Along with the few photographs of La‘ie during the early plantation era from about 1865 to 1920, several people made verbal sketches of La‘ie. La‘ie and Hawai‘i always have been considered exotic, and before photographs were common in newspapers, magazines and books, a verbal description was a highly developed means of sharing with readers what a place was like. It was meant to help a reader visualize a place the way we now use photographic images. We’ve all heard that a picture is worth a thousand words; here follows some examples of people using words in the place of a picture.

In 1871 Elder Harvey Cluff described the low condition in which the early missionaries found La‘ie, then pointed out some of the progress taking place in La‘ie in the six years the Church had been managing it.

Laie, on the Island of Oahu, of the Hawaiian group of Islands, was famed on account of the disorderly conduct and pilfering propensities, as well as the uncontrollable disposition, of the greater portion of its inhabitants. Consequently it became necessary to proceed with much caution, in dealing with them at the time the Latter-day Saint Missionaries bought and began to establish a mission at this place. But very few of those living here were members of the church at that time; in fact, the native population had dwindled down to a modicum, leaving a great portion of the once cultivated land for stock range. The whole face of the country, even high up on the sides of the mountains, shows marks of the husbandman, and that every spot of land suitable for cultivation had to be appropriated for that purpose in order to sustain the numerous population which had increased upon the land. Even within the memory of natives now living here, some ten villages flourished upon this small district, but they have vanished, not to be replaced by well laid out towns with a more recent style of architecture, but because the builders have been swept off by destructive maladies unknown to them, until foreigners began settling on these islands. This decrease tells the same fearful story of what has taken place on all the other islands of this group. No trace is left of the church which was built at an early day on the land by the American missionaries.

There were no frame dwelling houses belonging to natives when this place was bought in 1865. If there are any who are not yet conversant with this mission and matters pertaining to the same, we wish to furnish such a correct understanding of things in general, and what obstacles had to be surmounted in order to establish a permanent mission on these islands, then leave them to
judge whether the present Laie bespeaks the course pursued with the natives to be a truly commendable principle or not.

The erection of a meeting house, mill, with its appurtenances, several miles of stone wall, store, dairy, and quite a number of frame dwelling houses by the brethren, has stimulated some of the natives to build more commodious dwellings, so that, at the present, there are twenty frame houses finished and in course of erection, besides a very good school-house, in which upwards of eighty children are taught in the first rudiments of education.

It is proper to state that a great many of the natives own land here and that their little business in farming is doing so well, that no less than eight schooner loads of water-melons, besides corn, gourds and other products have and will be shipped from Laie this season.

By petitioning the Minister of the Interior the road, which now passes immediately through the cane field, and which has been a great detriment in consequence of the passing public indulging too freely in carrying off cane to eat, as well as the infringement of stock when driven along the road, will soon be changed to pass along the sea shore, so that we now have about one mile and a half of fence to build, besides making the road passable the same distance by building two bridges and grading in places.¹

One month later, Elder Cluff further expounded to his readers on the peculiar situation in Laʻie:

It may, perhaps be interesting to some of the readers of the News, to know of modus operandi of conducting the mission in respect to gathering the native members of the church from other islands to this, and the advantages or benefits which they secure by making this a gathering place....

Before, and since, the islands were conquered by the powerful chief Kamehameha, of Hawaii, petty chiefs possessed the land, and exercised more or less power over all who chanced to live within their dominions, which caused much fluctuation and petty thefts among the people and, since then, foreigners have bought and now hold possession of many of those districts that once belonged to the now extinct chiefs; and hence the natives who live upon those lands have to pay tribute to the owners for pasturing an animal or for the use of a little spot on which to produce kalo and vegetables to sustain life. A benefit possessed by native members of the Church, who settle here, is in receiving sufficient land to produce kalo and vegetables, free of taxation, and, as the business of the plantation increases, the young and able work hands find ready employment, while the females are employed to divest the cane of its foliage,
thereby earning means to make themselves comfortable. They also have free access to the fisheries, game and timber.”

In 1880 a good description of La’ie, apparently furnished by a missionary, appeared in Hawaiian Kingdom Statistical and Commercial Directory and Tourists’ Guide (Honolulu & San Francisco: George Bowser & Co., 1880.

At Laie the headquarters of the mission have been established. The natives have been gathered together from other islands to that place, and their comfort has been provided for by giving them land to build upon, and to cultivate free of rent. Other opportunities of obtaining a comfortable living by their own industry are afforded them. The manner in which the missionaries lead and direct the native converts is designed to inspire in the Hawaiian a degree of integrity and manhood above the common hope and aspirations of the race. Natives are not coerced in order to carry on the work of the plantation, but all the members who gather there are persuaded morally and religiously to abandon idleness and adopt, as free men, principles of industry and economy. Mr. Harvey H. Cluff, a Bishop of the Mormon Church, is now the presiding ecclesiastical officer of the mission and superintendent of the plantation, and is assisted by elders, who are sent here from Utah to labor in the mission.

In 1885, Elder Jacob F. Gates and his wife, Susa Young Gates (daughter of Brigham Young), arrived in La’ie on their mission. Jacob became the mission clerk and Susa wrote extensively about conditions in La’ie to the Deseret News using the “nom de plume” “Homespun.” R. Paul Cracroft says that Susa Young Gates was “the most versatile and prolific LDS writer ever to take up the pen in defense of her religion.” These letters give the best description of what life was like in La’ie during the years of President Joseph F. Smith’s third mission.

Her first letter, written on February 23, 1886 upon her arrival, presents a verbal painting of La’ie and gives some idea of the difference between reality and perception of what La’ie was thought to be like. (illus. 4-20 & 4-21 & 4-22)

It is difficult to bring this picture which I wish to present, clearly before your eyes. But bear in mind that Honolulu lies south from Laie, and that the road we traveled in my last letter leads north-ward, with all its various twistings and curves. Laie-Muloo (dry Laie) is a small cluster of whitewashed houses with little patches of gardens, tiny rice fields, and an occasional “kalo loi,” we have heard so much of the lovely ferns, mosses, and tropical trees of this Sandwich
Island home, that our eyes seek eagerly for the swaying trees and graceful ferns. But only a rolling hilly expanse form sea to mountain, covered thickly with grass, is seen. The mountains are cut up into a hundred gorges, and you can see they, as well as mountain tops, are densely wooded. But no trees [or shrubs] or even flowers are visible around you as you travel smoothly [slowly] along the grassy stretch of a mile and a half, lying between Laie Maloo and Laie-wai (wet Laie). In between grassy hillocks goes the buggy, and now turning a curve we can see the fine new meeting house away up on a distant hillside, near which are clustered the houses of the mission occupied by the white people. But nearer at hand, on the right, the waves roll softly on to the beach, and away out into the sea stretches the promontory guarded by a rock, surfdashed and bleak. On the left are fields, which, you are told, are the “canefields.” A rocky hill lies between us and the south end of the fields and you can see there is plenty of shrubbery on the other side of the hill which is thus sheltered from the trade winds. Away at the further end of the fields rises the sugar mill with its tall chimneys and outbuildings.

Swiftly the wheels roll, and we pass the fields, the promontory and suddenly turn west, leaving the beach, and making directly toward the hill (Lani-Luli, the natives call it), on whose brow nestles the little white houses, which are to be our home for a few years. A long rock wall with a big gate runs north and south. Outside this, are scattered in every direction, white board houses of the native population. Passing through the gate, you are in the pasture; then, an abrupt rise of ground, a few paces farther and you go through the big gates of the surrounding picket fence of Laie Nei, or Laie proper.

And here we are! On the brow of a breezy, grassy hill, no trees, no shrubs, no flowers, but withal a finely situated little colony of houses. This hill rises abruptly behind the Mission Houses, into a rocky ledge, on the top of which lies the graveyard; the hill becomes between us and the mountain tops on the west.

This valley is a lovely spot, and luxuriant with a wealth of tropical beauty. It, or rather the largest portion of it, has been leased to some Chinamen, who have chequered it off into brilliantly green fields of rice. An artesian well near the center supplies the water. All through it are scattered tropical trees, bananas, cocoanut, kamani, hei, hau, and kukui, and numbers of tiny gardens are brilliant with scarlet geraniums, roses and many tropical flowers. Grass and white-washed board houses are scattered here and there, the homes of natives and the Chinamen. On the north of this valley, runs the Laie river winding in and out and finally sluggishly emptying into the sea. Inside our picket fences is the much-added-to mission house (which always reminds me in some curious way of Joseph’s coat of many patches, with its additions here, there and
everywhere) also a large square new house used as bedrooms, by mission-house boarders, and three other various-sized houses used as dwelling houses by the families living here. A wash-house (the old cook-house moved away and turned to its present use) stands back a ways from the mission-house. Near this, rises our huge wind-mill pump. A well had been sunk and much good was anticipated form it; but, alas, the water turns out to be brackish, and although some help, it is not nearly as useful as was hoped. Under it, however, has been built a very convenient bath room with huge tub, and shower bath. Near these, on the southeast of the mission house, stands the barn, one side of which is used as a carpenter shop.

Down the slope, away, outside the fence and to the south of us, stands the old meeting house, used now as a schoolhouse, and still south, is a very creditable house, costing eight or nine thousand dollars. It is nicely painted, and looks cosy and clean.

Our place here is about half a mile from the sea. It is breezy, almost always, as the trade winds come to us from the [north east]. So we are comparatively free from mosquitoes. You can perhaps get some kind of an idea of our island home, if you will stand with me on my doorstep, looking south. On our right, to the west, lies this little verdant vale, sheltered and green. Above it rise the steep western mountains, cleft into many a wooded gorge, with an occasional spur, running down almost to a line with our houses; the little frame houses here, with the many-winged mission house overlooking us all, with its shabby eyes; the houses of the natives dotted on the grassy expanse of falling hillside, clear to the sea itself; the brown promontory reaching out its bare arm far into the sea; the long, low island, with an occasional single rocky island out in the blue waters, which sweep sometimes in high snowy mountains of foaming spray clear over their bald head; the curling, hurrying, much-described but never-described waves of the sea, chasing each other, like merry children, on to the pale gold of the sandy beach; the river winding and glistening to the north, on its way to the sea; the cattle lazily browsing on the hillsides; the native children inside the yard screaming and running at play around our stately flag-staff; the white dresses of the sisters as they flit in and out of their houses; all these with a serenely blue sky, and floating, sun-tinted clouds make up the every-day picture of Laie.

At some future time, I want to enter into our homes, with their habits and customs, visit the natives in their homes, and go through the mill, with its sugary sweet contents, and attendant machinery.
After being in La‘ie a few months, Sister Gates, again writing as “Homespun” shared with her readers back in Utah what Sunday was like in La‘ie.

Perhaps some of your readers would be interested in knowing how we spend our Sabbaths here on the Islands.

At half past seven the bell rings for Sunday School.... This, like every other meeting here, is subject to a sort of ebb and tide.... Just now there seems to be quite a revival. A change of local officers was effected at the late conference which may in some way account for it. Kinikapu was installed as President of Laie Ward Sunday School, Kinimakalehua and L.B. Nainoa as Counselors.

At half past nine Sunday School is dismissed and the bell rings long and loud for morning services. Ten o’clock finds all hands, except the cook, en route to meeting, the roaring, tearing wind that usually prevails at Laie blowing dress skirts into uncomfortable shapes. Nobody presumes to carry a sunshade, for old boreas would turn inside out in a trice.

And at last the foreigners are all there as well as the natives, the Elders in their uniform of linen breeches, the sisters in summer’s airy robes of white, usually. The natives dress very much as we do, only none of the women ever presume to put on a tight waisted dress. Indeed, they are far too sensible to thus compress their bodies.

The usual Sabbath services are conducted in the Hawaiian language, every fourth Sunday (the first one in the month) being the general fast day; on which day the sacrament is administered.

We have enjoyed some splendid discourses since we came here, and it is worth the time to study the language in order to comprehend the rich feasts of soul which have been, in times past, spread before the Saints at Laie.

Formerly the Y.M.I.A. was convened at half past one in the afternoon, the testimony meeting following at half past three. This, with our evening meeting, made five meetings a day, and was enough to make the strongest weary. Now the Y.M.I.A. and the testimony meetings are held on alternate Sundays at two o’clock, leaving a person time to breath between services. After the afternoon meetings, which are like those at home, every one goes to his own room to read, to write, to study or too long for a glimpse of home, as the case may be.

At seven, or thereabouts, the prayer bell rings and we hold an evening meeting in English, commencing with a reading from some of the Church works, followed by remarks from Elders previously chosen to speak on the lesson read. And thus closes the Sabbath, each on like the last, and all serving as a waymark that brings us one week nearer home.
The mill has been running three weeks since conference, and has turned out thirty five or forty tons of sugar. Miserable weather has greatly interfered with success, but Prest. King has energy and ability enough to rise almost superior to even weather. It is a great pity that we have not another set of rollers and another boiler. For then no matter what kind of weather we might have, the mill could be kept running, making work for the natives and money for the plantation.

With this vessel four of our native Saints expect remove to Utah. Peter Kealakaihonua and wife, and Brother Naau and wife, of Honolulu. The first two are staunch old “Mormon” veterans, and a most excellent and intelligent couple. The others are recent converts, but smart and capable. They will be an acquisition to the Nineteenth Ward “settlement” and depart with the best wishes of white and black.6

Later that year, a Honolulu newspaper, the Hawaiian Gazette, published another description of La’ie for its readers’ enlightenment. Then, as now, La’ie was a faraway place for people from Honolulu. The missionary quoted is Elder Enoch Farr.

The Mormon settlement at Laie is a most prosperous looking spot. In fact it looks more like a village than any other place on the island. There are some 400 people resident of this settlement while those who are members of this religious body number between 3,000 and 4,000, at least so says Elder Par [sic]. The white members of the community are 15 adult males, 7 females, and 12 children. Since the erection of the new tabernacle, a handsome building capable of seating 1,000 people the old meeting house has been used as a school room. In this some 30 children are educated by a young man who has recently come from Utah. The community has shown considerable energy in singing artesian wells of which there are 5 on various parts of the estate. By means of these wells a fine tract of rice land has been brought under cultivation. This is in a valley back of the settlement and is not visible from the road. It comes as a surprise upon one when the bluff behind the homestead is ascended and this rich patch of land bursts upon the view. This same homestead is a very comfortable and roomy range of buildings wherein dwell all the white inhabitants of the settlement around which cluster the houses of the natives. Many of these build their own houses out of their private funds, others have money advanced to them by settlement which they repay by installments and the house lot and houses pass from father to son or members of the family, but are, of course, not saleable. Attached to the settlement is a small sugar plantation and a 3 ton mill. The cane which is thoroughly irritated by a couple of artesian wells looks green and
healthy and shows every promise of giving an excellent yield. Upon the estate are some 1,500 head of cattle. The herd might be increased with advantage. Elder Parr [sic] says the settlement is self-supporting. Flourishing as this little spot is, it seems as if keeping one man at the head of it for a number of years, instead of constantly changing as is now the system might be of great advantage. To cultivate tropical products is a very different thing from cultivating in the western states or territories and time is required to both gain experience and to learn the Hawaiian language. A visit to the Mormon settlement is both pleasant and instructive and the heads of the settlement show themselves to be polite and intelligent.7

Elder George and Sis. Laura Fisher were serving a mission in La‘ie in 1894 when they wrote a long letter back to their home ward in Oxford, Idaho describing their mission.

Passing through the country below, (the Pali) which is dotted with cane fields, rice and kalo patches, and continuing on to the distance of thirty-two miles from Honolulu, one comes to the little village of Laie which is in the Laie plantation near the ocean with a pretty grassy shore having a population of about 300 natives, who have land for homes given them rent free and are furnished to some extent with labor from the plantation, the acreage of which in all is about 6,000 acres, about 300 of which is under cultivation, growing cane, rice, taro (or kalo) and vegetables. The uncultivated land is mostly mountainous and furnishes good pasturage on which at the present about 1,000 head of cattle are grazing. This place is headquarters for the Hawaiian mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which at the present is under the leadership and superintendency of Elder Matthew Noall, of Salt Lake City.

The mission premises, named Lanihuli, consisting of three residence buildings, church building, school house, barn, etc., are situated on a little raise or hill overlooking the entire settlement. The meeting house is a well constructed building and will accommodate about 700 people. The new residence building is of modern style, divided into about eighteen rooms, well arranged and furnished making a comfortable home for the missionary families.8

On May 2, 1895, Andrew Jenson (illus. 5-20) was called and set apart by the First Presidency an assistant Church historian and assigned to visit all the foreign missions of the Church, collect Church history, and teach the missions, districts, and branches how to keep accurate records. The first stop on his world tour was the Hawaiian Mission. He arrived in La‘ie on Saturday, June 1st
and on Monday toured the plantation. He wrote this description in a letter back to the Deseret News: (Aug 24, 1895)

Monday June 3, 1895. The brethren at the mission house at Laie saddled up their horses, which Elders Matthew Noall, Walter Scholes and myself mounted, and took a long ride over the plantation and along the sea-coast. By this means I became acquainted with topographical and industrial features of Laie, which property consists of nearly 6000 acres of land. This was purchased early in 1865 with a view to making it a gathering place for the Hawaiian Saints. It will be remembered that the natives at that time were forbidden by law to emigrate to other countries; and thus being prevented from gathering to Utah like coverts from other parts of the world, it was thought best to provide a local gathering place. The property cost about $14,000. Laie has a coast line of about three and a half miles; the Laie landing where steamers occasionally call to take on and unload freight is about a mile and a quarter from Lanihuli, the missionary home. The purchase extends inland for a distance of about four miles, or to the top of the mountains which form the boundary line between the districts of Koolauloa (in which Laie is situated) and Waialua. Of the 6000 acres only about five hundred acres can be classed as level and fertile lands; another five hundred acres is grazing land, consisting mostly of low hills and rolling country; then there is about 2,500 acres of timber or forest mountain land, and nearly the same amount of mountain grazing country. Of the 500 acres tillable land, 160 acres are planted this year with sugar cane; 150 acres are rented to Chinamen for rice fields; 18 acres are planted in kalo and ten acres in potatoes; about 75 acres are covered by so-called “kuliana’s” (small lots) which were owned by natives at the time the purchase was made in 1865. The town site of Laie covers about one hundred acres. The mission home called Lanihuli stands on elevated grounds about a quarter of a mile from the centre of the village of Laie and about the same distance inland from the sea-shore (nearest point.) The premises consists of the new and commodious cottage of modern architecture, one of the finest upon the island of Oahu outside of Honolulu – built under the direction of Elder Matthew Noall in 1893. It is a two-story frame building containing nine rooms in the lower story besides hall closets, bath room etc., and seven upper rooms, mostly used as sleeping apartments. About 160 feet to the southeast stands the old mission house, which was there in 1865 when the purchase was made; it is now used as a school house, in which Elder Harmon and Sister Fisher are teaching the English government school. Adjacent to this building is another small cottage occupied by Elders Brown and Birduo and their families, and near the new mission house is a smaller two-room cottage occupied by Brother Fisher and family. Elders Noall, Harmon and Scholes live with their
respective families in the new mission house. During my temporary stay at Laie I will occupy an upper room with a window facing the east from which I have a beautiful view of the coast, the reef and the breakers out in the ocean, also the valley of Laie and the steamboat landing beyond. Only a portion of the native population reside in the village; the remainder live on lots and parcels of land at different points of the plantation, some of them as far as two miles away.

Nearly a quarter of a mile from the mission house stands the beautiful Laie meeting house built in 1882-83 at an expense of nearly $8,000. It occupies an elevated piece of ground and can be seen to advantage a long distance oft. It is known among non-members of the Church as the Mormon Temple – a distinction which it perhaps daily deserves, it being the finest house of worship on the island of Oahu outside of Honolulu. About sixty yards away to the northwest is the old meeting house erected in 1866 soon after the purchase was made; it was used for all public gatherings prior to the erection of the new meeting house. Between the meeting houses and the mission home on one side and the village of Laie on the other, lies an open piece of prairie land covered with a beautiful carpet of fine grass called maniania, which serves as play ground for the children and occasionally for the grown up natives. This extensive natural lawn is the means of keeping everything clean and pleasant around the mission house as there is no dust flying through the air, though the wind blows at Laie almost without cessation. Yes, at Laie wind has often been commented upon. It prevents trees and flowers from growing, and the missionary sisters from wearing bangs. Many attempts have been made in former years to raise fruit and shade trees on the Laie property; but every trial in that direction has proven a failure so far except in places where they are protected from the wind either by hills or buildings, and then they only grow as high as they are protected. A few trees planted on the shielded side of buildings at Laie are proof of this assertion. But while the wind prevents trees from growing on exposed ground, it is a harbinger of health and vigor to the inhabitants. The air around Laie is always good and pure, as it is constantly blown in from the mighty ocean. To inhale it freely means life and renewed strength of mind and body. While the air at times is awfully hot and oppressive at Honolulu and at many places on the eastward side of the islands it is always good and pure at Laie; the missionaries, who when visiting the capital, are perspiring and feel uncomfortable under the oppressive heat, are always sure to obtain immediate relief when they return to mission headquarters. The town site of Laie is laid off like most of our town sites in Utah into regular blocks, the streets crossing each other at right angles, but the natives have not built their houses in conformity to the streets; they seem to face every way as if each builder has sought to make his house face different to that of all his neighbors. Most of the houses rests upon stilts. In their erection
the upright timbers have been left long enough to raise the floor several feet from
the ground. In countries where unhealthy vapors constantly arise from the
ground, such a mode in building would certainly be a great improvement on the
present style of architecture. Another peculiar feature in connection with the
dwellings on the Hawaiian Islands is the absence of chimneys. In a country
where it is perpetual summer there is no need for that particular commodity
which is so very essential in a more northern clime.

There are no continuous living streams on the Laie property, though in
times of rain there are a number of riverlets and creeks which find their way
from the mountains to the ocean, such water being utilized as much as possible
for irrigation purposes. But the surface water thus obtained being inadequate
five artisan wells have been sunk on the property, namely three by the
plantation company and two by the Chinese, who have rented lands for raising
rice. The largest of the plantation wells which is about 300 feet deep, gives forth
water at the rate of 469 gallons per minute, through a 7 5/8 inch pipe.
Preparations are being made now to sink another well with at least double that
capacity. It will cost about $3,000. One of the wells sunk by the Chinamen
gives forth a stream large enough to run their rice mill. From that well also, the
mission house obtains its water supply for culinary purposes. After the
missionaries had carried the water used at the house up a hill for a distance of
nearly 1000 feet during 28 years, Elder Noall got permission from the Chinamen
to tap the well, or attach a small pipe, through which the water is conveyed a
distance of about 600 feet into a tank built at the base of a perpendicular cliff, on
the top of which a wind-mill was built to pump the water up twenty-five feet into
an upper tank, from which another line of pipe conducts it into the missionary
home 390 feet further on. This very desirable improvement was made in 1892,
Elder Noall personally doing all the plumbing, first introducing the water into the
old mission house and later into the new building when that was completed. The
pipes introduce both hot and cold water into the bathroom, kitchen and wash
house.

Considerable stock is kept on the Laie plantation, and of late years the
kinds have been greatly improved. There is good grazing during the winter
season; but the species of grass growing on the Hawaiian Islands seems to
contain so few nutritious properties that cattle and horses who feed in grass
knee deep keep poor, the consequence is that even milk is a scarce article on the
plantation where they milk sixteen cows. But from all these less than a gallon of
milk a day is obtained. I am informed that one good cow properly fed in Utah
will give as much or more milk than ten cows on the Hawaiian Islands. Horses
and mules on the islands are also poor, except such as are fed on grain and hay
imported from California.
To prevent the Laie plantation cattle from straying off on to other people’s property a wire fence three miles long was built recently on the north line of Laie, or between that and the Kahuku ranch extending from the sea to the mountains. Four miles more of fence, also built recently, divide the grazing part of Laie into four paddocks, or separate pasture enclosures. Material is also on hand for a fence to be built on the other side – on the line between Laie and the Kaipapau lands. The sea on the northeast and the mountains on the southwest serve as the best possible fence in those directions.

Cane-growing and sugar manufacturing was once a very profitable industry on the Hawaiian Islands, and for years almost every other industry was neglected in its favor, but now the competition in the sugar line is so great that the industry does not pay, unless the cheapest kind of Japanese and Chinese laborers are employed and the best and most modern machinery used in making the sugar, and the article turned out on a large scale. Much of the lands at Laie which has been used for raising cane during the past thirty years, is now run down to such an extent that it cannot produce good crops any longer; hence some of the lower lands have been discarded, and about sixty acres of new and higher lands taken up, which depend almost exclusively upon mountain streams fed by rain water to mature the crops. In order to save and utilize the water, quite an extensive reservoir was built in the Wailele gulch in 1893. A sixteen foot aeromotor, with a capacity of 10,000 gallons per minute, has also been imported and built for the purpose of raising water from one of the artesian wells on the higher grounds. During the busiest season from fifty to eighty natives are employed on the plantation; their labors are directed by the manager and his assistant or assistants.

Both men and women are employed and I am specially requested by one of the missionary sisters to record the facts as a point in favor of woman’s rights that the women are among the most faithful laborers, and excel many of the men in doing the same kind of work. As an exception to the general rule, but as a true reward of merit, the manager of the plantation has paid for actual work done, and thus the women who worked faithfully got higher wages than some of the men.

The old cane mill erected in the days of Harvey H. Cluff, has stood idle for about six years. It together with the blacksmith shop, stands about half a mile south of the mission house.

Our ride along the coast was very interesting to me. A small peninsula extends quite a distance out into the ocean from the grounds on which the village of Laie is situated; and there are three small rock islets a short distance our from the shore.
As the Church prepared for the golden anniversary of its arrival in Hawaii, the local magazine *Paradise of the Pacific* investigated La’ie and published this description:

Laie is situated on the north side of the island, occupying a very picturesque spot sloping to the sea from the pretty low lying foot-hills at the foot of the main range of mountains that forms the back-bone of the island. On the high ground close under the hills are conspicuously situated the church, school house and the elder’s home, of pretty modern architecture. Below on the lower slopes reaching to the sea are the numerous houses of the natives who make their homes at the mission and by the road is the ever-present Chinese store. Within the settlement and spreading over rising hillsides, in the back ground, are extensive fields of sugar cane that, at this time of the years, are in flower, and in the bright sunlight spread a silvery sheen over the hillsides. To the left the low and marshy lands are devoted to rice culture.

The native village gathered around the mission comprises about 300 inhabitants. In addition to this there are about 150 people of other nationalities, mostly Chinamen, who cultivate rice fields. The school, which is maintained by the mission, has eighty native children enrolled. English is taught exclusively, although the Hawaiian language is used by the teachers as an aid in explaining ideas that are too complex to be elucidated in the limited knowledge of English possessed by the younger pupils. Services are held every Sunday at the church, with preaching in the native language by the elder.

All natives, whether converts to the faith or not, are invited to come to the settlement and make it their home. The heads of families are furnished a piece of land for building site and garden. If he signifies his intention of making it his permanent home there, the mission advances him enough money to build a house, and he is furnished work in the cane field at good wages out of which he is enabled to return the advances made on the installment plan. By this method the people are held together and are not only brought under constant religious influences, but furnished steady labor for the cane fields, thus learning habits of industry. Kalo land is furnished each family at a nominal rental, so that each family has an opportunity of growing its own food, thus giving the head of the family an opportunity of saving the wages earned as the fruits of his labor in the cane fields. All the work done is by free labor and, on this system, the colonization plan has proved an entire success.
After the formal Golden Anniversary celebrations in Honolulu Pres. George Q. Cannon decided to come out to Laʻie for a little rest and relaxation. On December 18, 1900 they rode out to Laʻie, which Pres. Cannon described:

We spent a week at Laie and were very pleasantly entertained by President Woolley and his good wife, and the brethren and sisters there. We looked over the plantation, where everything seemed to be prospering under President Woolley’s efficient management. Four hundred and fifty acres are planted in sugar cane, just ready to take off; also 240 acres are being cultivated in rice, being leased to Chinamen at $15 to $20 per acre. Two crops of rice are raised on the same land each year. It is believed that the present crop will pay off all the indebtedness of the property, including the cost of a powerful pump recently put in, which will enable them to increase the cultivation of cane over three hundred acres. During our stay at Laie it was a continuous holiday for President Cannon. Every day the yellow wreath was placed on his neck, serenading parties came to the mission house every evening, the natives singing beautiful songs and playing sweet music.”

Cannon’s own journal goes into greater detail about what he saw and thought about Laʻie. On December 19, 1900, the day after he arrived in Laʻie he wrote:

Brother Woolley took me out in his carriage this morning and this afternoon to see the plantation from the different points of view. The crop of cane is very promising…. There are three hundred sixty-eight acres ripe and ready to cut. A good stand of cane will yield about 6 to 14 tons of sugar to the acre. The irrigation of the cane is very costly. We visited the pumping machinery today. Water is drawn from four wells. The engine employed for this purpose is 160 horsepower though I think less than 100 horsepower is used. What is called the high lift, throws the water into an upper ditch. The low lift throws it into a reservoir. From these points the whole of the fields can be irrigated. The engine is capable of throwing 3,500,000 gallons of water every twenty-four hours, and consumes 5,000 lbs. of coal per day…. Two hundred sixty-three acres of this land is leased to Chinamen for the cultivation of rice. These Chinamen make excellent tenants.”

The golden jubilee celebrations highlighted the first fifty years of the Church in Hawaii. What would the new century bring? Momentous events had recently occurred in Hawaii, and how would they affect the future progress of Laʻie? In the *Latter-day Saints Millennial Star* issue of April 14, 1904, President
Samuel E. Woolley reported on the history and progress of the Hawaiian Mission. In describing La‘ie, he wrote:

"Besides our spiritual interests we have a sugar plantation owned by the Church which was bought in 1864 as a place to which to gather the people who were without homes, where they could be given employment and be taught the habits of industry; also to make the mission self-sustaining. We are pleased to report that the mission is self-sustaining, and the plantation is in a good, thrifty condition to-day. The plantation is the headquarters of the mission and the manager is the president of the mission, hence he has the oversight of both the temporal and spiritual departments of the mission. It is therefore necessary to have an assistant manager, a store keeper, a time keeper, a book keeper who is also clerk of the mission, a school teacher, and a general mechanic. These are all Elders from Zion with special qualifications for their work. Besides we have eight sisters from Zion who have charge of the domestic affairs at headquarter, also of the Primary school, Primary associations, Relief societies and Improvement meetings. We all aim to get an understanding of the language of the people, so we can the better appeal to their understanding, while they are learning to use the English language. We find they can get a correct understanding of the Gospel only when taught to them in their own tongue. We have at present twenty-one Elders and eight sisters from Zion, besides a number of native Elders in the mission all working energetically. Our methods of preaching are much the same as those followed by the stakes of Zion. More time is spent with the members than with the non-members, and we feel in duty bound to look after them first. However, the others are not lost sight of. We feel that the work is progressing; not as we would like but as well as we can well expect. We also feel that we are especially favored of the Lord in becoming the instruments in His hands in assisting to bring some of His chosen seed to the way of life. Our prayers go out to all the world that all who are honest at heart may hear and obey the truth."

In 1910 Thomas G. Thrum, publisher of the Hawaiian Annual, made this observation about La‘ie and compared it to the rest of Hawai‘i:

"Passing through Laie, the Mormon settlement, one is struck with the trim and cleanly appearance of the village; cottages and adjacent premises, fences and roadways evincing a supervising care in marked contrast to those of other sections. One of the sad sights met with in journeying about the islands is the lack of tidiness and care of premises too often met with among the people left to themselves."
J. Bryan Barton, in the April, 1913 issue of the Improvement Era, described the Church’s plantation in La’ie in this manner: (illus. 5-55)

The Church began to invite its converts, upon the various islands of the group, to remove to Laie. Everything possible was done to make Laie a most desirable place in which to live, and improvements are still being made; so that these, together with its natural favorable location and agreeable climate, make Laie an ideal gathering place for our Saints.

Each newcomer who expects to remain permanently in Laie is given a building spot, ranging in size from a few square rods to an acre or two – apparently limited only by the desire to keep clean and orderly a large or a small yard around the home. The title to the land is retained by the Church. Each resident is encouraged to build and own his home, so that he acts merely as a steward of the land, keeping it free from rubbish and beautifying it with grass, flowers, trees and shrubbery of various tropical kinds.

The village has been provided with a water system, the supply for which comes from a twelve-inch artesian well, driven over three hundred feet into the ground. For the use of the land and the convenience of water piped to the house, each householder is charged the yearly rental of twenty-five cents – scarcely enough to pay the interest on the money invested.

The remainder of the arable land outside the residence portion is used mainly for the cultivation of sugar cane and taro. The taro roots, when cooked and pounded into a sort of a paste, is called “poi”, which is the Hawaiian staff of life; in fact poi and fish form the chief diet of these people.

The higher upland parts of the plantation are used for the growing of pineapples, and for the grazing of the plantation’s six hundred head of cattle.

In connection with the plantation, the Church has opened a general merchandise store for the accommodation of the inhabitants of the village, and for the additional purpose of controlling the merchandising carried on in the village; so that no liquor is sold unless done so secretly and against the law.

The Church also maintains a district school, under the direction of the mission president supported wholly by Church funds, taught entirely by experienced teachers called from Zion for that work. The present enrollment is over one hundred.

The further advantage of living in a Latter-day Saint environment, under the leadership of the president of the mission and his associates, was an inducement to the Saints to make their homes in Laie. About eighty families of Saints, in addition to many non-“Mormon” Japanese, Chinese, Korean and Portuguese laborers and gardeners, have availed themselves of the opportunity to live in such a community, and have made their homes here.
The work of the missionaries consists in directing the temporal as well as the spiritual affairs of these people. All of them are being taught to be sober, industrious and economical; and those who will listen are being taught the principles of the gospel, in the English and the Hawaiian language.

The people are surrounded with a wholesome environment, free from some of the temptations and vices that exist in many other places here in Hawaii, and elsewhere in the world. As a result, many Hawaiian Saints rival the Saints of Zion in integrity of character and sincerity toward the work of God, which augurs well for the advancement of the gospel in this land. At the present time, about twenty-two per cent of all the inhabitants of Hawaiian blood on the islands, are members of the Church – a total of approximately eight thousand five hundred.

On May 21, 1915, President Joseph F. Smith came to La‘ie with Bishop Charles Nibley and Elder Reed Smoot, an Apostle who was also a U.S. senator from Utah. (illus. 5-56 & 5-57) It was at this time that he was inspired to dedicate the site for a temple in La‘ie. The Deseret News of June 12 published this report of their visit by Elder Edwin W. Fifield, clerk of the mission:

After a days rest at Honolulu the party came in automobiles by way of Waialua to Laie where they found 400 Saints gathered to greet them. As they drove up the Saints sang “We Thank Thee O God for a Prophet”. Elder Joseph Kekuku with a few well chosen words welcomed the visitors to the gathering place. President Smith made reply expressing his appreciation for the kindness shown. As the visitors alighted they were each presented with four leis; they were then taken to the amusement hall where a bounteous feast was prepared. The hall and tables were uniquely decorated. Ferns, flags and flowers hung in profusion. Each organization had a table to look after. The Relief Society presided over one decorated with the Hawaiian royal yellow colored flowers, the Sunday School chose white, the Mutuals chose pink, while violets was the color of the Primary. Aloha in large letters embossed with ferns and large while lilies hung in an arch in the center of the hall entrance.

During the feast speeches from each of the visitors and a choice program added to the dignity of the occasion. All joined in singing “Aloha Oe’, after which benediction was offered by President Woolley.

The visitors came to our mission home where we passed a pleasant evening. As night came on the Saints gathered on the lawn under the trees in front of the mission home, “Lanihuli”, and serenaded with songs and music. President Joseph F. Smith replied with a fatherly talk of counsel and advice which was greatly appreciated.
Next day being Sunday, the time of the organizations, the Sunday School, general meetings, Mutuals, and sacrament meetings were given over to the visitors, and the whole day was a feast to us all.

The visitors expressed their surprise at the growth and improvement of the people and surroundings of Laie. The plantation has driven for and obtained artesian water which is piped to each of the Saints’ homes. So they enjoy pure water free of cost, which is a great help in keeping their homes fresh and clean. Nearly every home is surrounded by a well kept lawn, flowering shrubs and beautiful trees where only a few years ago nothing but grass extended from the sea to the cane fields.

Progress as Mission:

Not only did they notice the progression in the homes of the Saints, but just as many signs of advancement at the mission home. The store has been moved from the old site, “makai”, to the railroad, and employs five clerks where two used to be sufficient. The schoolhouse has been enlarged from two to six rooms and children are not only taught in the common branches, but music, gardening, domestic art, and manual training as well. Our mission home also shows marks of improvement. The old home has been enlarged and good roomy house in addition has been built. Fresh water is found on tap in each room. Our grounds are neatly laid out and are kept trimmed and in the best of condition. All the lands that were lease by the Chinese for rice planting are now back in the hands of the plantation management and are producing splendid crops of cane. We now have 500 acres of growing cane.

During the last two or three years the Japanese have rented and cleared nearly 300 acres of land in the hills and planted to pineapples, which are proving a very profitable crop. All this speaks thrift for the Hawaiian Mission in the eyes of the visitors.

Not only do they notice progress in our temporal affairs, but spiritual improvement as well. In some of our most progressive branches a large majority of the Saints keep the Word of Wisdom, and observe the law of tithing, and officers of the branches are requested to add to Word of Wisdom and tithing, also the ten commandments, before they are deemed worthy to stand as leaders and teachers among the people. This same condition prevails throughout the whole mission to a great degree.\footnote{16}

President Smith described the progress of La’ie in a letter to his son, Hyrum M. Smith, dated May 27th, 1915 from Lanihuli, Laie, Oahu, Hawaii and printed in the Millenial Star.
Perhaps I should tell you, which you doubtless know, that Laie is the name of our plantation. There are about five hundred acres of it in sugar cane. Two hundred and fifty acres of cane are worked into sugar each year. The neighboring Kahuku plantation buys our cane, and makes the sugar. Lanihuli, the Laie home, is the birthplace of E. Wesley. It is now a very beautiful place. For a long time no trees could be found that would grow here, on account of the strong trade-winds, but a few years ago a species of rapid-growing trees was found which thrives abundantly, and the rapid growth of these trees has entirely changed the appearance of the country.17

Other transformations he noticed in La'ie included these:

Besides the almost omnipresent automobile, a railroad nearly circumscribes this Island, with vase networks of rails permeating the sugar-cane fields. The old grass-thatched huts have given place to comfortable and pleasant homes and grounds beautified with evergreens and flowers. Modern furniture, comforts, and conveniences of homes have supplanted the gourds, calabashes, and pandanus-leaf mats, on which the natives slept, and the native kapa, which furnished their clothing and the coverings of their beds. To a great extent the ancient and dim light of the kukui-nut and the oil lamp has given place to the brilliant illumination of modern electric lights.18 (illus. 5-58)

At the time of the dedication, the Liahona described La'ie to members of the Church unfamiliar with the tropical paradise:

President Heber J. Grant and his party inspected the property on Monday, Dec. 1, following the dedication of the temple. We rode through acres of waving sugar cane, which had attained a growth of from 10 to 15 feet high and was about ready to cut.

Looking to the higher ground beyond we saw other acres planted to pineapples, growing on the plantation leased land. A crop of cane matures in 12 to 18 months from time of planting, Three to four crops are gathered before it is plowed up and re-seeded.

The first crop of pineapples matures in 18 months, after which a crop is matured each year for two years. It is then plowed up and the land replanted. Thus it takes three and one-half years to mature three crops.

The plantation covers about 6,000 acres of land, much of it being mountainous. Five hundred acres of cane are now under cultivation, 250 being cut each year. With more water for irrigation 250 acres additional could be
brought under cultivation. Three hundred and fifty acres of the plantation pineapple lands have been leased to the Japanese.

The plantation also runs a store, carrying miscellaneous merchandise, for the convenience of its employees and the residents of Laie, and is stocked with cattle and mules, the latter animals being used for plowing and hauling in the pineapple fields.

Irish and sweet potatoes and all kinds of vegetables common to a temperate climate are raised on the plantation for local consumption.

Of tropical fruits the following are grown: bananas, mangos and papaya, the latter resembling the musk melon in appearance. It is smaller, however, and grows on trees. It has a delicious flavor of its own, and is particularly good for indigestion.

There are raised on the plantation about 30 acres of taro, from the root of which poi, a food peculiar to Hawaii, is made. Sufficient taro is grown to supply the mission home colony of Laie, with some to spare. When put upon the market it brings $400.00 per acre. The plantation realized $2,000 from this source last year.

The mango resembles a pear in shape, but unlike the pear it grows upon the tree with the big end up and the small end hanging down. When ripe it takes a deep yellow, and though radically different to fruit raised in higher altitudes, its flavor is very sweet and fine.

A steam pumping plant has been installed on the plantation, which taps four wells, each 350 feet deep, furnishing water to irrigate 250 acres of land.

In connection with the steam pumping plant, there is an electric lighting plant, which furnishes light for the mission home, temple and Laie settlement. There is also a small gasoline pumping plant that furnishes water from artesian wells for 25 acres. A small electric pumping plant has been installed in addition which takes care of about 40 acres. These plants constitute an important feature of the plantation as without them sugar cane could not be successfully and profitably raised in that locality.

About 100 men are employed to do the work of the plantation. The numbers are made up of Hawaiians, Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos, Portuguese, Porto Ricans, and Koreans, the Japanese and Chinese predominating. These men are divided into three working shifts of 33 each, and are directed in their labors by a general overseer and three sub-overseers.

The branch, or colony, of Laie has a Church population of about 475 souls and is presided over by a presiding elder.
As Samuel Woolley settled into his lighter load of just being the plantation manager a feature article in the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* on Sunday, March 21, 1920 by W. K. Bassett described Laʻie:

*But amidst the pastoral silence of the place you are quickly aware of the contentment there as made manifest by the physical appearance of the people, the homes, the streets. Noticeably more than at any other single section of the island you find well-kept gardens, we-cared-for houses, well-nurtured children. You see person who seem to have a job to do or in the doing, and in their eyes seems to be the light of labor....*

*Of course, above the entire settlement, shining out magnificently in the sunshine, is the granite and marble temple, symbolic of the Mormon theology. To the lay mind and eye it is a handsome piece of architecture only and beautiful central monument for the community. Not far from it is the Mission House where the missionaries and their families reside and it, too, although an older structure and of frame, is a creditable landmark.*

*Taking it all in all, by and large, the settlement of Laie is not only a credit to the Mormon policy of community life, but it is a distinct credit to the Territory of Hawaii, demonstrating what can be done in the rural districts of the Islands through a unified effort of people toward making their neighborhood a comfortable and attractive one through the manifestation of civic pride.*

*Certainly no more beautiful spot than that chosen could have been selected for this settlement on the windward side of the island. Behind it the mountains lift their rugged heads in the distance and before it the smooth sand levels down to the wide sea.*

*Laie is the Arcadia of the rural life of Hawaii and whether it be through religion, or by the plain simple policy of contented life, the Mormon missionaries have made it so.*

By this time cameras and printing technology were able to present graphic images to the common man and the need to paint these verbal pictures was no longer necessary.

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2 Harvey H. Cluff, “Correspondence,” *Deseret News*, November 16, 1870, 479.
7 *Hawaiian Gazette*, August 17, 1886, 8.


“Latter Day Saints’ Mission.” *The Paradise of the Pacific*, 13 (January 1900, 7–8).


*The Hawaiian Annual for 1911*. (Honolulu: Thomas G. Thrum, 1910), 131–32.


Jenson, “MHHM,” 8 July 1915.


Descriptions of La’ie 1871 to 1921
Susa Young Gates
I Hemolele
La’ie Sugar Mill
Coming from Church
La’ie Rice Fields
La‘ie Kalo Lo‘i
La’ie Mission Complex
Golden Anniversary with Geo. Q. Cannon
La‘ie Panorama 1915
Laʻie Map 1914
Pounding Poi
Sam Woolley Lu’au
Laʻie Aerial Photo 1925
Laie Rice and Kalo Fields 1887
Hawaiian Hale
Old School from Top of the Temple
Laie Collage
Thatched Hale