SAMUEL PUA HA'AHEO

by

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Samuel Pua Ha'aheo was born in 1885 on the island of Maui and died in Kahana on April 22, 1952 at the age of 87. He came to Kahana while in his youth and there married his companion Amoy who had been raised there in the valley. He was a good fisherman and was noted for his ability to fish and to lawai a kilo, or spot the fish in order that the nets could then be used to surround the fish. He operated the fishpond adjoining his home and not only enjoyed fishing, but used it as a means of providing for his family. He was also a policeman at the time. He was a strong member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, a temple member as well as being District President.

After Sam retired from the police force, he taught hula primarily to the Church members there in Kahana. He strictly taught all of his classes in the Hawaiian language and expected much. His students would perform for Church functions as well as the community at large. Church functions always held a higher priority.

His teachers of the Hula are Kamowai, Niuola'a, Akoliko, Kawiho'ona and Kanuku. Two of his contemporaries in the Hula were Kiaka Kanahele and Louisa Kauipele both of Laie.

He had a distinctive style of drumming and chanting while using the pahu drum, the large drum and the smaller coconut drum. All his dances were ceremonial for the alii and were mostly about nature.

He believed that there were two characteristics that were important for becoming a good dancer. These were discipline and humility—discipline, in order to make the daily practices, study and retain the chants; and humility, in order to be teachable. He taught in a white shirt and pants. He students always wore long blouses with a pahu or ti leaf skirt. He always prayed both at the beginning and end of practice. He felt that in teaching and learning the hula there was a fine line between doing what would be pleasing to God and doing that which was not as pleasing. He felt it was important to stay on the right side of that line and blessings would thus follow.

Sally Kekuaokalani, who also grew up in Kahana, and Kau Zuttermeister of Kumu Hula of Kaneohe, were two of his students. Both of these women were eager to share their memories of Uncle Pua and were my primary sources of information. Being neighbors of his, Sally's mother and daughter both took hula from Uncle Pua also. Sally's tenure was for approximately six months.

Kau Zuttermeister studied with Uncle Pua for about three years. She was related to Amoy, Pua's wife. At the age of 27, after working each day for the Hawaii State Hospital as a telephone operator from 8:00 a.m. till 5:00 p.m., her husband would drive her from Kaneohe to Kahana. Practice would be from 6:00-9:00 p.m., Monday-Friday. They would take a half-hour break and then Uncle Pua would teach Kau and his daughter, Mamo, from 9:30-midnight. The training was so rigorous that Kau would always need to take an extra change of clothes.

Kau's husband, who was of German descent, would encourage her to learn the hula. She went down for six months to just watch before she finally felt like joining in. She said Uncle Pua was very patient with her and would invite her to join them and one day she finally did. Once she started it came to her rapidly and quite naturally. Her mother and dad were both native speakers and could thus help her with her
Hawaiian and she, too, was fluent in the Hawaiian language making the learning of the chants easier. It demanded a lot of time, study, and sacrifice but she felt that it was important to her life. She later went on to teach and Uncle Pua was very happy that his teachings would be carried on. Aunty Kau'i was a Catholic and she said Uncle Pua had wanted her to join the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but she felt she was too set in her ways to change. Uncle Pua was a good missionary. Aunty Kau'i said every Wednesday night was his Temple night and Aunty Kau'i and his daughter, Moana, would teach the hula class for him.

He was felt to be a kind loving man, who loved the hula, and wanted to see his teachings live on through generations.

After his wife Amoy passed away, he married a much younger women named Rachel.

He was a loyal and faithful member of the Church and he seemed able to merge culture and his religion into a special and harmonious relationship.

As we look at LDS life here in Kahana, we are grateful for the famed Pua Ha'aheo and for his contribution to the Church and to the hula in passing on his knowledge to others and perpetuate this part of Hawaiian culture.