Agnes edited the journal of *Don Francisco* de Paula Marin and the Hawaiian Journal of History 1972, 1974-1975.

She, along with Nancy Bannick and Frances Jackson, wrote Old Honolulu, A Guide to Oahu's Historic Buildings, which some consider one of the turning points in saving Honolulu's Chinatown.



threatened by a nearly-final scheme for the 75-acre Kukui Redevelopment Project in Honolulu. All except two are to be demolished because they lie in sections destined to become all-residential or all-commercial in a plan which generally frowns on any mixed-use zones.

"The plan was drawn with little regard for the existing character of the district, an area of first settlement for the city's immigrant groups, particularly the Chinese and Japanese. It is a place of small shops with living quarters above and behind, of many elderly people who go about in old-country dress and gossip in their native tongue, of shrines, temples, and ethnic societies which were founded by lonely minorities chiefly for mutual aid and a banding together but which over the years have become institutions for the perpetuation of socio-religious customs of the Asian peoples who have given Honolulu its rich and diverse culture."

Out of all the Kukui turmoil, Nancy and her cohorts took credit for most new apartment buildings being three-story walk-ups of human scale and to at least saving the Toyo Theatre and the Izumo Taisha Kyo Mission. The latter, however, had to be moved to the bank of Nuuanu Stream and rebuilt, because it was in the wrong place. Millions were being spent on urban

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Toyo Theatre in the 1960s, an outstanding work of architect Charles W. Dickey. On the Ewa bank of Nuuanu Stream, it was saved from urban renewal but later torn down for a parking lot.



renewal, but none of the funds could be spent on restoration, so the shrine members had to raise the money—and they did. (Years later the beautiful Toyo Theatre on College Walk by architect Charles W. Dickey was razed for a mortuary, never built, and then just a parking lot.)

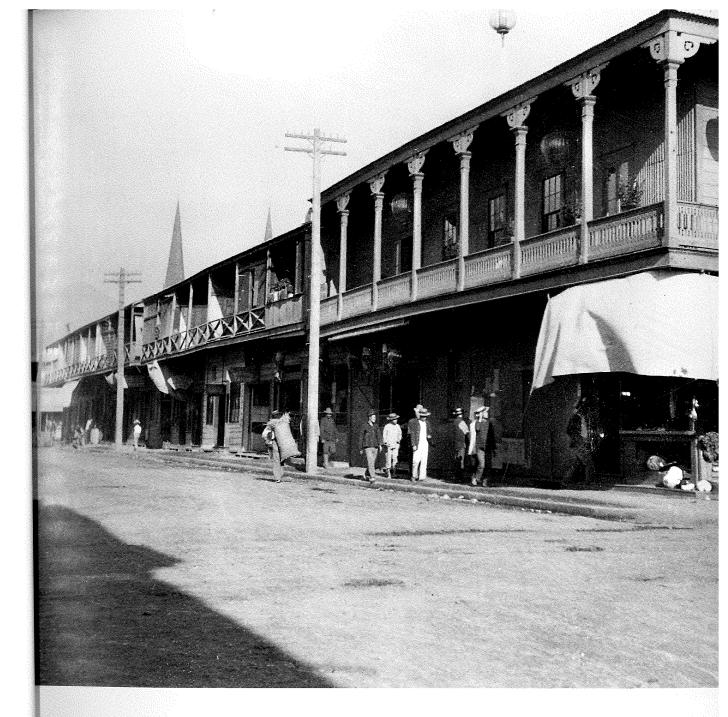
City officials and other community leaders recognized Honolulu's need for a landmarks preservation body and in 1965, a Mayor's Historic Buildings Task Force was formed with Nancy as chair. Again with a smile, Nancy says it is ironic that the HRA did all the group's paperwork.

Task Force members included: State Archivist Agnes Conrad; Jane Silverman, head of the State Historic Preservation Division of the Department of Land and Natural Resources; Herbert Mark, architect and DLNR planner; and several other architects, historians and laymen experienced in historic preservation (working members changed and were added over the Task Force's 10-year life).

Within a year the Task Force had established criteria for what makes a building historic and worth saving, boosted the burgeoning State Historic Preservation Office, and enlisted University of Hawaii architectural history students to do an island-wide survey of some 100 pre-World War II buildings. This added to an inventory that had just Civic Center buildings and a few others of prominence covered by the Hawaii Chapter, American Institute of Architects.

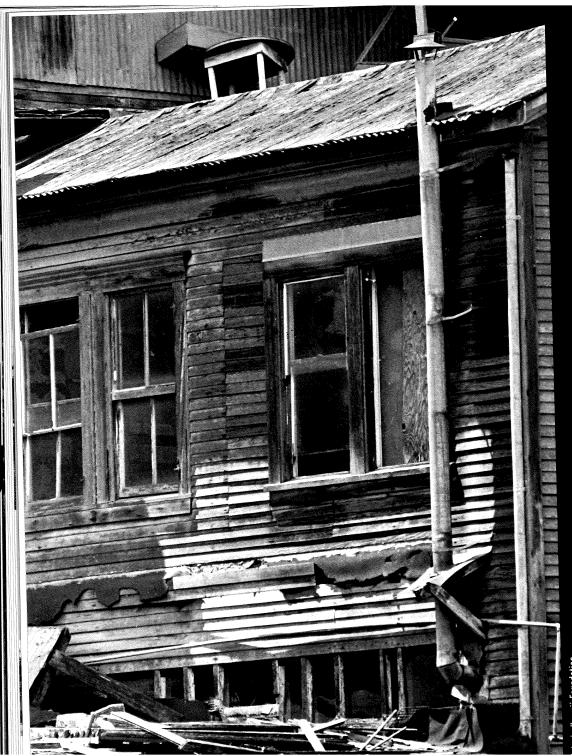
ABOVE: Maunakea Street's harmonious ensembles of two-story buildings contrast with the affordable housing towers rising along Beretania Street in the 1960s and '70s.

RIGHT: Looking mauka along Maunakea Street, circa 1898, were attractively-detailed wooden buildings that were destroyed in the 1900 fire along with Kaumakapili Church, whose spires are in the background.



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Run-down tenement houses like this in Chinatown everyone agreed had to go.

storic Hawaii Foundation

"Why do you want to save all that old stuff? We couldn't wait to get out of there."

Then the students did historical, architectural, cultural and structural research on 70 buildings in Chinatown, most built after the second Chinatown fire in 1900, and more than a dozen earlier buildings along and just off Merchant Street between Fort Street and Nuuanu Avenue, dating back to 1854. The Task Force then proposed the creation of two historic districts: Merchant Street, as just described, and Chinatown to include the blocks between Bethel Street or Nuuanu Avenue and River Street and Beretania Street and Nimitz Highway.

In 1966 the Task Force developed a preservation district land-use plan for Chinatown and in 1968 presented it to city officials and downtown and Chinatown organizations, putting forth an urban renewal plan based on blight studies and proposing to demolish and rebuild most of the district and save only an historic building here and there as a token.

The Task Force plan called for protecting the central Chinatown blocks as an "old quarter" standing in contrast to the blocks mauka of Beretania with the modern Chinatown Cultural Plaza and apartment towers and the Central Business District increasingly going to high-rise office buildings. It asked for a special building code for Chinatown so that lots could remain abnormally small and buildings could be repaired reasonably and without spoiling their architecture and end up safe and sanitary. It called for a façade code to require new structures, desirably of contemporary design, to fit in with the old buildings which have a clerestory and awning above the first floor and decorative upper level windows and cornices.

It suggested small parks and parking lots as well as new buildings for infill spaces, breaks in the ensembles of harmonious buildings. It would turn living quarters above street shops inward to center block courtyards. It would set height limits of five to seven stories between King Street and Nimitz as buildings of that size were already there and to prevent Chinatown's being hemmed in by high-rises (already on mauka and Diamond Head sides).

BELOW: Old Honolulu, the 1969 guide book published by the Historic Buildings Task Force, is no longer in print and some of the buildings described are gone.

RIGHT: The Foster Building, today's O'Toole's—in the background and the Royal Saloon, now Murphy's—in the foreground.

The Task Force presented its Chinatown plan to many groups using slides, a big map, and panels mounted with large photos of several blocks showing their architectural harmony. Nancy and Herb Mark had taken a ladder along the sidewalk and every few buildings

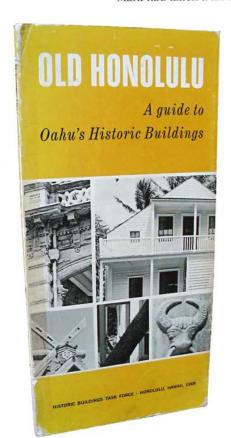
Nancy would climb up and shoot pictures. At one point in the preservation campaign a Chinese friend said to Nancy, "Why do you want to save all that old stuff? We couldn't wait to get out of there."

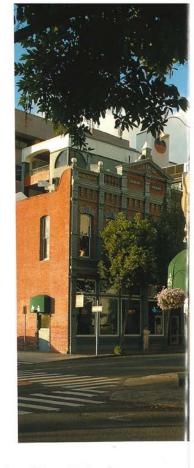
In 1969, the Task Force went under the wing of the Hawaiian Historical Society and making use of its inventory, published *Old Honolulu: A Guide to Oahu's Historic Buildings.* It covered the island's most important structures built before 1941 and

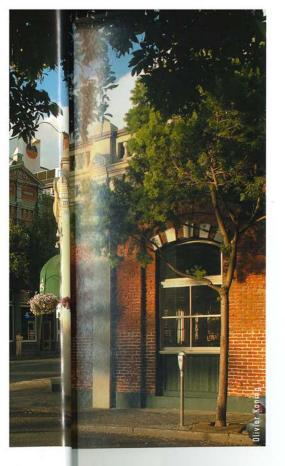
the criteria used for determining their merit, adapted from National Trust for Historic Preservation standards to fit Hawaii's history. Chinatown was portrayed as a district and the older Merchant Street buildings were written up individually.

The group helped the state put the Chinatown and Merchant Street districts on the Hawaii and National Register of Historic Places in 1972-1973. (Later Merchant Street was made part of the Chinatown historic district).

Nancy in particular had been working since 1966 to find new owners and uses for the Merchant Street buildings which were in





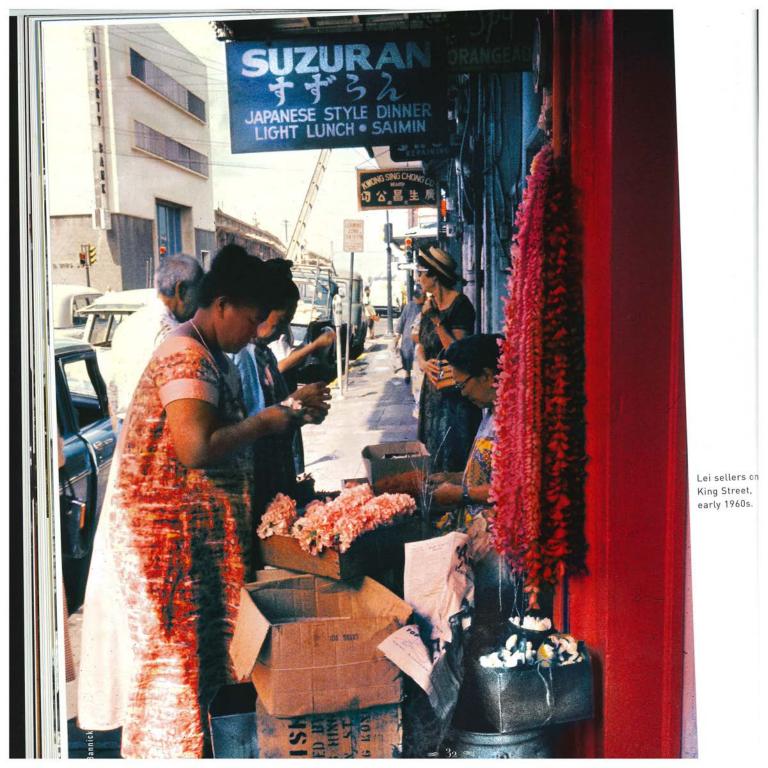


serious decline. She interested Alan Beall and William Lahmann in acquiring several of the buildings and they, with partners Donald Cowell and Joseph Miccio, formed Merchant Square Company, set up an office in the Yokohama Specie Bank building, turned the Foster Building and Royal Saloon into restaurants (today's O'Toole's and Murphy's), and spurred the eventual restoration of most of the district whose treasures were noted for their unplanned variety of styles and materials but being of human scale.

When the Chinatown General Neighborhood Renewal Plan and plans for the Pauahi Project, its first increment, were brought out in the early 1970s, the Task Force objected to its proposed high-rise apartments in the blocks between Nuuanu Avenue and the stream, makai of Beretania, a fancy Pauahi Street mall, and saving of only four historic buildings. The Task Force resubmitted its Chinatown Plan to the city in 1973 pointing out it had been proposing it under

three different HRA managers, two mayors, the Downtown Improvement Association, the Oahu Development Conference, the Hawaii Register of Historic Places staff and other groups concerned with Chinatown and historic preservation.

A frustrated Nancy telephoned the National Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. "I know I helped," Nancy says, as an official came out in response to invoking the Section 106 process of the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act and a Memorandum of Agreement was worked out between the National Council, the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the state historic preservation officer that called for a Design Review Advisory Committee to guard the district's integrity and to pass judgment on all new Chinatown projects. Eventually high-rises that were approved were given Chinatown character at street level.



"What was interesting was that the buildings in Chinatown weren't Chinese."

Nancy testified in 1975 before the City Council as a trustee of the new Historic Hawaii Foundation for establishing Chinatown as an historic, cultural and scenic district (subsequently approved). She also testified against the DMJM (Daniel, Mann, Johnson & Mendenhall) plan that included a proposed Smith-Beretania multi-story residential, commercial and parking structure; a Pauahi mall; and the long-proposed widening of King Street and Nuuanu Avenue that would have wiped out buildings along the mauka side of King Street and the Ewa side of Nuuanu Avenue. These were soon given up.



Architect Bob Fox as AIA Preservation Committee chairman and others were involved with the preservation of portions of Chinatown. Nancy gives credit to the Historic Hawaii Foundation for saving the venerable Oahu Market. "I think Historic Hawaii deserves a lot of credit for that. It took getting people together and arranging to buy the site. Otherwise, I think somebody was going to take it down and do something else there. It is fascinating. The idea of wandering back in there and all kinds of stuff appears."

ei sellers on Roasted ing Street, arly 1960s.

ducks hang inside the Oahu Market.

In a final note, Nancy says, "When I first got involved in preserving Chinatown, what was interesting was that the buildings in Chinatown weren't Chinese, really, most of them. They were Victorian with little Chinese touches here and there, but they weren't Chinese. And to me, what has happened in recent times is that they try to make them so Chinese."

"That's a bit of a jarring note to me. Just like putting in the street trees and putting in the gateway when you come in from River Street-that big Chinese thing," Nancy says with a touch of sadness.

Some of the architects who subsequently became deeply involved with the restoration of many of Chinatown's historic buildings would agree with Nancy as you will see in the next chapter.

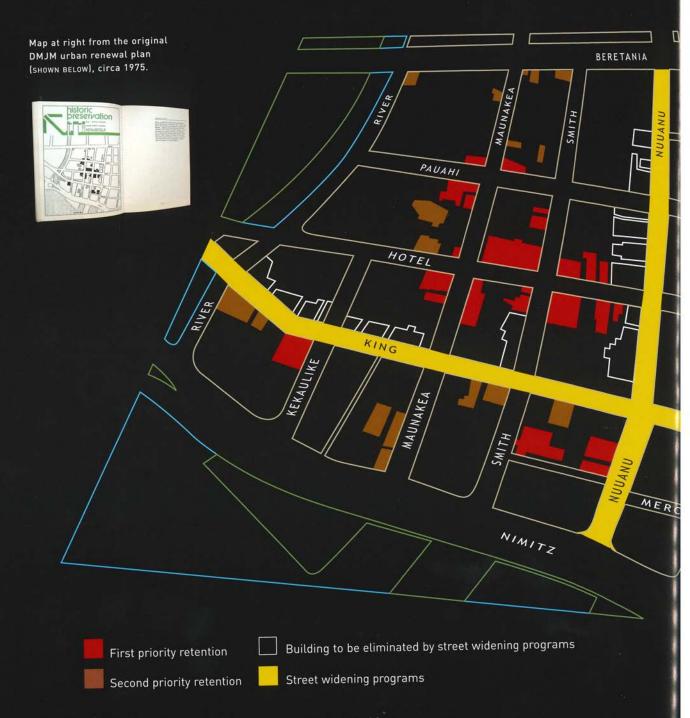
Chinatown Gateway

CHAPTER T W O

"CHINATOWN

Nightclub stage show, possibly at Club Hubba-Hubba or the Swing Club, Chinatown, Honolulu. August 3, 1953.

I POTPOURRI"



"This plan seems quite radical today..."

rchitect Spencer Leineweber says that her first involvement with Chinatown was looking at the plan drawn up by DMJM. "This plan seems quite radical today—almost the entire area was to be bulldozed—only a few historic buildings would remain. High-rises would be all along Nimitz." Spencer says it was part of the federally popular and locally reviled "urban renewal" program that Nancy Bannick and others fought so hard to overcome.

The dynamics in Chinatown had started to change before that. Hawaii passed a preservation law in the early '70s patterned after the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act. Under that law, according to Dorothy Riconda Pyle, one of the first employees and the first historian of the nascent State Historic Preservation Office, rules for registering historic sites in Hawaii were drawn up. She as an historian, and Bob Fox, an architect who was writing a series of articles about preserving historic buildings, identified historic sites eligible for this early register.

It was Bob, as a consultant to the State Historic Preservation Office, who in 1971 helped draft the nomination papers that would place Chinatown on the Hawaii Register of Historic Places and then the National Register. Now those who wanted to keep Chinatown intact could breathe a little easier.

Placement on the Hawaii Register meant first defining the whole Chinatown area, which would run from Beretania Street, down Nuuanu Avenue to the harbor, along Nimitz Highway and up River Street. Dorothy Pyle and Bob Fox say these boundaries were drawn including the buildings on the opposite side of the street. This allowed controls on the perimeter of Chinatown to help preserve the historic character of the boundaries.

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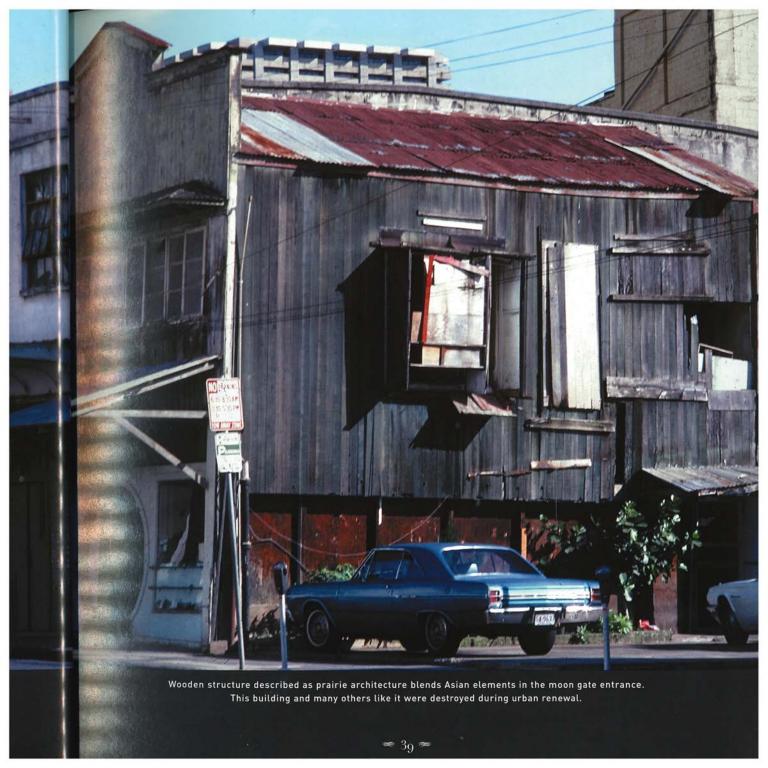
"There is no architectural style that is unique to Hawaii in Chinatown. This is basically 'prairie' architecture."

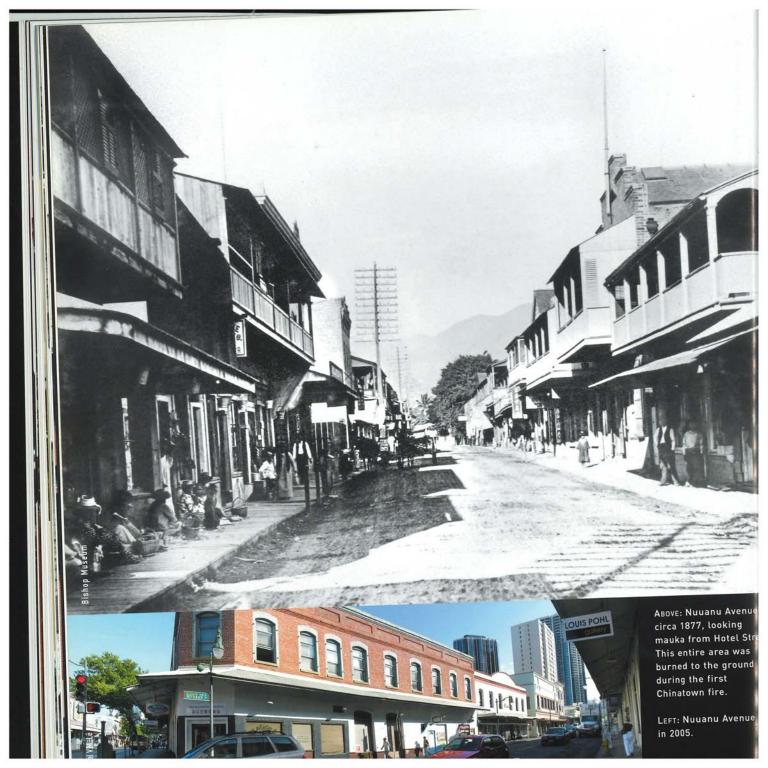
Prior to urban renewal, Chinatown was much larger, stretching beyond Vineyard and across River Street. Bob says, "However, during the search and destroy of the urban renewal process, most of the historic buildings in the larger Chinatown area were destroyed."

When asked what qualified Chinatown for protection as an historic district, Bob says it was primarily the cultural aspects of the area and its distinctive turn-of-the-century commercial architecture. Dorothy says not many buildings in Chinatown were qualified for the Hawaii Register as individual buildings. However, the area met all the requirements of an historic district: a cohesive collection of buildings in a defined geographic area that shared a common historical association. Further, she says you got a "sense of place" looking at the whole district and thus Chinatown qualified for registration.

Bob Gerell, a successful developer of multiple properties in Chinatown, echoes Dorothy's position that very few if any of the individual buildings in Chinatown would make it onto the historic register. "I don't believe any are on the register," he says. "There is no architectural style that is unique to Hawaii in Chinatown. This is basically 'prairie' architecture where boxes were built of the cheapest material available."

Regardless, according to Dorothy, Chinatown became the first state registered historic district. And it's a good thing it happened because Bob Fox claims that Nuuanu Avenue has the longest contiguous stretch of historic commercial buildings in the state.





After the Herculean effort of Nancy Bannick and others to save Chinatown, it took some time for property owners to figure out what to do with their buildings for the long haul. According to Bob Gerell, "Ala Moana Center and the burgeoning suburbs of Hawaii Kai and Pearl City sucked the vitality out of downtown and Chinatown to the point where nobody cared. Seedier businesses moved in. Chinatown was at its low when we got involved in 1975-76."

Bob says he had developed several highrises before that. He was looking to balance his residential work with more commercial enterprises, so he took a look at Chinatown and he was impressed with two factors. "I fell in love with the culture and I fell in love with the entrepreneurial spirit—the tremendous work ethic—of the people," he says.

Architect Glenn Mason says, "I think what happened was you had some people who liked old buildings and saw an economic opportunity by restoring and, in some cases, redeveloping them. I honestly think that guys like Bob Gerell and Pete Smith are the ones who took the big risks in the beginning."

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BOB GERELL

Bob says he came to Hawaii in 1962 straight out of high school when his father got a job at Aloha Airlines.
"I liked numbers, so I was headed for an engineering degree at the University of Hawaii. That didn't work out, so I switched to the TIM School because it was easier."

He says he wasn't sure about TIM either, so he dropped out, raced cars and went to work for a Portuguese gas station on the Windward side. It was hard, grimy work which convinced him to settle down. He married a girl who is half Hawaiian and half Korean and went off to the University of Texas. That eventually got him back into the UH where he got a marketing degree.

Once on the straight and narrow, he went to work for Amfac where he learned the ins and outs of the real estate business.

In 1972 he left Amfac with his boss Pete Smith, and as partners, they started a development business that concentrated on building high-rises and condo conversions.

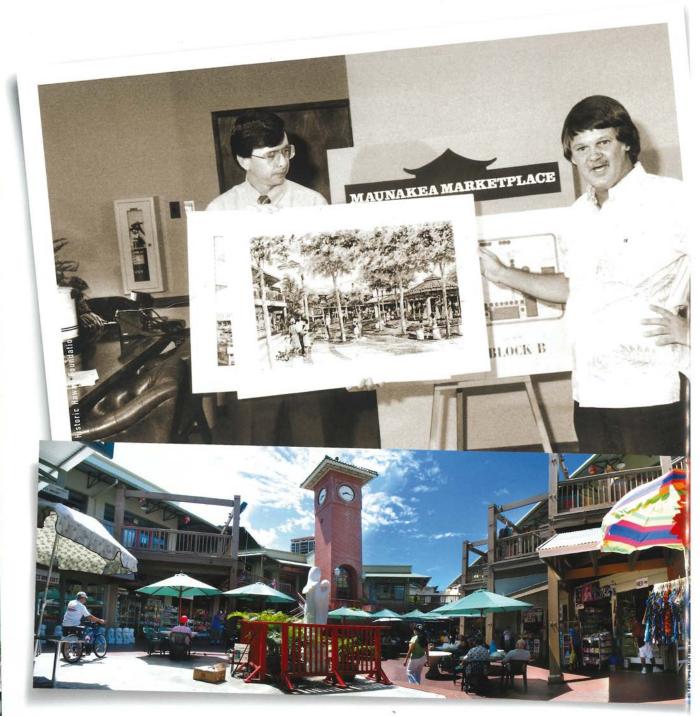
Bob says he further got the bug for restoration when the Waterhouse family approached him in 1983 to ask if he was interested in what was then the derelict, but historic Koloa town on Kauai. They wanted to know if the 17 buildings could be saved, or should they be torn down.

He leased the property and turned it into a huge success.

Bob says he hasn't built anything since the Maunakea Marketplace in Chinatown. Today he is semi-retired and his son is taking over the business, which is mostly property management at this point.

"But I still love Chinatown. I've been blessed," he says.





OPPOSITE LEFT: Bob Gerell is shown with then City Managing Director Jeremy Harris as he makes his pitch for development of the Maunakea Marketplace around 1987. Developers had to bid on these projects. Bob credits Harris with providing vital government impetus for infrastructure changes in Chinatown.

OPPOSITE BELOW: Maunakea Marketplace courtyard.

It should be pointed out that Bob received a 1986 Preservation Certificate of Service from Historic Hawaii Foundation for inspiring others by example that preservation of Hawaii's architectural heritage can be economically profitable.

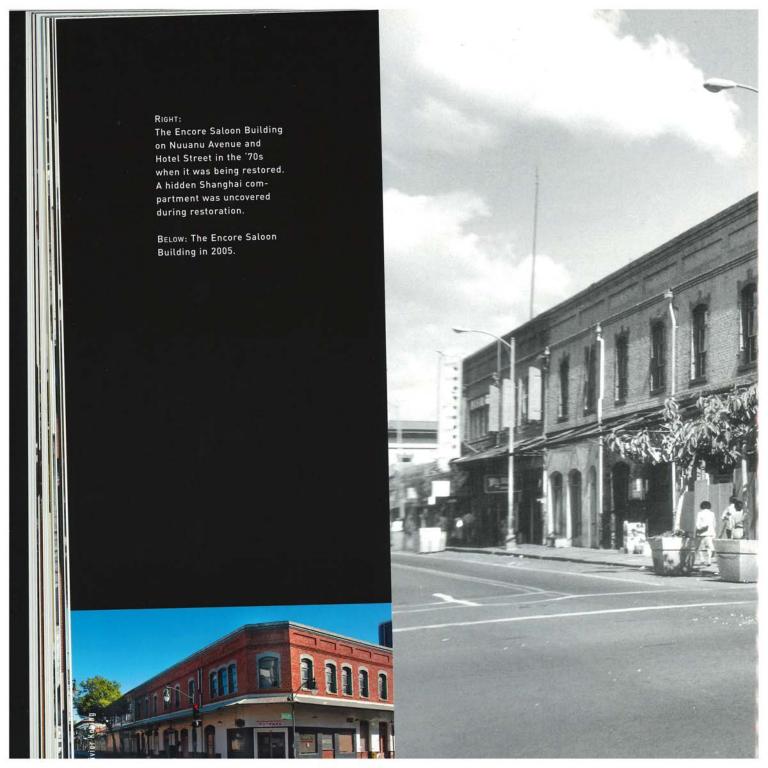
Glenn says he's not sure how many buildings Bob Gerell did, "but it must be ten projects in Chinatown." Included in that total is the Maunakea Marketplace. This wasn't a restoration, but what some consider a low-rise urban renewal, in that vacant land and the selective demolition of one or two old buildings allowed for a suitably scaled infill to be shoehorned in between remaining historic buildings.

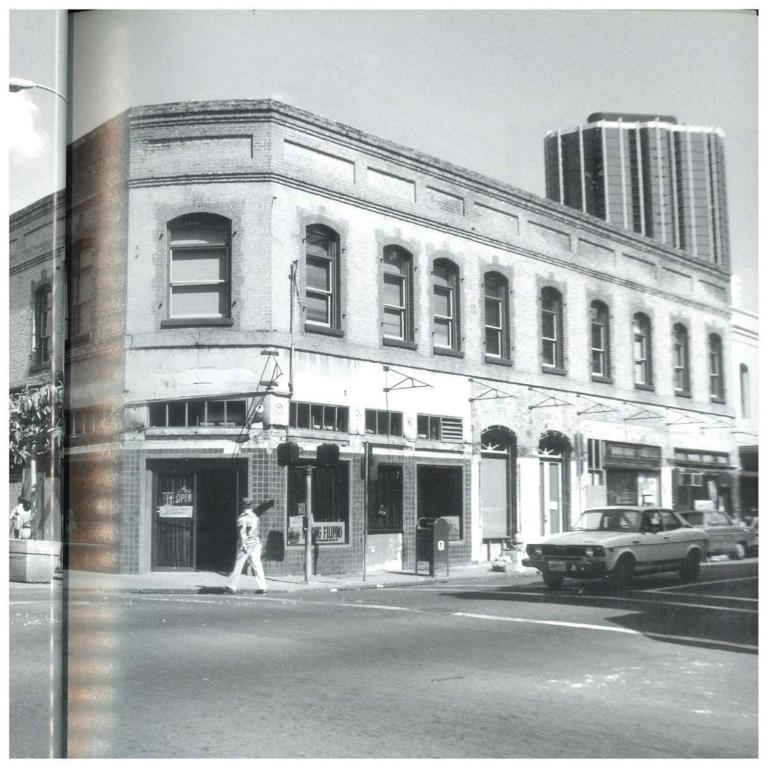
In spite of all this activity to save Chinatown, the area remained somewhat of a sin city. Spencer Leineweber says she spent 19 years as

an architect working in Chinatown. During some of those years she watched from her office window in the Mini Mendonça Building at Smith and Hotel streets as "it went from being a horrible red-light district to an even more horrible drug district. I'll take the hookers any day!"

DATA ON PROSTITUTION LANDLADY: Local Rooms, (Asla Rooms) 1026-B Asla St. Mrs. Hun Yee Yei 22 girls Asla Park Rooms, (Park Rooms, 1050 Asla St. Mrs. Hun Yee Yei 18 girls Norma Lane 7 girls Bell Rooms 137 Worth Kukui St Mrs. Rebecca Paskonia Camp Rooms 1126 Smith St 8 girls Peggy Staunton Western Rooms 120 North Beretania St Cottage Hotel 1183 River St Mickey Allen 4 girls Pacific Rooms 1130 Mauna Kes St Frances Norman 4 girls Rex Rooms 1145 Smith St Molly O'Brian 5 girls Senator Fotel 121 Worth Hotel St Ruth Favis 15 girls Midway Hotel 1243 River St Patricia De Corso Virginia Martin 6 girls Modern Rooms 1133 Mauna Kee St Ritz Rooms 143 North Beretania St Helen Burton 3 girls Service Hotel 1153 Mauna Kea St Darlene Foster 12 girls Palace Hotel 1252 Nuuanu St Honolulu Rooms 347 North Beretania St Rainbow Hotel 1207 River St Bronx Rooms 1275 River St Toni Abe Mirror Rooms 154 North Hotel St Bungalow 1166 Smith St Anchor Rooms, (Hotel) Mrs. Angeline Russell 57 North Pauchi St

ABOVE: This is an original list of brothels in Chinatown from the 1940s. The data was compiled by public health officials when the city kept track of such information.







Bob Fox, one of the original founders of the Historic Hawaii Foundation when it was established in 1974, echoes Spencer in his view of the dark side of Chinatown, which he also observed first hand.

ABOVE: The Perry Block, built in 1889, is the only building in the area that survived the 1900 fire. He says from his office on the second floor of McLean Block he could see across the street to the Encore Saloon Building where there were several suspect massage parlors and a line of hookers along Nuuanu Avenue.

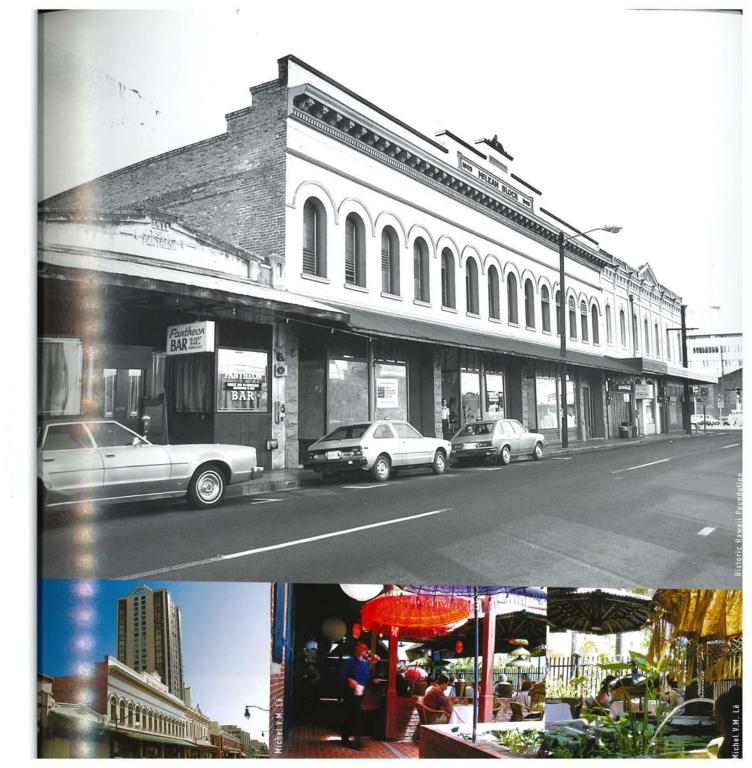
Among the stories about illicit activities in Chinatown buildings, both Bob Fox and Bob Gerell say when restoration of the Encore Saloon Building started, it was discovered that the second floor had a hidden Shanghai compartment between the floor and the ceiling with a trap door where sailors were drugged and kept until the early hours in the morning when ship captains would pay a fee to the proprietor to take the sailors to their ships ready to sail on the morning tide for Shanghai or other points west.

Bob Fox believed enough in the preservation of Chinatown, however, that in 1978 he bought the McLean Block, which is the longest building between Pauahi and Hotel streets on the Diamond Head side of Nuuanu Avenue. Bob had his architectural office there for 15 years and eventually sold the building to the Hawaii Theatre in 1990. He also bought the adjacent Perry Block in 1979, which was built in 1889 and is the only building in the area that survived the 1900 fire.

The well-known Indigo Restaurant now spreads through most of the first floor of the McLean Block and into parts of the Perry Block.

Top Right: The McLean Block is the longest building between Pauahi and Hotel streets. This 1980s photo shows the Pantheon Bar, on the left, claimed to be the oldest bar in Honolulu.

Below Right: The McLean Block in 2005, with the Chinatown Gateway high-rise in the background, is home to Indigo Restaurant. The Pantheon Bar is boarded up and used for storage by Indigo.





ABOVE AND RIGHT: The restored Mendonça Building at the corner of Smith and Hotel streets dates back to 1901.

It has been managed for the last 30 years by Mickey Thielan, who was the contractor on the restoration and who took the storefronts back to the way they were originally built.



"This was the key block in restoring Chinatown."

Bob Fox was involved with the restoration of the Mendonça Building at Maunakea, Hotel and Smith streets. He calls it the "key block in all of Chinatown. Very visible." Bob explains that this building, designed by Oliver Traphagen in 1901 and restored in 1977, had some original storefronts buried under years of plywood and grime. Spencer, who worked for Bob at the time, says the building was in "really bad shape and incredibly sleazy with peep show rooms and hot tubs" when they started the restoration.

Spatial changes were made to the building in the restoration. Spencer says rather than being organized vertically with a shop and residence in the same bay, the spaces were reoriented horizontally with shops below and offices above. The circulation on new balconies at the back also provided better fire escape access.

Bob Gerell, who bought the Mendonça Building as his first foray into commercial real estate and his first development in Chinatown, says he learned that in going for big government tax credits for restoration, which was the case with Mendonça, the exacting federal standards doubled the restoration price. He says he believes this was the first "authentic" restoration of a commercial building anywhere in Hawaii. As he restored other buildings in the district, however, he followed the city guidelines and was able to make better economic sense of these restorations.



Working in Chinatown and seeing its potential is what prompted Spencer to buy the Mini Mendonça Building in 1980 for her architectural practice.

At this point it should be pointed out that two intrepid lady artists also took the plunge in buying buildings in Chinatown early on. One was the widely collected artist Pegge Hopper, who bought an historic brick building at 1164 Nuuanu Avenue.

Pegge says she had had her gallery in Chinatown starting in 1982. When 1164 Nuuanu Avenue (next door) became available in 1986, she knew the potential of the area and that encouraged her to buy in Chinatown, even though the building was essentially derelict. She gutted the building, added a new front, a new floor, a loft and air conditioning. The Pegge Hopper Gallery remains at the same address today.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

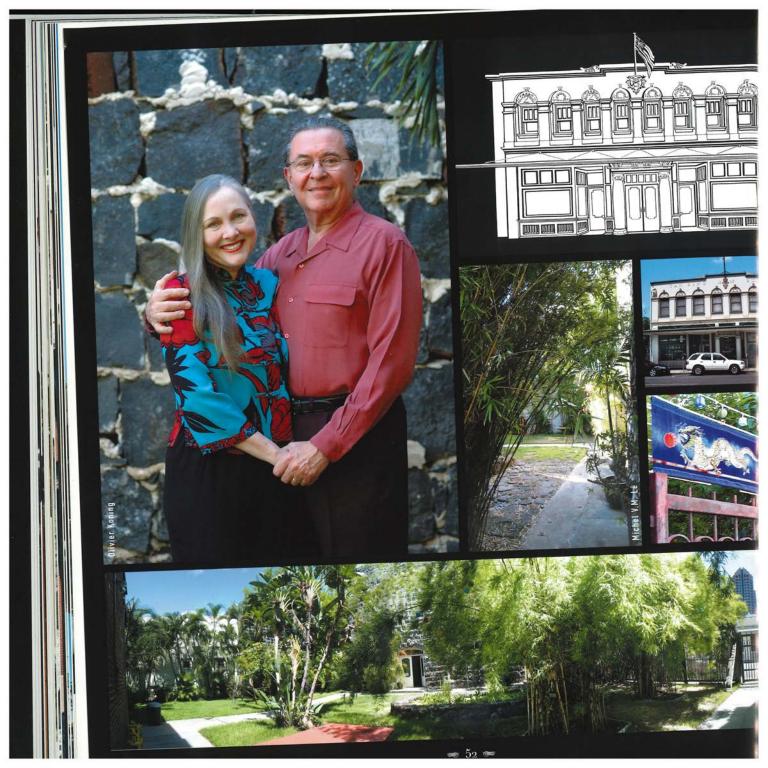
Pegge Hopper's "Wood," an acrylique and pastel painting, 1994; the original building front with a barber shop on the left and an herbalist on the right; Pegge in her gallery today; the shabby mauka side of the building before Pegge rehabbed it; Pegge proudly displays her new sign when the building restoration was finished in 1987; the gallery, 2005.











Together with her dermatologist husband Norman Goldstein, another well-known artist by the name of Ramsay bought the historic Tan Sing Building at 1128 Smith Street in 1983. Spencer, the restoration architect for Tan Sing, says the building was in good condition compared with some of the others she had worked on. She credits Ramsay with changing the stairs so that when you enter from the street you can go directly downstairs (versus upstairs as before) where Dr. Goldstein has his office. Most of the first floor and all of the second floor are devoted to Ramsay's studio.

The saving of Chinatown has not been without some controversy, especially among the architects. Perhaps the most worrisome detriment has been the high-rises that some say have snuck in around the height limits.

"The city controls the district in terms of height. Whenever they want to do something, they change the rules. But I think the district has held up," says Spencer. However, when asked about the affordable high-rises the city has constructed here and there in Chinatown, Spencer says she still disagrees with the city.

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

Artist Ramsay with her physician husband Norman Goldstein; Ramsay's signature pen and ink drawing of her own building; the Tan Sing Building as it looks restored today; bamboo and artistry in the courtyard next door to Ramsay's gallery.

RIGHT: Red awnings of the Oahu Market on King Street in the early morning, with the Marin Tower on the harbor-side of Chinatown in the background.



"The high-rises really overshadow the district."

"I think the intent is good, but they're too high because the high-rises really overshadow the district." She also feels these high-rises have impacted the site lines out of the district to the mountains and the sea.

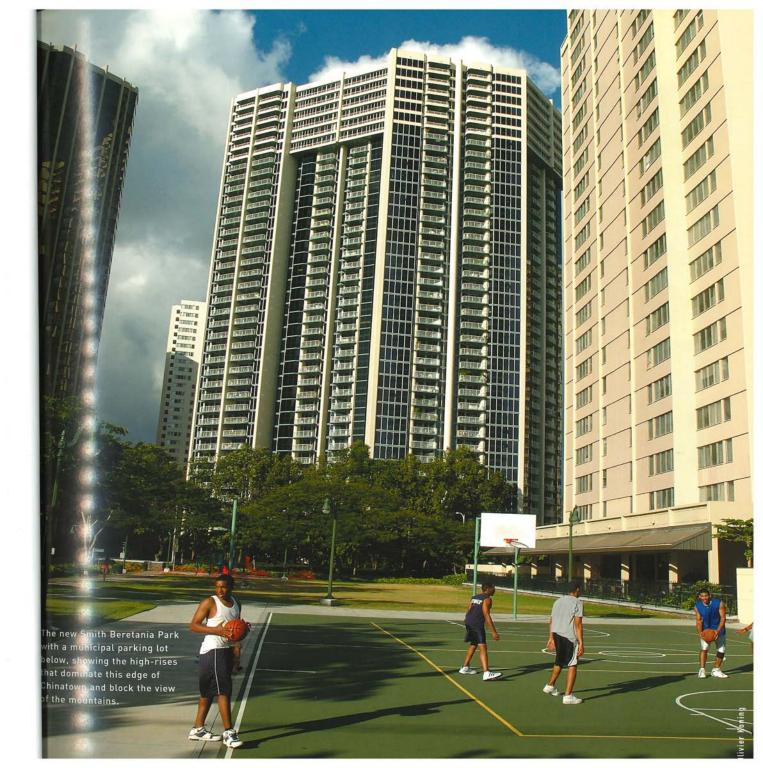
BELOW: The Chinatown Gateway Building on Nuuanu Avenue looking makai. When asked if these high-rises have helped conserve the scale of Chinatown, Spencer responds, "Yes and no. Certainly they have increased the value of the land. I'm not sure I'd argue, 'well, let's put high-rises around so we can save the historic middle.' You can still save the historic middle and put high-rises someplace else."

Architect Chris Smith says, "I'm not really pleased with the high-rises in Chinatown. I don't think any of them is monumental. None of them, I think, has been designed creatively. There could have been more mid-rise buildings or something like that."



On the other hand, Bob Gerell feels the high-rises have fulfilled two very important purposes. First, they replaced all the housing that was taken out under urban renewal, and second, these buildings have created a population base that is critical to Chinatown's commercial success.

The Chinatown Gateway Building bounded by Bethel and Hotel streets and Nuuanu Avenue was built by the city in the mid '80s. It has 23 floors of affordable housing, some city offices and several levels of parking. Glenn Mason says, "I think the building turns its back on Chinatown. All I know is it turns its back on the street, which is a horrible sin in Chinatown. The Nuuanu façade violates a basic tenant of retail space in Chinatown. Shops and restaurants have to be at the sidewalk level. I know why they did it. They did it so they could fit more parking in underneath there without digging a deeper hole. It does not engage Chinatown on the Hotel or Nuuanu sides. It's been a financial and retail disaster."





When he was director of planning and permitting for the city, architect Eric Crispin campaigned mightily against a highrise on the site of the former Otani property at the entrance to Chinatown. The thought was that there should not be a high-rise



Glenn says the city tried to stop the project by gerrymandering around it so they could control it. But that didn't work. "When the Otani Block was there, which was a very interesting two-story building, green with a little bit of tile detail, the city never said anything about demolishing it. Once it was taken down, the property was no longer a viable part of Chinatown," says Glenn.

at the entrance to an historic district.

He feels the new high-rise at this location bears no relationship to Chinatown. Chinatown is artificially cut off at this end. There used to be many more historic structures in that area.

"That's all wiped out now. But that's why Chinatown is so important, because it's a remnant of an area that was probably two or three times its size at one time."

Glenn says there aren't too many more places to build high-rises in Chinatown today, except maybe the Bank of Hawaii property on the Ewa corner of Nuuanu Avenue and Nimitz. "You're going to see this one built, but I think the protections that are on Chinatown, if they are followed fairly well, aren't going to allow too much more high-rise development."

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The old Otani Block, looking makai from the Nuuanu Stream; the Otani with the OR&L train station to the right; all that was left of the Otani Block when it was razed in 1980.

ABOVE: The new high-rise built on the site of the former Otani property, viewed from King Street.

"Too much design in Chinatown is trapped in one era."

The design guidelines for Chinatown elicit some interesting comments from the restoration architects.

Glenn worked on the Stack Building on the Ewa/mauka corner of Pauahi Street and Nuuanu Avenue that was built after the original collapsed. "The footprint was the same, the overall height was the same. They made us copy some details we weren't trying to copy, but we were trying to do something that fit in with Chinatown and looked like Chinatown. I did not agree personally with the guidelines for this building set up by the design advisory board, because I don't think we should be copying buildings."

Glenn goes on to reiterate his position that, "too much design in Chinatown is trapped in one era. Chinatown is not one era. The design styles are not one design style. But according to the city, every building that goes in there now is of one design, which is pre-1930, unless it's a high-rise. This ignores the very appropriate designs that were done in Chinatown through the early 1950s."

He is adamant in saying, "I don't think Chinatown deserves to be a whole bunch of fake old buildings, but should reflect the cultural and architectural vocabulary of the past with some sense of the present."

ABOVE RIGHT: The original Stack Building at the corner of Nuuanu Avenue and Pauahi Street, looking mauka about 1945.

This building collapsed in 2002.

Right: The new Stack Building reflecting the city's design guidelines replaced the original. The high-rises at the edge of the district are very visible in this photo cutting off the view of the mountains.

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"Chinatown is a potpourri."

Glenn ends by saying, "Chinatown is a potpourri. That what's fascinating about Chinatown."

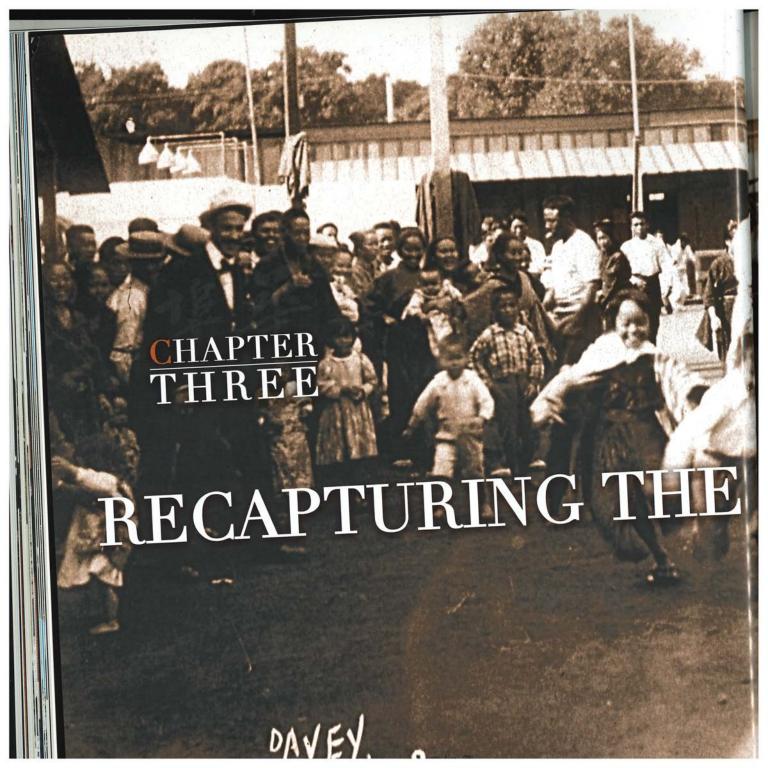
Many would agree with Glenn. Chinatown is not only a mix of building styles, but also a medley of people, shops, smells and intimate spaces. There are some unusual physical aspects of the district that are not always visible to many casual passersby.

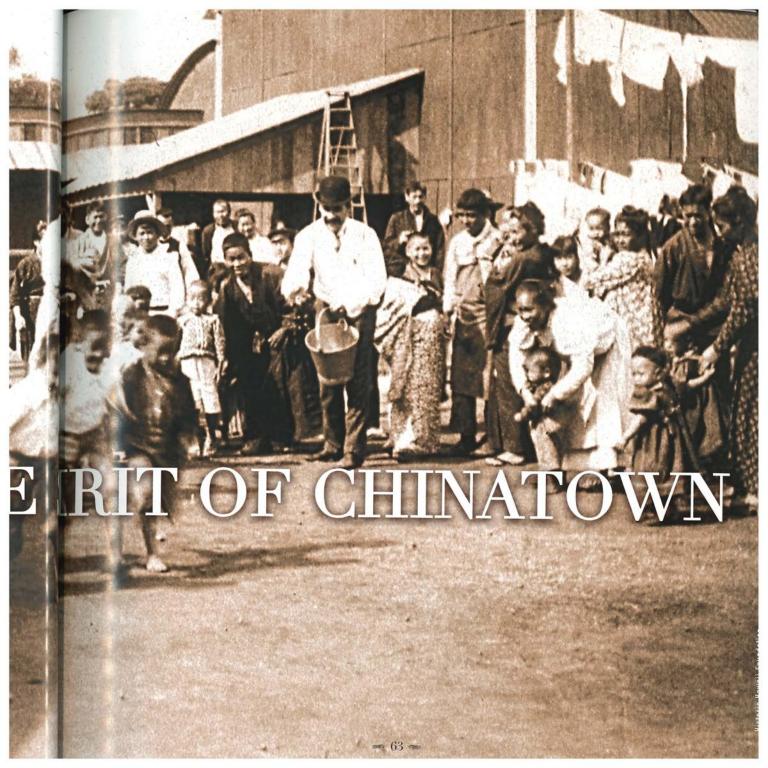
Illustrated here are alleyways that lead back to remnant open spaces where one finds grass and trees – right in the heart of Chinatown. These are wondrous places of respite from the oftentimes frenzied pace of the area.

Whimsy plays a part of the mixture as well. In this case it is an office on the third floor of what is sometimes referred to as the old Love's Bakery Building at 1128 Nuuanu. There on the third floor one finds a severed portion of a DC 3 fuse-lage installed for small meetings. The office was at one time occupied by a design firm that had the venerable old plane lifted up and placed through the roof.

Because Honolulu's Chinatown is a potpourri as described, it invites exploration over and over again.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Passage connecting Harbor Village with King Street; 1st Hawaiian Bank Chinatown Branch courtyard; Krung Thai courtyard; entry to Info Graphik, a design studio; DC3 fuselage in the Love's Bakery Building; old DC3; Chinatown Gateway courtyard; Krung Thai courtyard; Armstrong Building courtyard; alleyway off Nuuanu Avenue; charming alley off Marin Lane; Chinatown Manor gate; interior of the DC3.









t is important to remember that Chinese plantation laborers who had completed their contracts moved into this part of Honolulu as early as the 1860s. Chinatown was wiped out by a fire in 1886, but the Chinese rebuilt it. In January 1900, while the Board of Health was burning down some wooden buildings to eradicate a bubonic plague outbreak, the fire got out of control and swept through 12 blocks. It was rebuilt once again.

The area's history as an incubator for some of Hawaii's larger ethnic groups goes on even now. Ask anyone familiar with Chinatown and they will tell you there aren't many Chinese left. Over the past 30 years, steadily, many of the business owners have become Filipino, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Korean—even haoles.

Wing Tek Lum, who is part of a family whose business has stayed in Chinatown, extols the dynamic environment of Chinatown versus the sterility of Kahala Mall. "Which one gives the immigrant a better chance to succeed?" he asks. His family-owned Chinatown real estate company, Lum Yip Kee, is a major landowner and has three namesake buildings in the district.

Wing Tek, who incidentally is also an accomplished poet, says, "There is a day city and a night city. The people who live in Chinatown go about their business during the day, and at night the city is left for other people. The two don't have to mix."

"Restore the Hawaii Theatre to help Honolulu become a vibrant 18-hour city."

Despite all of the changes that have taken place over the years, Honolulu's Chinatown has a cohesiveness to it even today. It is still an area of small shops, many with open fronts. A well-known marketing expert said recently, "Think about the fact that there are no chains in Chinatown. Every business is an original. I really like that."

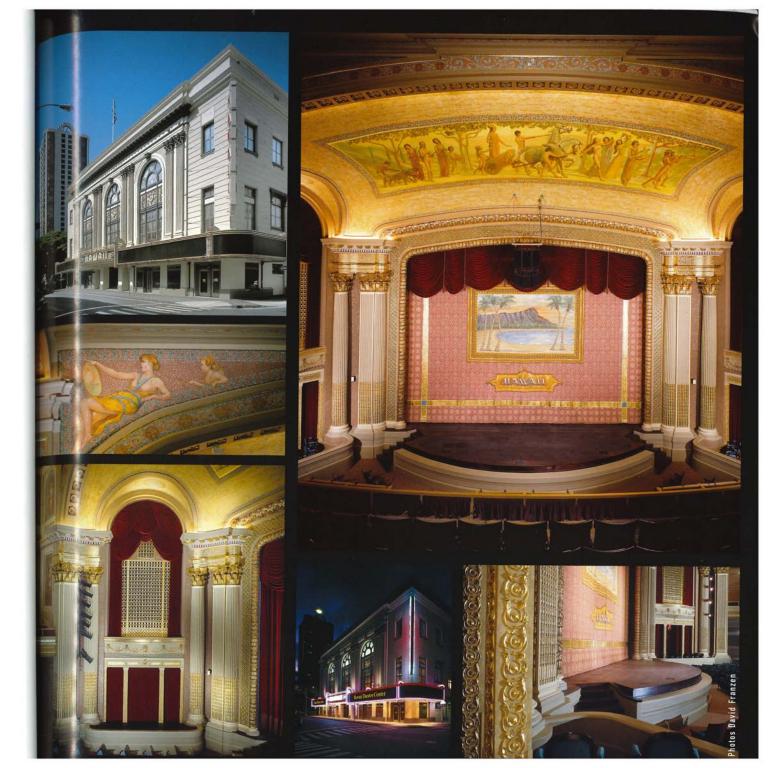
The real news is that parts of Chinatown are experiencing a substantial transformation. Some call it gentrification. In all this renovation and change, is the spirit still there?

In the 1980s there began an enormous effort to restore the historic Hawaii Theatre as an anchor to bringing back, economically, a whole section at the edge of Chinatown. It is an area bounded by Bethel Street, Pauahi Street, Nuuanu Avenue and King Street. There was even this key line used by the money raisers, "Restore the Hawaii Theatre to help Honolulu become a vibrant 18-hour city." In other words, helping us restore this theater will provide a big benefit for you business people.

Dr. Norman Goldstein and his artist wife Ramsay actually signed a mortgage to keep the old theater from the wrecking ball. Because his family built the place in 1922, the late Jack Magoon ponied up substantial early money to get the restoration started. Then the state and the heavy money people got together, and in a sizable gamble, eventually raised \$32 million over about 15 years to give the old theater a shiny new appearance inside and out.

It should be pointed out that part of that money went for the purchase of the adjacent properties on Nuuanu Avenue including the Austin Building and the McLean Block so that the theater could eventually increase the size of the stage to accommodate Broadway plays and other large productions. These purchases have helped keep intact these historic Nuuanu buildings.

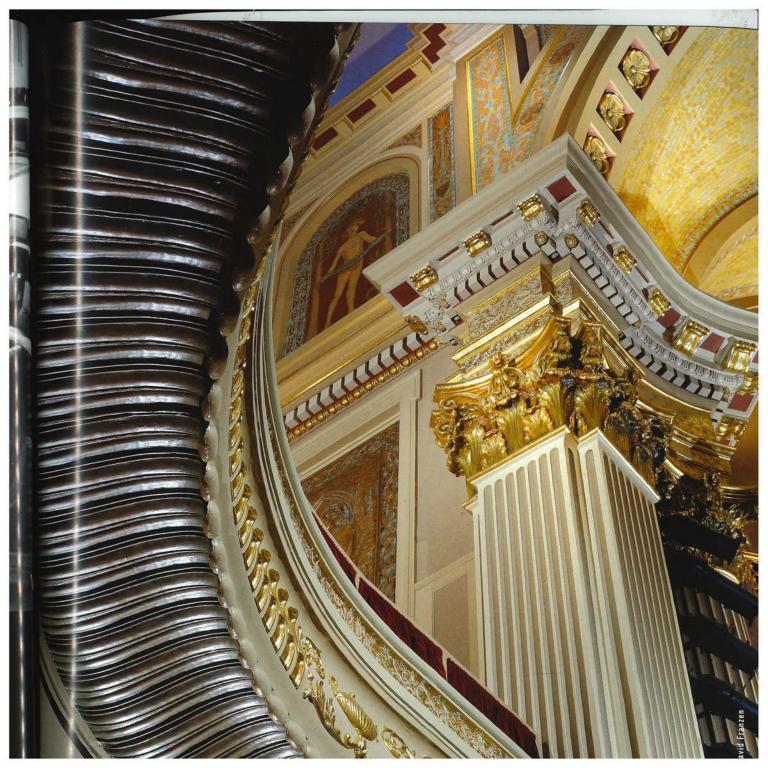
RIGHT: The Hawaii Theatre in all its splendor.





ABOVE: The first four rows of the original Hawaii Theatre balcony had wicker chairs. Consideration was given to again using the same chairs in the renovated theater until it was discovered that the creaking sounds might be bothersome to theater patrons.

RIGHT: The sweep of the balcony in the renovated theater showing the detailed gold leaf used in restoration of the columns.





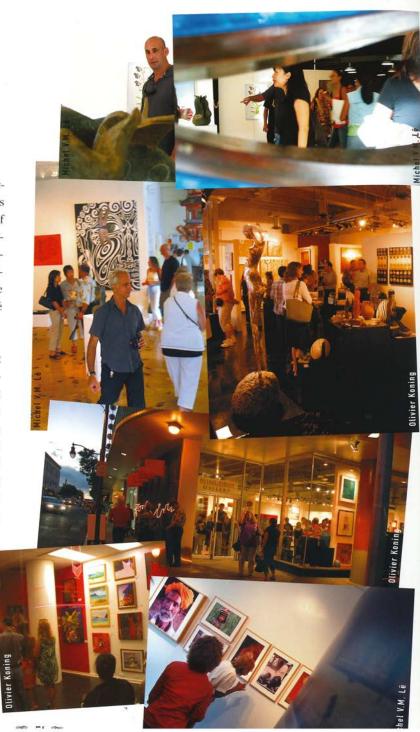
"There is a day city and a night city."

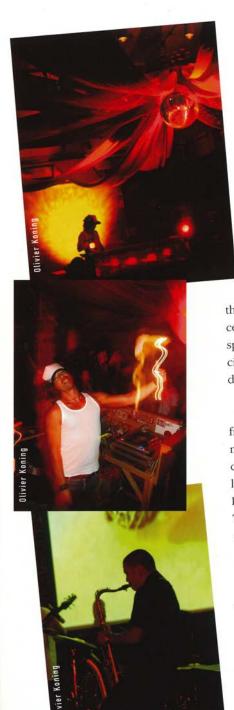
To most, the theater has been a huge success, bringing about 120,000 souls a year to its 1,400 seat auditorium for a wide variety of entertainment. It also seems to have contributed to the promise of providing an economic revival in the neighborhood. Surrounding the theater are art galleries, a new wine bar, a wine store, a highly recommended café and an art gallery/small performance space.

A major program to snazz up the district from Bethel Street to Smith Street was the creation of the Honolulu Culture & Arts District (HCAD), a non-profit that went after grants and has now hired an executive director. Its purpose is to spark even more interest in the arts and cultural events around the Hawaii Theatre by promoting the area's attractions to residents and visitors. One of HDCA's more daunting efforts is to help building owners improve their store fronts.

LEFT: The bright neon sign for ARTS at Marks Garage, considered the focal point of the new cultural district.

RIGHT: Crowds at several galleries enjoying First Friday event.





"There's a crying need for different places for people to go different entertainment venues."

HCAD has taken upon itself to map out businesses in Chinatown and has found there are 100 restaurants in the district. It developed a map of major business categories other than restaurants and the variety may surprise many.

Andy Friedlander, who owns the Marks Garage adjacent to the theater on Pauahi Street, claims credit for helping along the very successful ARTS at Marks Garage. Andy finds the name HCAD—or the spelled out version—too laborious and forgettable. He will provide a special name and logo for the area, such as those of other cities with such distinctive acronyms as SoHo, SoMa and LoDo.

Andy makes an interesting point about why Honolulu is different from other cities when it comes to places for entertainment. He says not many have an area of the magnitude of Waikiki to draw away people and dollars from their downtowns and other pockets where you might normally find entertainment venues. "And too, we have a plethora of sleazy bars. Look at the Korean bars that don't exist in any other American city. There's a crying need for different places for people to go—different entertainment venues," he says.

LEFT: Performances of all sorts are part of the revitalized Chinatown.

RIGHT: The Honolulu Culture and Arts District took inventory of major business categories with surprising results. Chinatown businesses are more plentiful and diverse than most would imagine.

HCAD MAP OF BUSINESSES





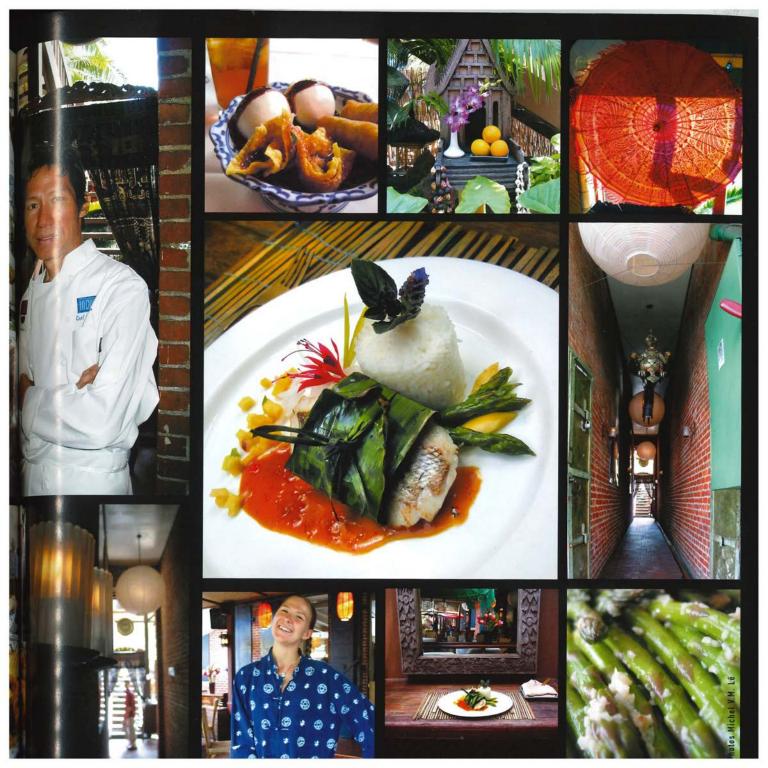
An interesting phenomenon is the First Friday event that draws literally thousands who wander between many galleries, shops and restaurants. Organized by the Hawaii Alliance for Arts Education, First Friday, with a memorable name, has to be considered a substantial success. But it is only one night out of the month. Increasing this kind of activity will be the longer term challenge.

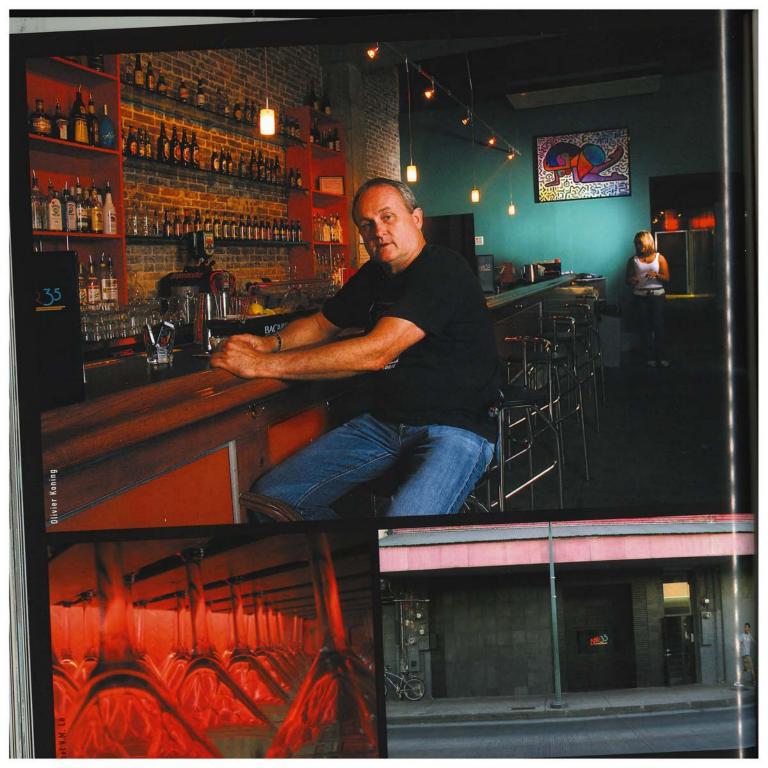
A pioneer establishment in the transformation of Chinatown is Indigo Restaurant. Glen Chu, one of the owners, says when a realtor first showed him and his partner David Stewart their present space in 1991, the perception was that the area was dangerous. "And there was nothing else down here. We preceded the Hawaii Theatre opening by a year."

ABOVE: First Friday crowds have grown month after month.

RIGHT: Indigo owner and chef extraordinaire Glen Chu in his restaurant. Other photos clockwise show Glen's inventiveness in food, décor, place settings and even the uniforms of his people.







"This town is seriously lacking in good bars."

Nevertheless, according to Glen, the old brick and metal shutters and doors (installed in many Chinatown buildings after the second fire) had so much character that the space really inspired him. He and David saw the potential of the building and set about transforming it into what has become the widely acclaimed Indigo.

Many restaurant critics and others have tried to describe the Indigo food and ambience, but Glen says you aren't supposed to be able to pinpoint either. "Is it Hawaii in the '30s and '40s? Indonesia? How strong are the Polynesian influences? The food and the décor are the blending of many cultures. I think that's why we've done as well as we have."

David Stewart developed the Green Room Lounge next to Indigo. It has been wildly successful as an after-work gathering spot for Hawaii's young professionals and business people. "This town is seriously lacking in good bars—fun places. Everything's corporate—a formula," he says.

David says that because the Green Room is at capacity, he expanded his business by opening Bar 35, at that address on Hotel Street. It is an urban bar in a downtrodden section of Hotel. He's built an urban garden at the back, an open courtyard with trees and plants.

Further, he also has a new wine bar called Du Vin across the street from the Hawaii Theatre, which in his words puts him in the "punter" category. In his native New Zealand lingo, punter means he is among those who are willing to take risks.

Top LEFT: David Stewart has expanded his business beyond Indigo to Bar 35 on Hotel Street. The entrance is subtle as shown below.

SUN HUNG WONG

Honorary Mayor of Chinatown

Sunny Wong grew up in the Palama area when it was considered a part of a larger Chinatown. He worked at Pearl Harbor in accounting until he retired in the '60s.

He recalls that during WWII, Honolulu's Chinatown was the place for military R&R. "Name anything and it was in Chinatown," he says.

Business was bad in the '60s. Sunny was retired at that time and that was when he got involved in the community. "It was so unfortunate, no one wanted to do anything," he says. "You could give away Chinatown and nobody would want it."

In the '70s, developer Bob Gerell came to Sunny seeking support from the local community. Bob and Sunny attended city hearings together on the revitalization of Chinatown, with the full backing of Mayor Frank Fasi. The opposition was always the Chinese community. "The most embarrassing thing was that the 'pakes' refused to help us," says Sunny. "All the people who helped were non-Chinese."

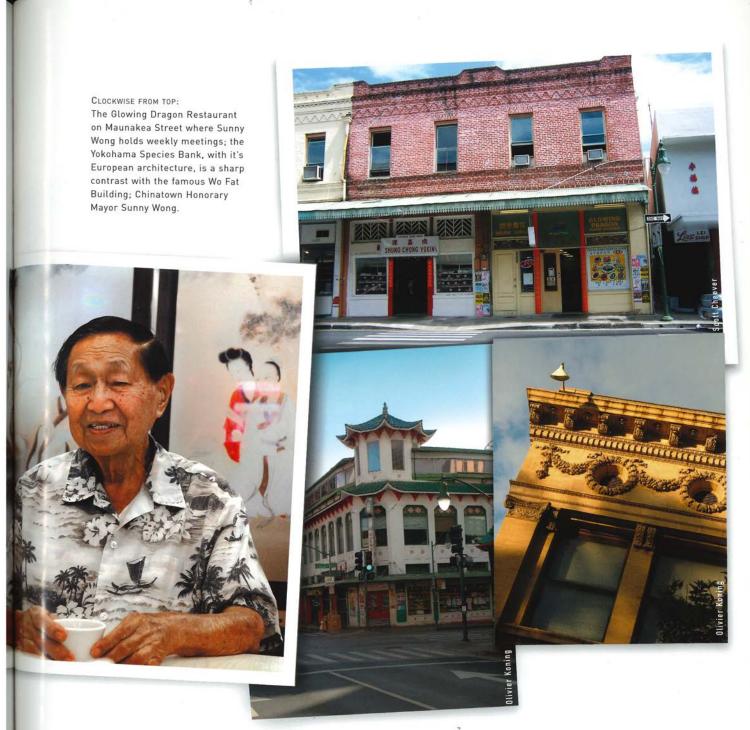
Sunny worked closely with Jeremy Harris when he was city managing director, and when Jeremy became mayor. The question of sustaining the economic vitality of Chinatown has always been: Is there enough foot traffic? Sunny feels a very good solution is redeveloping River Street. "Chris Hemmeter had a beautiful plan," he says. "You'd think it would work. Performances on the bridge at the Cultural Plaza would draw in more people than the art thing. Flower boats, small shops, music...tourists would love them. Upgrade that area around River Street and you've got it!"

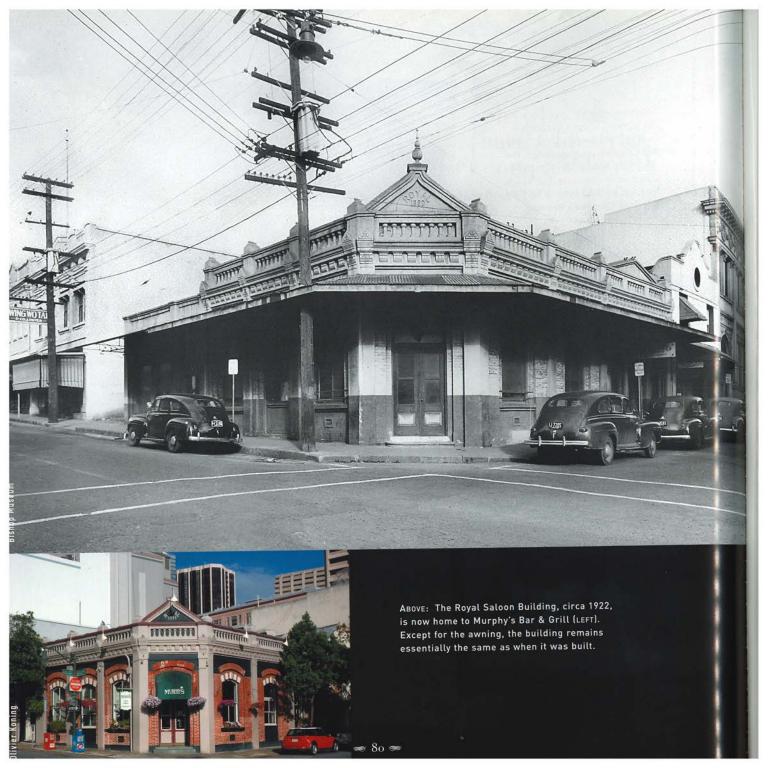
"The people who eat potatoes have a lifestyle that isn't compatible with the people who eat rice."

David claims to be the mayor of Chinatown from Smith Street to Bethel Street. Tongue firmly in cheek, he says Sunny Wong can be the mayor from Smith Street to River Street. David sees the Smith to Bethel area "really blossoming out, but these are not with Chinese businesses. This is beginning to be an arty neighborhood not unlike what you'd find in New York. But for any enterprises to succeed long term, a method has to be found to force the building owners to fix up their properties. They cannot leave them derelict."

Sunny Wong, who for years has been the honorary mayor of Chinatown, holds weekly luncheon meetings at the Glowing Dragon Restaurant on Maunakea Street.

The discussion at these lunches has always been about revitalizing Chinatown. "But the boundaries have changed—the people who eat potatoes (Nuuanu/Bethel) have a lifestyle that isn't compatible with the people who eat rice," he says.





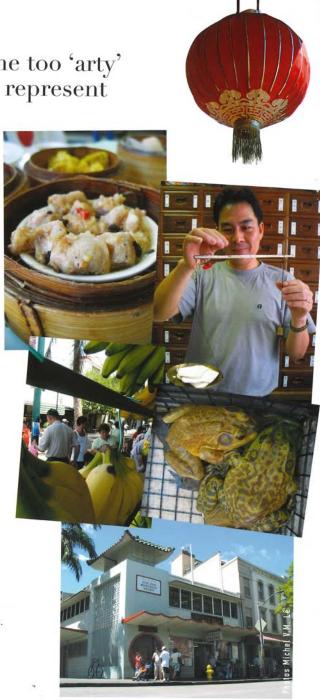
"I'd hate the area to become too 'arty' because Chinatown has to represent what is Hawaii."

"The real Chinatown must have the tastes, smells, sounds and appearance of Chinatown." Sunny feels that, "Chinatown has divided again based on different priorities, and the Chinese side won't come over to the Nuuanu/Bethel side. It's a different class of people. And new immigrants aren't accustomed to the Western world."

McCandless Properties, a family business, is a major landowner in Chinatown. When asked about the new bars springing up especially along Hotel Street, McCandless Manager Tita Stack says this is not a new use for spaces in Chinatown. "Bars are what Chinatown thrived on for years. Further, I'd like to see people who were here come back."

As a long time property owner in the area, she says she would "hate the area to become too 'arty' because Chinatown has to represent what is Hawaii. Chinatown is a pretty unique 16 blocks. I hope it doesn't become all haoles from the mainland."

RIGHT: The tastes, smells, sounds and appearance of Chinatown.



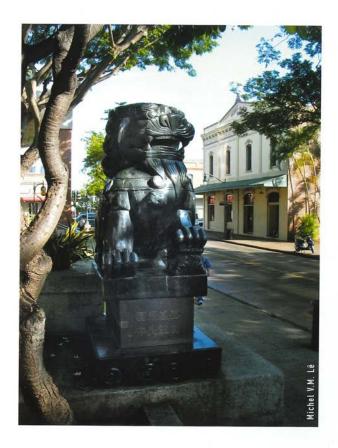
The perception is that Chinatown is filled with bars, but as this map illustrates,that is not the case. New bars are emerging so that a map several years from now might look much different. Further research has been done showing that there are over 100 restaurants throughout the district which are not shown here.

Lofts in Chinatown, being pushed by HCAD to encourage more people to live in Chinatown, don't do much for Tita. "Lofts won't work for me—it's too intensive a use. Lofts take extensive retrofitting, and the ones I've seen look tacky. The Korean lady who owns the Encore Saloon Building at the corner of Nuuanu Avenue and Hotel Street had lofts, and she kicked all the renters out," she says.

For the second floors of her buildings, where she claims there isn't much unleased space, Tita mainly looks for office tenants, "people who want to be in an old building. I've had lots of proposals for Mah Jong parlors, but again that's too intensive a use. These buildings can be a little fragile. There are no sprinklers, so we really don't like people cooking."

Tita is high in her praise of Historic Hawaii Foundation. "HHF gave me a bundle of help. They got me in touch with the appropriate federal agencies to get tax credits and I couldn't have restored some of my buildings without them." Tita agrees with Bob Gerell that restoration of historic buildings in Chinatown has been profitable.

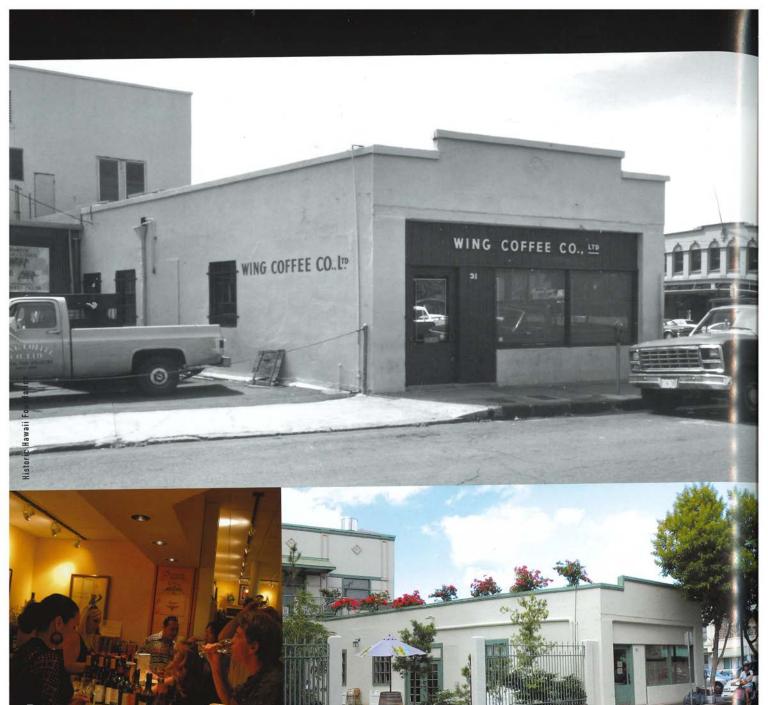
The Chinatown Gateway lion keeps a watchful eye on the Perry Building in the background, one of the McCandless Properties' buildings.







Practically across the street from Indigo Restaurant on Nuuanu Avenue, the modernistic J Salon is another bright spot in the revitalization of the Diamond Head side of Chinatown.



In some of those restored buildings are colorful new shops and other businesses besides galleries. On Pauahi Street in the old Wing Coffee Company are two bright stars in the emerging Chinatown firmament. One is the HASR Wine Co. with a wine tasting room and the other, the Grand Café and Bakery that has received rave reviews. At 1128 Nuuanu Avenue, in what has for years been called the Love's Bakery Building, is a relatively new hair salon called J Salon. Around the corner at 40 Hotel Street is another exciting new shop called In To with home decorating accessories. And one of the brightest restaurants is around still another corner on Smith Street. Little Village Noodle House has captured the spirit of the new Chinatown with its engaging service and fantastic food.

As mentioned earlier, a big force in the rebirth of Chinatown has been the Hawaii Theatre. The theater's only president, Sarah Richards, says the trick is to get lots of people to the area from all over the island. "You have to have a mass," she says.

OPPOSITE TOP: The old Wing Coffee Co. has been reconverted into the successful HASR Wine Co. and the Grand Café & Bakery (BELOW LEFT). A landscaped courtyard adds to the transformation of this property.

SARAH RICHARDS

President, Hawaii Theatre Center

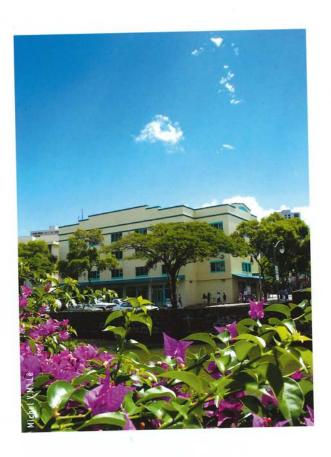


Sarah Richards, who was born and raised in Indiana, tells an interesting story about how she first came to Hawaii. As a graduate student at Indiana University, she was walking down a classroom hall one day when a poster advertising teaching a summer school creative writing course at Kamehameha Schools caught her attention. She applied, was accepted and arrived in Honolulu all fired up to turn out the next set of Hemingways.

The trouble was, no students signed up for the creative writing class. Not to worry. She ended up teaching swimming, which she describes as much more fun during the summer than being in a stuffy classroom.

Adaptable as always, Sarah landed a number of jobs in education, including Dean of Women at Albion College in Albion, Michigan. But the lure of Hawaii called again and she accepted a job as Dean of Students at Chaminade University. In her ten years there she garnered lots of federal grants, developed the financial aid and career counseling departments, hired Merv Lopes as a coach of Chaminade's winning basketball team and was much admired for her energy.

From Chaminade, Sarah went to the State
Foundation on Culture and the Arts as executive
director, succeeding Alfred Preis. In 1989, she was
appointed president of the Hawaii Theatre Center and
has presided over it ever since. Her stint at the theater
included the \$32 million remake of that historic property,
and nine years of financially successful operation of the
theater, culminating in the 2005 award from the
League of Historic American Theatres as the
Outstanding Historic Theatre in America.



Nuuanu Stream and River Street, across from Aala Park, are part of the ambitious Riverwok plan that would literally walk you through thousand of years of Chinese history.

"You have to invest, not be afraid.

"The arts—the performing arts and visual arts—are showing the way to bringing people who might never have come down here before."

And, of course, she credits the theater's \$32 million investment as a major catalyst for other investors. "You have to invest, not be afraid. There needs to be lots of parking. Then you'll see owners improving their properties. But it doesn't happen overnight," she says.

One of the greatly under-utilized sections is River Street, along the edge of the historic Chinatown District, picturesque but unfortunately just across Nuuanu Stream from the homeless camps in Aala Park. Architect Chris Smith has devised a unique plan for this area called the "Riverwok." This plan proposes land-scaping sections to feature China's prominent dynasties "so that if you were to start a walk at Nimitz and end at Vineyard, you would have transgressed through the history of China."

He emphasizes that the Riverwok is only a concept at this point. But he envisions about 19 sections, each with a monument or tree, some sort of weather-resistant banner and a marker that explains the importance of the particular dynasty.



"Recapturing the Spirit of Chinatown."

Chris says he would like to expand the First Friday events, offering a longer walk, perhaps an art fair at Kekaulike Mall and eventually the Riverwok.

Another Chris named Hemmeter once suggested turning Nuuanu Stream and River Street into a floating flower boat area. His idea, which was part of his multimillion dollar plan for Aloha Tower Development in the '80s, was to the raise the bridges across Nuuanu Stream and deepen its channel so Asian flower boats could leave Aloha Tower, float through the harbor and up the stream to land at Foster Garden.

Chinatown seems a dichotomy. On the one hand it is about dreams—of immigrants to better themselves, of architects who want to build monuments, about developers who want to innovate—and yet it still has its gritty side, even in the 21st century. We titled this section "Recapturing the Spirit of Chinatown."

On reflection, it seems that over its 150 year history, despite changes, that spirit has never gone away.









Acknowledgments

henever one starts out to create a book, early encouragement is vital.

We want to thank the Strong Foundation for believing in the concept from the very beginning and especially Trustees Henry Rice and Sam Cooke. This book would not be what it is without their support.

Zep Costa was also an early believer and was helpful in allowing us to present the book to an audience even before it was finished. This kind of early test run – even without the finished product – can be nerve wracking for book preparers, but in this case the early comments were thankfully very positive.

Most of the book is based on oral interviews. It takes a special talent to conduct these interviews and Scott Cheever has mastered the technique. We hope you find some of the comments made by interviewees interesting. In some cases they might be controversial, but that is okay.

Two organizations – the Hawaii Architectural Foundation and Historic Hawaii Foundation – both supplied important services such as operational help, photos and research materials.

Finally, our book designer, Michel V.M. Lê, who is French of Vietnamese heritage, has been renamed St. Michel for his tremendous patience. His talent is on display on every page of the book and we hope you agree his creativity is supreme.

Please enjoy.

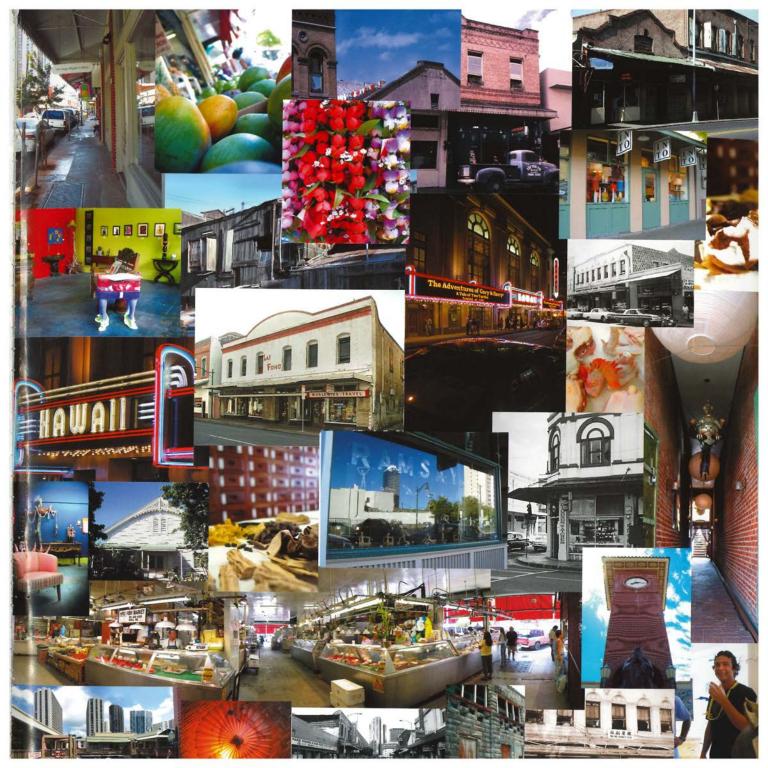


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David Cheever, Nancy Bannick, Scott Cheever.

Nancy has spent most of her life in Hawaii in three endeavors. First, she has worked tirelessly as a volunteer to save numerous historic structures and sites. Second, Nancy held the prestigious position of Hawaii editor of *Sunset* magazine for many years. And third, she has been very generous in her encouragement and financial support of the arts in Hawaii. Nancy was the main guide and editor of this book.

Scott has spent most of his time in the Islands working on various research projects. In one recent case, his work lead to the publication – with others – of a major book titled "*Pobaku – The Art & Architecture of Stonework in Hawaii.*" Scott has recently expanded his horizons to include photography. Some of his work appears in this book.

David has spent most of his Hawaii career as a marketing advisor. He has also written two published travel books, one on Hawaii and another on San Francisco. He prepared a major coffee table book for his client Belt Collins and has participated in the preparation of other major books on Hawaiiana. His role in this book was to pull together the interviews and write them as the narrative.

To order this book, please go to the website: www.historichawaii.org or call 808-523-2900. The price is \$16.95 plus postage and handling.



