Building of the Waianae Chapel

Bishop Joseph Allen, MPHS 2011

I arrived in Hawaii in 1957 to teach at Waianae High School. Soon after, I was introduced to the members of the Nanakuli Branch. At this time, Sam Alama was the Branch President with Ash Tun Soon as a counselor, James Chong and Bill Keiki were clerks.

In 1958, Sam Alama had a stroke and was replaced by Horce (Horace?) Kemumu as the Branch President.

In 1959, Floyd Davidson became the first Bishop of the Nanakuli Ward. I became one of his counselors.

In 1961, I was ordained a Bishop by elder Delbert L. Stapley of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. I served in that position until 1964 and was replaced by William E. Fuhrmann.

While I was Bishop, the ward had the opportunity to build a new chapel in Waianae on a piece of property called “Shangri-la. This property was owned by Chinn Ho, the financier. The Church purchased 8 acres of land, 5 as a mango grove, and 3 on the hill for a chapel.

We started construction in 1962 and finished in 1964. I was present for the groundbreaking. When I was released, all the work was finished except some cabinet work and the paving of the parking lot. The cost of the building was 200,000 in materials and 100,000 in labor by the members of the Ward. Bishop Fuhrmann then moved the Nanakuli Ward location from Nanakuli to Waianae in 1964.

On March 29, 1963, Stake President George Q. Cannon set apart Moana Alama Allen (spouse) as a labor missionary to feed the labor missionaries who lived on the church property. There was a house on the property which was taken off by Chinn Ho’s people along with another house with a pavilion overlooking the Waianae Valley. We made the pavilion into some living quarters for the labor missionaries.

There were two labor missionaries who lived on the property for the total time of the chapel construction: A Samoan man from Samoa, Melvin Keil, and a Tongan from Tonga named John Kauvaka. Melvin was single and John was married with several children, which he left in Tonga. He wanted to learn a trade in the construction field and traveled to Hawaii to labor at Waianae. We also housed four brick masons who did the work on the walls of the Chapel. During the first summer, we organized about eight Aaronic Priesthood boys to work during the summer months and live on the property.

During the construction, some of the members did not want to work on the chapel because they were content with going to the old chapel on Nanakuli avenue since it was much closer to their homes than Waianae, which was about 10 miles further up Farrington Hwy.

I used to tell the members that the Lord wanted a chapel to be built in Waianae for the Ward. I was told a story by John Kauvaka of a dream he had when he was a young boy. He had contracted polio and was bed-ridden. In his dream he saw that he would be cured of this disease and saw that he would help build a church chapel in a foreign land.

Since the chapel has been built, it has become a missionary in its own right. It became one of the most beautiful buildings in Waianae. It is a credit to the faithful members of the Nanakuli Branch and Ward.
Nanakuli Ward, Oahu

GROUNDBREAKING -- September 1, 1962

Brother Low reports, "A jack hammer was necessary to dig footing the entire length of the building except the spot where the baptismal font was designed in the plans. Considerable time and effort was spent trying to get me to relocate the building in another location rather than the one chosen by the authorities, but I refused to change the plan. Consequently, the excavating for the font was carried on by two sisters and was accomplished with ease."


The concrete slab has been poured and the lumber and bricks await construction workers.

Short term missionaries and high school boys who worked during vacation.

At left, Bishop Joseph Allen.

House mother, Sister Moana Allen and family with her help and some of the part time Construction Missionaries.

The walls are up and ready for the roofing.
Chapel with congregation
Names added
Chapel with congregation
Names added
Group photo – Kanaka Kane
February 6, 1934
Group photo with names – Ah Toon Soo
1934
Nankuli
Nankuli