



HISTORIC HAWAII FOUNDATION Presents
 Nancy Bannick: Journalist, Preservationist and Advocate

The Preservation of the Nancy Bannick Collection at the Hawai'i State Archives
 Thursday, April 7, 2022 5:30-6:30pm, Via Livestream



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Presentation Timeline:

- 5:30 pm Welcome and Introductions
Beth Iwata, Historic Hawai'i Foundation
Don Hibbard, Ph.D., Architectural Historian
Adam Jansen, Ph.D., State of Hawai'i Archivist
- 5:35 pm Slideshow of images from the Bannick collection:
Don Hibbard
- 5:55 pm Documentary short about the project
- 6:05 pm Overview of the collection on the Archives' website:
Adam Jansen
- 6:15 pm Q&A

Nancy Bannick (1926-2008)

“The driving force”; “Tireless”; “A determined, dedicated crusader.”

These are the words that friends of Nancy Bannick have used to describe Bannick and her dogged advocacy to save historic places and to develop the arts in Hawai'i. She may not have been able to save everything she fought for, nor was her brusque, no-time-to-waste MO embraced by all; nonetheless, the impact she had on making Hawai'i a better place is monumental.

Born in 1926 in Iowa, Bannick grew up in Rochester, Minnesota where her father was a surgeon at Mayo Clinic.¹ She graduated from Stanford University with a degree in journalism and arrived in Honolulu in 1950 to begin working at the Honolulu Star-Bulletin. As the Hawai'i editor for Sunset Magazine from 1952 to 1974, Bannick traveled the Islands and around the Pacific taking photographs of people, places and events with a particular focus on scenic, historic, cultural and natural resources. A close friend said it was her time at Sunset that kindled a deep passion and sincere interest in preserving Hawai'i's unique history.

“She was an early preservationist before it was front-of-mind for a lot of people,” says Kiersten Faulkner, executive director of Historic Hawai'i Foundation, of which Bannick was a charter member.

Bannick helped preserve architecturally-significant and historically-important buildings, as well as exceptional trees, landscapes and natural resources. She is especially well known for her decades-long fight to save Honolulu's Chinatown, spearheading its designation as a historic district in 1973. She documented the effort to preserve Chinatown in the book, “A Close Call” with co-authors David and Scott Cheever, which was published in 2005. Bannick had earlier contributed an essay on the stonework of Our Lady of Peace Cathedral for the Cheevers' “*Pōhaku: The Art and Architecture of Stonework in Hawai'i*” (2003).

Bannick also played a leading role in helping to save and document the Waikīkī War Memorial Natatorium and Kapi'olani Park.

Peter Apo worked with Bannick to preserve the Natatorium. He remembers the petite 81-year-old as “a one-man army, relentless, who could see Hawai'i slipping away. She was a despot about keeping the little things that connected our past with our future, preserving those things that define us as a people.”²

As a board member of the Kapi'olani Park Preservation Society, Bannick helped prevent a national fast food chain from getting a foothold in the park. “She was passionate about keeping the park free and open to the public as intended by King Kalākaua, without allowing the commercialism of Waikīkī to encroach upon it,” wrote Susan Essoyan in the Honolulu Star-Bulletin.³

Bannick received Historic Hawai'i Foundation's very first Preservation Award when the program was inaugurated in 1975. She was recognized for her tremendous contributions as a preservationist and community activist.

Bannick was also a life-long champion of the arts in Hawai'i, and served on the boards of directors for the Honolulu Symphony, Chamber Music Hawai'i and Hawai'i Public Radio (HPR). She helped persuade the City & County of Honolulu to build a concert hall and was one of the first supporting members of HPR since its launch in 1981. She also supported the Hawai'i Opera Theatre and the then-named Honolulu Academy of Arts and The Contemporary Museum.

About The Bannick Collection At The Hawai'i State Archives

Hawai'i experienced profound changes during Bannick's lifetime, primarily from America's entry into World War II and the resulting effects from that historic event. In the years following the war, the U.S. experienced growing prosperity which contributed towards Hawai'i's transition from large-scale agriculture to tourism. By 1954, the Democratic party became the leading political power largely due to support from the labor unions and war veterans. The territory



“I’ve never encountered anyone who as a purely private individual has had such an impact on the community they live in,” said Michael Titterton who was president and general manager of Hawai'i Public Radio at the time. “When you’re around somebody like Nancy, it’s like the sun coming up in the morning. She was a force of nature, an absolute force of nature.”⁴

became the fiftieth state five years later. The post-war population boom concurrent with the growth in tourism spurred development of large-scale residential developments, apartments and high rises, shopping centers, hotels, and office buildings across the state.

The Bannick collection is a reflection of Hawai'i during this period of dramatic change. It includes examples of an idealized Hawai'i for the visitor audience, while also capturing everyday life and snapshots of places that no longer exist.

Bannick donated photographs and other items to the State Archives during her lifetime. After her passing in 2008, Bannick's estate executors offered Historic Hawai'i Foundation a collection of slides and photographs and informed HHF that Bannick wished the remaining images to be archived and made available for research, public education and advocacy for historic preservation.

Historic Hawai'i Foundation is pleased to honor her request by making this additional donation of her work available to the public through the Hawai'i State Archives. Preparing this collection for digitization required a tremendous amount of intensive labor to clean and process approximately 3,200 images. HHF was fortunate to partner with individuals who deeply cared about making the images accessible to the public. An additional batch of images will be released at a later date.

In addition, HHF collaborated with Robin Lung of Nested Egg Productions to create a short film about the archives project. Lung will pay further tribute to Bannick and her advocacy to save Chinatown with the production of a second documentary film.

Mahalo to HHF's project partners at the Hawai'i State Archives, especially former archivist Clara Hur; the University of Hawai'i Community Design Center and interns Connie Kwan and Kenneth Guillen; contributors Ann Yoklavich and Don Hibbard; and Nested Egg Productions. Special thanks to the Hawai'i Council for the Humanities which offered critical support through a Preservation and Access Grant.

¹ Susan Essoyan, “Nancy Bannick, 1926-2008: Preservationist championed isle landmarks,” Honolulu Star Bulletin, Vol. 13, Issue 55, (February 24, 2008). <http://archives.starbulletin.com/2008/02/24/news/story06.html>.

² Drew Rose, “Nancy Bannick,” Honolulu Magazine (April 2008).

³ Essoyan, “Nancy Bannick.”

⁴ Essoyan, “Nancy Bannick.”

HISTORIC HAWAI'I FOUNDATION

A statewide non-profit organization, Historic Hawai'i Foundation encourages the preservation of historic buildings, sites and communities relating to the history of Hawai'i. Founded in 1974 by concerned citizens who saw the need to protect the Islands' irreplaceable historic and cultural legacy from destruction, Historic Hawai'i Foundation works to ensure that the heritage of every historical era remains as a lasting, vibrant part of the present.

www.historichawaii.org



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To access the collection at the Hawai'i State Archives, visit: <https://bit.ly/36E87yN>