MORMONS AND LEPERS: THE SAINTS AT KALAUPAPA
by Lance D. Chase

I have been to the Friendly Isle. The first time was summer 1974 aboard the 65 foot iron-hulled sailing sloop, Machias. I had arrived in Hawaii ten months earlier and just before wading to the Zodiac rubber boat to take us to the Machias, I ate my first mangoes. At that critical moment of departure I did one of the more foolish things of my life. Along with the current Vice President for Academics at BYU-H, Eric Shumway, I decided not to take any seasick pills before crossing Kaiwi Channel, which some have called one of the roughest channels anywhere. I take only slight consolation that both this veteran sailor from the Tongan mission and myself threw up every twenty minutes during the twenty-five mile, four and one half hour voyage. At the other end of the passage, Molokai in general, and Popohaku Beach in particular, indeed seemed “friendly” as we staggered ashore. And I think I have never eaten a whole mango since.

I did not visit Kalaupapa during that first Molokai trip, but I did sign the Church register there on a visit in 1979 and again in 1991. We had gone by air in 1979; our purpose to audiotape Jack and Mary Sing and to bring back whatever records of the history of the Church might be available to us to be placed in our Learning Resource Center Archives so future scholars in Hawaii could have access to them. Both our objectives were accomplished and both these sets of records were valuable for this paper in the reconstructing of the history of the Saints at Kalaupapa.

Sometime after my 1979 visit the thought occurred to me that the story of the Mormons at Kalaupapa was little known except for that of the Napelas who came after the leper colony had been there seven years and that of Mary and Jack Sing who arrived in 1917 and 1919, respectively. One of my former students, Rodney Van Skoy, did a preliminary study of the Mormon presence at Kalaupapa for a class at BYU-H, but other than that there is very little collected under a single cover. It is important to say at this point, that this paper is far from an exhaustive report of my subject and much more remains to be done. There is a wealth of sources I have not examined and my work will best serve as a basis for further research.

Little did I know when I began this project that I would have so much in common with my friends Kuilei Bell and Lucy Kaona at Kalaupapa, that I would develop a fourth stage Lymphoma in my mid-section which would grow to the size of a cantaloupe. I have felt a common bond with the Hansen’s Disease1 sufferers, conscious of my own alienation from my normal self and from healthy friends as well. My eyes burned and my fingertips were numb from the chemotherapy I was taking as I leafed through the records from Kalaupapa. These Church records had been smoked for eighteen hours in the fumes of potassium permanganate and formaldehyde so the healthy recipients of these reports would not contract Hansen’s

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Disease. 2 Fortunately, just as the sulfone drugs arrived in 1948 to arrest the disease of my friends, so has chemotherapy shrunk my tumor and if it destroys the cancer cells in my bone marrow, radiation will hopefully do the rest and my “alienation” like that of the Kalaupapa patients will end.

At the risk of boring the kamaiianas whose knowledge of both Molokai and my subject exceeds my own, I feel it necessary to describe Molokai and the Kalaupapa Peninsula at the outset. The island is 259 square miles, less than half the size of Oahu. During two periods of its ancient history the middle of the island was totally under water, making Molokai two separate islands. Reconnected during the late Pliocene or early Pleistocene eras, the island now has a population of about 7,000, although fifteen times that many tourists may visit each year. These figures compare with the estimated number of 10,500 on Molokai at Captain Cook’s arrival, as many as a quarter of these at Kalaupapa, and 6,000 about 1835. 3 Molokai is about ten miles wide and thirty-eight miles long making it the second smallest of the Hawaiian islands in land area and population. As of March 1992, there are seventy-eight patients, with an average age of about seventy, and about fifty-three state workers at Kalaupapa, supplemented by up to one hundred visitors daily, the maximum allowed on any given day. 4 The Kalaupapa patient population today is 56 per cent Hawaiian ancestry, compared to the state average of 22 per cent. 5

The leaf-shaped peninsula itself, properly called the Makanalua Peninsula, juts out directly north and 1,600 feet below topside Molokai and is about 2.25 miles across east to west and 2.5 miles south to north. Total land area is approximately twelve square miles and 10,726 acres if some land topside, some offshore, and a narrow strip stretching along the beach west from Kalaupapa village to an uninhabited greensward named Nihoa are included. 6 The 3,500 acre peninsula itself is quite flat except for the small shield volcano near the peninsula’s south center which created the land mass. The remains are the 400 foot walls of this small Icelandic shield volcano called Kauhako Crater. The crater has a unique 813 foot deep natural lake about an acre in size.

Access to this island, close enough to be seen from Oahu and nearest of the Hawaiian islands to the population center, is by a steep 2.4 mile, 26 switchback trail, by daily

3 Ibid., 26: 1-7.
5 Ibid., 11-2.
6 Kalaupapa, Brochure produced by the National Park Service, n.d.
small plane air service or barge twice a year. There are three akupuaas that form a backdrop to the Makanalua Peninsula. From east to west, the three streams of the same name have cut Waikolu, Wai’alei’a and Waihanau valleys. On the southeast side of the Makanalua Peninsula is Kalawao, original site of the leper colony. On the opposite and southwestern side of the peninsula a quarter mile north of the foot of the Pali trail down from topside is the village of Kalaupapa where virtually all inhabitants of the settlement now live and which gives the peninsula its name today. It is likely Kalaupapa, like Laie, was completely barren of trees, until sometime after the creation of the leper settlement, probably in the 1890s when extensive tree planting was undertaken on the peninsula. 7

The first LDS missionaries to work on Molokai appear to have been William Perkins and his wife. (I could find no evidence the Perkins’ kept a journal). The Hawaii Mission History 8 shows that sometime between January 31, 1852, when they were assigned to Molokai, and April 8 of that year the Perkins’ were on the island since on the latter date Sister Perkins was reported there, sick but improving. They were joined in June by John Stillman Woodbury and by that same month Elder Uaua had already baptized thirty persons on Molokai. During this time the missionaries labored primarily along the southeast coast of Molokai between today’s Kaunakakai and Halawa on the extreme east end. Whether Perkins, who never learned more than a few sentences in Hawaiian, or others made any visits to distant Kalaupapa during this time and where a sizeable group of Hawaiians lived in relative isolation, I could not determine. What is clear is the extreme difficulty of the lives of the missionaries, their poverty, frequent sickness, and their ongoing battles with the Reverend Hitchcock over converts. Despite these problems, Elder Woodbury went down to Kalaupapa on the last day of January 1853. My sources do not indicate whether there were LDS members already there. However, the Hawaii Mission History does say that prospects were bright, so there may have been. Woodbury’s own journal records his arrival in Hawaii in 1853 and subsequent assignment to Molokai. Before being transferred from his Molokai assignment, he made six descents down the Pali to Kalaupapa over a period of eighteen months.

John Stillman Woodbury was a remarkable little man, 130 pounds of tenaciousness and courage, and dedication to the work. In Woodbury’s journal I found the earliest records of the Mormons at Kalaupapa.

Woodbury made the first breathtaking descent in 1853, remember today’s precipitous but relatively safe trail was not then in place, and was well treated by a local Roman Catholic, Nunumea, who killed a “chicking” for him to eat and with whom he stayed while he preached at Kalaupapa. He visited the presiding Deacon hoping to preach in the “good” Calvinist meeting house, probably of stone and built as early as 1839.9

7 Greene, 249.

8 Manuscript History of the Hawaiian Mission, compiled by Andrew Jenson, (Hereafter cited as MHHM or in text as Hawaii Mission History).

9 Greene, 40.
and later in the small stone meeting house of the Catholics. This lays to rest the idea the Mormons had the first church on Kalaupapa Peninsula since the Mormons had no missionaries in the Pacific before 1843.\textsuperscript{10}

After preaching for about a week at the villages on the peninsula, on Monday, February 7, 1853 at Waikolu, a mile east of Kalawao, three men called on Woodbury to be baptized. Woodbury recorded these first convert’s names as Mikiholo of Waikolu and Kaloaaole and Kahewahemanui of Kalawao. He stayed the night with the latter after confirming these brethren. Apparently, their baptisms occurred near Waikolu “in a beautiful place there for baptizing, a stream coming down from the canyon,” probably Waikolu Stream. Woodbury continued to meet with those who would listen to his message, staying until Monday, February 28, a month after his descent. On his last day, while only three or four came in the morning, there were at least twenty at night who listened and he described it as a very good meeting. Demonstration of Woodbury’s courage is provided by his journal account of his ascent up the Pali. He wrote: “some places you have to crawl up on the side of the rocks with merely little notches to stick the feet in but I prayed to the Lord to strengthen me for the task and taking it slow and resting occasionally I at length reached the summit.” This was probably the Kukuihapuu Trail which the government made a bridle path out of in 1873 down the Waihanau Valley and which began near the Rudolph W. Meyer home. It is no longer negotiable.\textsuperscript{11}

The second Woodbury visit to Kalaupapa Peninsula was in April 1853 in company with one of the original ten Hawaiian missionaries, Elder James Hawkins. It is noteworthy because while they remained only six days they were able to split up and preach. However, the Calvinists and Catholics had had time to prepare for them and the contention was more pronounced this visit. Still, the Mormons succeeded in attracting sizeable audiences. They visited the volcano and described this place where twenty years later under Jonatana Napela the Saints held their services. They preached in the old schoolhouse at Waikolu, farthest east of the Kalaupapa valleys, but mentioned no baptisms on this trip.

It was August 1853 before Woodbury’s third visit. An interesting bit of historical information is provided in his account for Thursday, August 18 since he recorded that from one to two hundred men were working on the Pali trail as he and Ephriam Green descended. This was probably not today’s trail which was built in the 1905-07 period. More than likely it was the first trail built by Rudolph W. Meyer down a ridge called Ili‘iliKa‘a.\textsuperscript{12} By now local LDS missionaries had clearly been succeeding since Brother Maiola had baptized twelve Hawaiians before the Utah Elders arrived at


\textsuperscript{11} Greene, 118. The story is told of the mailman being required occasionally to take a two by four with him to bridge portions of the trail which had been washed out. Presumably he did not have his mule with him on such occasions.

\textsuperscript{12} Imamura, II-43.
Kawaluna, just west of Kalawao. Maiola was probably part of the group assigned Sunday, March 26, 1853 to labor on Molokai. It was this third visit which in many ways was the most encouraging of all. David Kahakauwila, his wife and five others were baptized, among them two very promising young men viz. Kahna and Lamual Kahakauwila, a man of high standing and respectability in the Calvinist Church and one that the Church members looked up to on this side of the island, but the Lord has showed him the truth of the gospel and he has accordingly left his sectarian honor and good name to embrace the truth.\(^{13}\) Kailua’s daughter called on Woodbury to perform her marriage and the brethren were busy building a bowery in which to hold meetings.\(^{14}\) The local Saints asked Elders Green and Woodbury to stay permanently with them. Significantly, the impetus for this surge in Mormon religious activity on the peninsula appeared to come from the local, rather than the Utah missionaries.

By Sunday, August 21, 1853 the little bowery at Kawaluna, though incomplete, was sufficiently ready for meetings. After the sermon there a woman was baptized and that afternoon the first branch on the peninsula was organized with some twenty-one members. David Kahakauwila was ordained a priest, Kalua and Lamual teachers, Palenapa and Kaloahe deacons. By Tuesday the 23rd, Woodbury had issued licenses to the priest, teachers and deacons.\(^{15}\)

By Sunday, August 28, 1853 a more substantial roof had been added to the small but still too breezy bowery and the first sacrament service was held in the new branch at Kawaluna. The things for the sacrament were brought clear from Kiliuli, topside, by Brother Samuel. The missionaries had already been successful in Waikolu, the second valley east of Kalawao, and now they extended their labors four miles farther east still to Konakaupu, site of three or four houses and accessible only by sea. Here friends of Maiola lived. The Elders then climbed up and down to more easterly yet, and larger, Pelekunu (Burning Hole Land). Though Maiola and Woodbury preached in both places and found some believing, the Calvinist influence was sufficiently strong that apparently none were baptized at that time at these remote locations despite the three days preaching. However, on their return, Pale, the schoolteacher from Kaunakakai applied for baptism from Woodbury and Green, the latter having remained behind on the peninsula during Woodbury’s and Maiola’s absence. By Tuesday, December 6, the elders had instructed the local leaders and discussed opposition threats to burn down the bowery. They then ascended the Pali again, having stayed a full month.

Five weeks later, on January 13, 1854, Woodbury visited Kawaluna again in company with Daniel and Mookini. He went to Elder Green’s, who had been responsive to the local’s request and remained on the peninsula. This fourth descent was significant in part because by this time the Saints had begun to build a meeting house,

\(^{13}\) John Stillman Woodbury, *Journal*, 105.

\(^{14}\) Ibid. 108.

\(^{15}\) Ibid, 108.
presumably to replace the bowery since the new structure was to be at Kawaluna also. Significantly, the Mormons had their least success at the larger settlement of Kalaupapa and appeared to make the least favorable impression on the Hawaiians there despite repeated attempts to convert them.

During this fourth of Woodbury's visits, one cold Wednesday he and unnamed others visited Kuhako Crater again and gave a detailed description of it. Woodbury, Green, and a native Elder David Kahukauwila also visited Kalaupapa once more, trying to make inroads, although the Calvinists had a new chapel there. This is probably a third chapel, the second one having been constructed in 1847. Nevertheless, the Mormons succeeded in gathering an audience of about fifty Catholics and Calvinists, although no baptisms are mentioned. After a twelve day visit Woodbury again left Green behind and climbed out on his way to Kiliuli.

The fifth Woodbury visit lasted from Wednesday, April 26 until Tuesday, May 2nd, 1854. Elders Green and Woodbury descended the Pali together having spent the night in the same house topside with the Catholic priest, who then followed behind them down the trail, a spatial relationship probably discussed by the Mormons well aware that some will go into the kingdom first and others last. During this visit the Utah missionaries learned that Maiola and his companions had been to the villages of Pelekunu, where they baptized the first four recorded converts, and even more easterly, Wailau.17

On this last recorded descent Woodbury remained only five days, staying with Brother Green. He blessed children, and argued with Kaluna and Pualewa, who were assessors and tax collectors as well as officers in the Calvinist church. He described the typical argument the Mormons had with their antagonists, the latter changing the subject when these scripturally well prepared LDS missionaries hemmed them up on any doctrinal point during the discussion.

On July 26, 1854 the Church appointed James Lawson to preside over Molokai and he may have been fourth of the Utah Elders who first descended the Pali to Kawaluna. On November 3, 1854 Elder Lawson reported holding meetings with a small branch of the Church which had been raised up there.18 It was during this summer of 1854 when permission was granted to make Lanai the LDS gathering place and with this leadership drain from the various Hawaiian branches missionary work began a pronounced decline.

An initial anecdote is relevant to this pre-leper colony Kalaupapa history although it may not have involved a missionary visit there. In the spring of 1856 when John R. Young was presiding over Molokai during his five months labor there after he had replaced Lawson, he may have been at Kalaupapa but if so he misnames it Kaluakoi.

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16 Greene, 41.

17 Woodbury, 225.

18 MHHM, November 1, 1854.
He said he started on horseback for Kaluakoi, “a place selected by the government as a prison colony for lepers.” Did he mean Kalaupapa? He did, however, travel by whaleboat to Pelekunu where he obtained a private house for preaching to which the whole community came, amazed, he said, he could speak so well. Then, in the really remarkable part of this story, he wrote that he hiked through the trackless forest to the headquarters of the church on the island, at Wailua, alone or accompanied he does not say. That journey would have encompassed some ten miles if the land had been flat and the direction due southeast, neither of which conditions applied in what must have been an incredible trek over that precipitous mountain terrain.

In order to obtain money for his passage home in 1857, Young worked for a month at the Rudolph W. Meyer mill at Kala’e just topside of the trail from Kalaupapa. Meyer was the superintendent of the leper colony for thirty-one years from 1866 until his death in 1897.† We remember that Brigham Young called the missionaries home in 1857 and there was only local leadership left in Hawaii until Walter Murray Gibson stepped into the vacuum in 1861. Gibson assumed control of the Hawaii mission until his excommunication in 1864.

On October 10, 1858 a truly ominous note is sounded in the Hawaii Mission History. During the conference at Palawai, Lanai, all the members of the Church at Molokai are cut off. Did this mean the Saints at Kalaupapa as well? It is impossible to tell from my sources. But from around that time on, Lanai, Molokai, and Maui appear to be grouped in one Church jurisdiction, possibly because of similar actions by the Church on Maui taken against those who would not migrate to Lanai. (Of course, we must realize that in those times excommunication did not always mean what it means in the Church today. Apparently excommunication was sometimes used more as a disciplinary device and did not always carry the same weight it does today).

The next step is to pick up the history of the Saints at Kalaupapa after the disaster on Lanai and concurrent with the establishment of the gathering place at Laie in 1865, a year after Gibson’s excommunication. While Hansen’s Disease had existed in Hawaii for many years by then, it played the major role in the story of the Kalaupapa Peninsula from then on.

The history of Hansen’s Disease in Hawaii and the establishment of the Kalaupapa settlement is commonly known so I will only briefly review these details here. The disease appears to have been first observed in a Hawaiian woman named Kamuli, living at Koloa, Kauai, in 1835.‡ The twin local names for the disease suggest theories as to its origin, Mai Pake, intimating that Chinese laborers brought it and Mai Alii, that it first originated among Hawaiian chiefs. In 1850, the year the Mormon missionaries first came to Hawaii, the Hawaiian Board of Health was established, ostensibly to deal with cholera but forced to turn its attentions more and more to leprosy.

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‡ Kalaupapa, Brochure produced by the National Park Service, n.d.
First known in Egypt, leprosy's nature was such, as the Bible makes clear, that those who contracted it were considered not only unclean but already dead. The infection, while not easily transmitted even to children living with infected parents, takes one of two forms. The so called Lepromatous type is signaled by early skin changes. Later, less prominent nerve changes occur. Nodules, or swelling sores follow, slowly increasing in size and number. The upper respiratory system is often affected, the eyes also, and sometimes the liver and spleen. There may be periodic fevers and a loss of sensation. Untreated, the Lepromatous type lasts eight to ten years.

The second type is Tuberculoid. In this type nerve changes dominate. There are brownish spots on the skin, pain and fever episodes. The peripheral nerve branches are attacked accompanied by pain, paralysis and muscle wasting. The fingers become clawed, ulcers may develop, fingers, toes, and whole feet may be lost. Despite this, many victims live to be very old, death coming often as a result of kidney disease. This type lasts twenty years, at least.

By January of 1865 the Hawaiian government's concern was officially expressed when King Kamehameha V signed an act to prevent the spread of leprosy, land being provided for isolating the most severely afflicted sufferers so they could not spread this "highly communicable" disease. Seven to eight hundred acres and fifteen to twenty good houses were purchased for $1,800 at Kalawao, some of these from an old Mormon friend, Chief Levi Haalelea, who had sold the Mormons land for a gathering place on Lanai. Kuleana land on the Kalaupapa Peninsula remained a problem after establishment of the colony as its inhabitants continued to provide hiding places, food, and lodging for healthy Hawaiian friends or relatives of the exiles. It was not until 1873 that land was purchased at the more heavily settled site of Kalaupapa for the colony.

On January 6, 1866, the first patients went ashore at Kalawao, nine men and three women. The problem was that the healthy kamai'na evacuees from the sold land had been absent sufficiently long that the crops they had left could not be harvested. Thus began the long term problem of feeding the patients adequately which continued for eight more years. But the dramatic description by James Michener of the patients being thrown off the ship bearing them to the settlement and having to swim for their lives in the roiling water, a picture never to be forgotten by those who have read his novel Hawaii, probably did not happen. If it did it was only when the seas were so treacherous that people and goods could not be landed from the transporting ship without endangering the lives of the patients, the crew, and the ship. However, the dreaded motto describing the early social conditions among

21 Greene, 9-10.

22 Ibid, 51.
patients on the peninsula was a reality: "A‘ole kanawai ma keia wahi," "in this place there is no law." Not surprisingly, between 1866 and 1873 nearly forty per cent of the patients died.

Were there Mormons among the first patients? It seems likely when one considers the prevalence of Latter-day Saints among 19th century Hawaiians, perhaps approaching 20 per cent of the Hawaiian population. (Documentation of this figure awaits the results of further research.) The first LDS patient of whom I am certain was Kitty Richardson Napela, wife of Jonatana Hawaii Napela. On Thursday, November 4, 1869, about four years after the first patients arrived at Kalawao, the Napelas had returned from Utah having received their endowments. The Napelas could not have known that within three more years Kitty would discover her own leprous condition. The Napela’s, although he was then free of the disease, became residents at Kalawao on the 10th of May, 1873, Father Damien arriving with the Napelas on the same vessel. Elder Napela apparently asked to be given supervisory responsibility so he could accompany and remain with his sick wife. He not only received the appointment as assistant superintendent under Rudolph W. Meyer, but on October 8, 1873, Napela was appointed president of the combined Maui, Molokai, and Lanai Conference of the LDS Church. His life on the Kalaupapa Peninsula was one of increasing difficulty from the time of his arrival until his death in 1888, prior to Kitty’s, from conditions associated with his own leprous condition. He must have been troubled by his dual allegiance to Kitty and the healthy Saints, assuming some loyal Saints were left, for he could not simultaneously have worshipped with both because of the quarantine. This may be why the Saints held services, at least occasionally, on the windward side of Kauhako Crater, among the thickest trees. During the time Napela was assistant supervisor there was great unrest among the inhabitants of the peninsula.

Of the many problems, the greatest was the procurement of adequate food supplies for the patients. At least by June of 1873 Napela was in this position of luna but after a campaign of intrigue by the patient and lawyer William P. Ragsdale, he was replaced by the latter on October 17, 1873, ostensibly for corruption. Since

23 Ibid, 62.
24 Ibid, 62.
25 Korn, 14.
27 Greene, 579.
28 Korn, 55.
Ragsdale himself is regularly accused of starving the Hawaiians after he replaced Napela, his accusations against Napela lack some credibility. More likely is it that Napela deserved blame only for feeding starving Hawaiians not on the official list of lepers as well as trying to feed those who were.\textsuperscript{29}

There is much more that could be said about Napela's experience at the settlement but one deserves comment. On June 3, 1874, Napela engaged in debate with Father Damien. The discussion began when Napela told the priest he and six others were going to fast since they were Mormon. Peter Kaeo, patient and nephew of Queen Emma, as recorded in his letters to Emma in \textit{News From Molokai} described what followed as quite a dispute at the end of which, he said, "both were victorious" but he favored the Priest. By the 6th of August 1879, Napela was dead and Kity followed him two years later.\textsuperscript{30}

My Kalaupapa story resumes with the visit of Utah Elder Henry P. Richards, who on October 26, 1878 descended the Pali and visited Napela whom he had last seen when the latter was in Salt Lake City, Utah. Richards reported he hardly recognized Elder Napela he was so disfigured by disease.\textsuperscript{31} Richards provided us with some significant information about the condition of the district when he noted he held a meeting with about fifty present in what I assume was the Kawaluna (Kalawao) branch president, Lepo's home. Napela was then presiding over two Kalaupapa Peninsula branches, presumably as a district president. In the afternoon Napela accompanied Richards to Kalaupapa where there was another branch of about the same size, there being about seventy-eight members in the two branches. My speculation is that the earliest chapel, built around 1878 at Kalaupapa, was constructed on the very spot where the three LDS buildings are today, at the western terminus of Damien Road where it intersects with Kamehameha Street. It is clear significant missionary work has been done at heretofore relatively unreceptive Kalaupapa. There are reportedly about 700 lepers in the settlement at this time, about ten per cent of which are LDS.

The next part of my account continues with a more chronological history of the construction of chapels and the names of those who served as branch presidents on the Kalaupapa Peninsula. Much of it comes from the \textit{Hawaii Mission History} which notes the visit of Elders Bewsley, Farr, Kaleohano, Moses, and other in July 1888. On Sunday, the 12th of July they held meetings in both Kalawao, presumably with the patients, and at Kalaupapa where they set apart Momona to preside over the branch since the former president (name omitted) was sick and feeble. Whether this was the President Lepo mentioned earlier, the record does not show. Kekai and Kakipa were made counselors to President Momona. On July 13, 1888, the missionaries visited the grave of Napela which they said was near the crater and was covered with lime mortar.

\textsuperscript{29} ibid., 140.

\textsuperscript{30} Bowen.

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{MHHM}, October 26, 1878.
After 1887, the Board of Health began moving the health facilities and patients to Kalaupapa. By 1892 the bulk of the population was at Kalaupapa and within two years, the Hawaii Mission History records, there were more LDS at Kalaupapa, 149, than Kalawao, 78. This shift of patients that had begun in 1887 was completed by 1932. In 1894 both places still had meeting houses and all the auxiliary programs except Primary. Comparative figures with other branches in the mission demonstrate the significance of the Kalaupapa Peninsula which tied for the fourth largest LDS population (with Pulehu) in the Hawaiian Islands. Totals were: Honolulu, 677; Laie, 364; Kahana, 154; Pulehu and Kalaupapa both 149. Wailuku was fifth with 132 Saints.

A year later, in 1895, the same source records B. M. Kapule presided over Kalawao Branch and S. Kekai over Kalaupapa. The shift from Kalawao to Kalaupapa was continuing largely because the climate was much more hospitable for the temperature and moisture change-sensitive Hansen’s Disease sufferers on the western side of the peninsula. The construction of docking facilities and improved access to fresh water supplies at Kalaupapa also made it the new center of activity on the peninsula. It was during this time that the last kama’aina was evicted from Kalaupapa Peninsula. During the 1890s the leprosy epidemic reached its peak with more than a thousand patients at Kalaupapa, representing as much as two per cent of the Hawaiian population.

Just prior to the completion of today’s six foot wide Pali Trail between 1905 and 1907, which was being worked on at least as early as 1889, Elder William Waddoups and his companion, Elder David Johnson, visited Kalaupapa. With this 1904 trip to dedicate two Kalaupapa meeting houses began an era which continued down through the life of Jack Sing Kong in relatively recent times. During this century the leadership tenure of the various branch presidents was often extremely long. The chapels at Kalawao and Kalaupapa were described by Waddoups as some of the best houses in the mission. The latter one had been under construction for about five years and was built entirely from contributions. The elders baptized ten people while there and noted this swelled Mormon ranks to more than 200, perhaps twenty per

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32 Imamura, I-11.

33 MHHM, December 31, 1894.

34 Ibid, December 13, 1894.

35 Greene, xxvii.

36 Ibid, 22.

cent of the population, and all of them patients. John Haulani was apparently president of one of the branches and continued to preside until he died in 1917. John M. Bright, who had accompanied his sick wife to Kalaupapa, apparently served as branch president from about 1918 until 1926 when his wife died. Some time around the end of his tenure the Kalawao Branch was discontinued.

Although LDS patients could not leave the settlement and join the Saints at their semiannual Church conferences usually held in Lale, they were very much a part of the excitement and planning for the completion, dedication of, and work which was to occur in the Hawaii Temple, completed in 1919. In November, just prior to the dedication Thanksgiving week, President Waddoups again visited Kalaupapa. He trained the Saints there so they would compile the names of their ancestors to be submitted for temple work. The word “vicarious” takes on new meaning when it is realized these stricken Saints could entertain absolutely no hope they would receive the endowment themselves, let alone personally do the work for their kindred dead. However, that is not to supposed they were deficient in either gospel knowledge or commitment to gospel ideals. President Waddoups had written as a result of an earlier visit:

“Our Saints in this settlement are among the most faithful. Their faith seems unshaken in the truth. They are united in doing good and their greatest joy seems to be in honestly serving the Lord. They seem happy and contented with their lot. . . .” “I have never felt a sweeter, calmer spirit among our Saints anywhere, than I have felt in laboring with these people. Even in their trials, God has given them joy and contentment and a firm testimony of the divinity of the gospel.”

On December 21, 1920 when President E. Wesley Smith and George Bowies visited Kalaupapa, Bowies was “astonished at the knowledge displayed.” He commented: “These people are students of the gospel.” The record further attests: “some of the foremost members of the Church in any land are there at the leper settlement.” “The spirit among these unfortunate people cannot be surpassed.”

A few months later

38 MlHM, June 4, 1904.

39 Orlene J. Poulsen, “Kalaupapa: Place of Refuge,” The Relief Society Magazine, March 1968, 210. The small monument between the chapel and cultural hall marks the burial site of President Haulani. Rodney Van Skoy in his undergraduate paper housed in the Pacific Islands Room at BYU-H, says Haulani died in 1917 (p.14). I was unable to confirm the accuracy of his information nor its source.

40 HMMH, 1 May, 1929.

41 Ibid, June 4, 1904.

42 Ibid, November 5, 1919; December 23, 1919.
the patients donated $70 to the Near East Relief Fund set up to relieve Armenians suffering from the war between the Red and White armies in Russia.\

President John M. Bright’s tenure was typical of the lengthy service of Kalaupapa leaders. This non-patient whose wife had Hansen’s Disease apparently served Kalaupapa Village, by now the only branch, as its leader between 1918 and 1926 when his wife died. The Improvement Era for January of that latter year reported President Bright was leaving Kalaupapa and would be replaced by Elder Nahulu Eleakala. My records do not show whether this happened. The membership was reported to be ninety at that time. President Eleakala could have presided when William Waddoups and his party dedicated the chapel Thursday, 5 May, 1927. The building had been remodeled and repainted, the branch was reported in very good condition and large crowds attended all the meetings. About this time there were 1,191 patients, 741 males and 450 females. The chapel seated 200 and all the auxiliaries except Primary were functioning.

President Waddoups’s courage, reminiscent of John Stillman Woodbury’s in visiting Molokai, is illustrated during one particular trip by the fact that on Saturday, March 1, 1930, he “aeroplane[d]” to his destination. I assume the leather helmeted, white scarfed pioneer landed topside on a dirt strip since the Kalaupapa airport was not completed until 1933. Just how adventurous Waddoups was is illustrated by historian William H. Chafe who wrote that as late as 1942 airplanes were something flown by the military and a few adventurous businessmen.

While it is unclear whether Elder Eleakala ever was branch president, at least by 1928 Elder David K. Kauhi was presiding. Born in the first year of the Civil War, this brother was still leading the Kalaupapa Branch during the second year of U.S. involvement in World War Two, when he was 81! But he apparently passed away some time after October of 1942, having served at least fourteen years and was replaced by Jonah K. Mahelona, also known as Jonah K. M. Napela. By that time the number of Mormons in the branch was continuing its decline. In 1933 Elder Kauhi had presided

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43 Ibid, February 20, 1921.

44 Ibid, May 1, 1928.

45 Imamura, II-51.


47 This information was collected from a box of Kalaupapa Branch records held in the BYU-H Archives of the Learning Resource Center. Some 20 notebooks from the Kalaupapa Chapel were given to Ken Baldridge and Lance Chase by Jack Sing.
It was in the year 1947 that I can begin personally to relate to this history since the only Kalaupapa branch president I knew may have assumed his office that year. There is some disagreement over this since President Sing’s admittedly faulty memory provided the date of his setting apart as branch president as 1952. Jack Sing Kong went on to serve until his death on December 8, 1983. To my knowledge, the branch has not had a Kalaupapa resident presiding since President Sing’s death. As of this writing in April of 1992 the three members of the branch are presided over by Elder Thaddeus “Ipo” Albino who is in charge of the mule rides which negotiate the Pali trail. He has the peculiar responsibility of being present to preside over service on Sunday when there may be as few as two members, including Ipo, or as many as twenty present. A cancer victim himself, Ipo, despite his young age and through great faith completely recovered from the disease and former Bishop Horner of the Hoolehua Ward gave him the assignment of conducting the sacrament service for the little group in the dependent branch. Elder Albino brings a change of clothes with him when he leads his group of tourists on mules down the trail and usually arrives just after the three active Mormons at Kalaupapa, Kuulei Bell, Lucy Kaona, and Peter Keola have met for Sunday School. I was told during my December 1991 visit that when there is no longer a need to hold meetings at Kalaupapa the three recently restored buildings will be turned over to the National Parks, assuming that entity is successful in purchasing the complete rights to the settlement.51

One of the many heroes of Kalaupapa was Joseph Dutton, originally of Stowe, Vermont, who worked selflessly among the patients for forty-four years. Before Brother Dutton, not LDS, died in Honolulu in March of 1931, he wrote in his self-effacing style:

> I wish to guard you against having too high an estimate of the work here. Work performed with good intention, to accomplish the will of Almighty God, for his glory, is the same in one place as in another. One’s Molokai can be anywhere.52

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48 Ibid.

49 Greene, from maps, pictures and accompanying text.

50 Information on Kalaupapa Church records in BYU-H Archives.

51 Statement made to Lance Chase at Kalaupapa in December 1991 by Glenn Lung who had been given supervisory responsibility for the Kalaupapa LDS Church buildings.

52 Statement recorded in the Kalaupapa Museum by Lance Chase in December 1991.
No doubt Brother Dutton was right in his geographical allusion reminding us it is not important where we serve. But virtually all those who have visited Kalaupapa and written about it have been consistent in one thing, at least. Our souls have been unforgettably touched by the place and the people. We are fortunate we lived at a time when we could still personally know these people for the day is coming when the specialness of Kalaupapa will be memorialized only by written records and pictures of the haunting soul of that beautiful and secluded place.

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