FORMATION OF THE KAHULUI HAWAII STAKE
Its First Ten Years
By Evan A. Larsen

A Brief Historical Resume

One hundred twenty-five years prior to the formation of the Kahului Hawaii Stake, George Q. Cannon was among a group of missionaries that landed in Honolulu. Their work among the people of Oahu proved fruitless, so George Q. Cannon sailed for Lahaina, Maui. Proselyting among the natives was more successful. Slowly as he travelled around the island Elder Cannon was able to organize many small branches. The first was Pulehu, organized in 1851. Subsequently, missionaries administered all branch activities.

In 1951 the Hawaiian and Japanese Missions were combined into the Hawaii Mission. The Maui District was born with Elder Thell S. Naegle, missionary, president. He selected two local brethren to be counsellors. In 1955 local brethren were called to the presidency: Rogers E. Akiu, Arthur K. Enos, David K. Keala. This set the trend for the ensuing years. 1959--Lemuel Ah Sing, Aloi Apo, Thomas A. Kekaula; 1961--Thomas A. Kekaula, Ralph F. Min, Heber Broderick; and 1964--Frederick T. S. Mau, William E. Graves, and Henry K. Long.

For the sake of efficiency, in 1970 Molokai and Lanai were consolidated with the Maui District, and thus was created a very unique segment of the Church.
Changing times affected many branches, especially the small ones, and they were combined with others to form larger units. By 1964 these consolidations were complete. Honokahau became part of Lahaina Branch; Waikapu, Kihei, parts of Kahului and Wailuku became the Kahuwai I Branch; Waihee, Waiehu, and the remaining portions of Kahului and Wailuku was known as the Kahuwai II Branch; Paia, Peahi, Pulehu, Huelo, Haiku, and Ulupalakua joined together as the Haleakala Branch; and Keanae and Nahiku became part of the Hana Branch. On Molokai, Hoolehua swallowed Kanaloa.

**Preparation for Stakehood**

After eleven years of service Fred Mau was released as district president. His councillors were also released on February 2, 1985. The new district president was Evan A. Larsen with Lawrence P. Baber as first counsellor and Larry M. Wada as second counsellor. Executive secretary was Kris Kirsch and Ralph Gima the district clerk. The district high concil and district auxiliary remained unchanged until later.

The first project was to "dress up" the presidency's office and the second was to prepare a suitable room for district council meetings and other leadership meetings. Desiring a high level of performance, the presidency established goals, created a yearly calendar, and set a district budget.

It was glaringly evident from the first council meeting that the work of the Lord needed a huge boost. Of the twenty who were expected to attend only five showed up. Four were from the district presidency and district clerk and the other the district
Relief Society president. Forthwith, letters were sent to the absentees reminding them of their roles as servants of the Master and that they should act as servants of the Master. The letters reiterated Revelations 3:16 wherein the Lord warned that he would spue out those who were neither hot nor cold. "Who does this haole think he is?" was voiced among some of them; but eventually they came to realize they needed to perform or others would replace them. Attendance at all other district meeting rose to 95-100%.

A few months prior to the re-organization of the district, the Church had started weekly mailings directly to large mission districts. Not having to wait for materials from Honolulu proved invaluable for the presidency to be fully appraised of Church programs and progress. In 1974 Maui District for the first time was involved in a regional meeting. Regional Representative A. Ray Curtis gave instructions on the organization and operation of Branch Correlation Council meeting. There was a great deal to learn.

In early 1975 Paul C. Andrus was appointed the new Regional Representative. In this capacity he visited Maui to help prepare for a scheduled Regional Meeting in June. Mission President Robert Crandall had submitted a recommendation that Maui District be made a stake. At the preparation meeting Elder Andrus outlined the requirements for stakehood in finance, priesthood organization, and auxiliary organizations. No problem, everything was in place. The June Regional Meeting was a success. All members who were asked to be in attendance were there and on time. Elder Andrus
approved President Crandall's recommendation. Shortly after President Crandall's release, President William Cannon visited Maui and he too endorsed the recommendation.

Organization of the Kahului Hawaii Stake

Under the direction of Elder Thomas S. Monson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the Kahului Hawaii Stake was organized on November 9, 1975. Many have asked why not Maui Stake. It must be remembered that this stake is very unique in that its boundaries take in three separate islands: Maui, Molokai, and Lanai.

Evan A. Larsen was sustained stake president with Lawrence P. Baber, first counsellor; Larry M. Wada, second counsellor; Kris Kirsh, executive secretary; and Ralph Gima, clerk. Fred Mau was named Stake Patriarch.

Five wards were organized with their bishops: on Maui--Charles Albright, Kahului I (Kahuwai I Branch); Colin Kailiponi, Kahului II (Kahuwai II); Cirilo Figuerres, Lahaina; Boyd P. Mossman, Pukalani (Haleakala); and on Molokai Lucky Davis, Hoolehua. Oliver Young remained president of Kaunakakai, Molokai; Stanley Oshima, Lanai; and Moses Bergau, Hana. Kalaupapa Branch remained a dependant branch of Hoolehua Ward.

The stake was formed when there were only three High Priests in the entire district. Therefore, when Elder Monson set them apart, assisted by Regional Representative R. Raymond Barnes, he had to initially ordain the candidates High Priests. During the following week counsellors in the bishoprics and those in the High Council were ordained and set apart by the stake president.
In 1975 Kahului Hawaii Stake was assigned to the Hilo Hawaii Region. A Regional Meeting was scheduled for June 9, 1976. All preparations were made for this meeting; all members involved were encouraged to make the trip although it meant spending personal funds. Nearly 200 attended. 50% were from the Kahului Hawaii Stake. The stake members left Hilo with considerable confidence and pride in their wards and their stake.

Stake Building Program

Of major importance was the buildings in the stake. All of them needed to be up-graded. The plans laid down were extensive: Kahului Stake Center—additional classrooms, offices and parking; Lahaina—additional classrooms and parking; Hana—additional land, parking and renovations; Kihei—in anticipation of a new ward, construction of a new Phase I building; Kaunakakai—major renovation, addition and parking in order to house both Kaunakakai Branch and Hoolehua Ward.

To inform the stake members and to get their support, the stake presidency interviewed each bishop and branch president. With their firm support, a special meeting was convened with the high councillors, bishoprics, and their wives. All expressed their support. Finally, meetings were held in each ward where the stake presidency explained the need for financial support from the membership. Through pledge cards each family and member voiced their support. This kind of response was very gratifying.

Because the stake had been newly organized from a mission,
the participation ratio was 80/20, or Church 80% and local 20%. In spite of this the local share meant a great sacrifice for the members. Over the next three years all that was needed, and more, came from the members. Not a single project was delayed due to lack of funds. Some labor was donated in lieu of cash, but the bulk was cash donation.

By 1977 Kihei Branch had been created and they met in an elementary school until the first phase of their chapel was done. After the ward was organized, it flourished under the leadership of Bishop Charles Albright. No sooner did they move into their building, when they needed more space, so the second and third phases were begun and completed.

By 1985 other projects were needed. Both Pukalani and Lahaina chapels had to be expanded to accommodate the growing numbers. Lanai chapel was entirely renovated and this project was completed in 1987. These last three projects were financed from funds which were on hand when the Church building program changed to 96/4 ratio.

It must be noted that all of these projects cost more than 5 million dollars and our members dug deep into their pocketbooks to raise the funds to pay their share of this cost. Of interest too is that while the members were donating to the building fund the number of full tithe payers increased substantially.

Home Teaching, Visiting Teaching

Another major concern was Home Teaching and Visiting Teaching. While still a district the home teaching report was 30-40%. This
was not acceptable. The kingdom would never grow on Maui if this trend continued; so a plan of action was devised. Their goal: 100%.

A special priesthood meeting was scheduled for early June 1985. Notices advised all stake priesthood leaders, bishoprics, executive secretaries, clerks, and quorum leaders to get their home teaching done before the scheduled meeting because they would be expected to give oral reports at that time. This they did. All other brethren were encouraged to do their visits before the third week and report to their leaders. What was not complete was then picked up by the quorum leaders. Result: 100%.

By using this system, with effective follow-up procedures, and insisting that each member warranted a visit by his home teacher, the Home Teaching in the district and the stake rose to 90-95% and remained constant. Because of this the active membership in the stake increased by a considerable number and was reflected in all areas of activity.

Coupled with this the Relief Society exerted all effort in the same type of program with similar results. No other program had such an impact on the strength of the stake as did Home Teaching and Visiting Teaching. Elder Bruce R. McConkie stated, "As Home Teaching goes in the ward, so goes all other programs."

**Distinguished Visitors**

Among the many distinguished visitors to bless Maui was our beloved President Spencer W. Kimball. He came as a guest of Bonneville Communications Cooperation which was meeting on the
island. President Kimball's secretary, Arthur Haycock, telephoned ahead to prepare a reception at the airport. A large crowd gathered and the airport management made special allowances so the people could greet the prophet as he deplaned. The stake assisted with the security. Also a qualified physician agreed to be on stand by in case of emergency.

On February 11, 1979, we met with President and Sister Kimball in a special stake meeting. Over 1000 gathered in the building which ordinarily seats 900. Arch Madsen of Bonneville Corp. spoke as did Edward Eyering and William Edwards, Sister Kimball's brother and brother-in-law. Sister Kimball captured our hearts with her sweet testimony, and of course, everyone listened attentively to President Kimball's counsel.

A year later President Kimball made a second visit to our island. This time he was tired and weary after having undergone major surgery. Elders Gordon B. Hinckley and David B. Haight accompanied the prophet. Arthur Haycock, having recovered from his surgery of a year ago, also came with his wife, Maureen. Brother Haycock was no stranger to Maui and he expressed his surprise and some dismay at the changing face of Kihei and Makena. He did not like the hotels and condominiums and missed the thorny keawe trees.

Again a special meeting was held on Sunday afternoon. All the distinguished visitors spoke. Brother Haycock spoke in fluent Hawaiian. At the conclusion of the meeting, Stake Relief Society President Rebecca Keala presented President and Sister Kimball with
a quilt. It contained blocks showing all the chapels in the stake that had been hand drawn and painted by the president of each ward and branch Relief Society. Roselani pink blocks in Hawaiian design accented the face of the quilt. President Kimball showed his appreciation by keeping close track of the quilt.

The weekend had been rainy. The stake presidency received news from Lanai that there was a missionary lost in the mountains. This missionary and his companion had ridden their bikes around the island. On their way back to their quarters, one of them decided to go over the mountain instead of skirting it. The other stayed on the road; but, when he tired, tried to follow his companion. Consequently, he lost his way and wandered around in the fog and rainstorm. Because of the weather rescue efforts were hampered. This bad news had to be relayed to the prophet. During the special meeting on Sunday, we were told that after two days in the mountains, the missionary walked out into safety, uninjured, hungry, still pushing his bike. When informed of the good news President Kimball said, "Do you suppose he learned never to leave his companion?"

Elder John Vandenberg, an Assistant to the Twelve, was our first visitor to the stake. He presided over stake conference. Elder Richard G. Scott, newly called General Authority presided over another. He related that he was formerly on General Rickover's staff and that General Rickover was very upset when he resigned to do missionary work for the Church. Elder John Groberg came several times to preside over conferences as well as to relax. H. Burke Petersen brought spiritual food to the
stake also.

Well-loved Paul H. Dunn was weary when he arrived. He was happy to occupy the guest cottage in the stake president's back yard where he could relax in complete privacy.

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of Twelve Apostles had studied the strengths and weaknesses of the stake before arriving. He cautioned the leaders not to hit a plateau but to continue upward.

Apostle Marvin J. Ashton was an honored guest at one conference. He also flew to Molokai to speak to the Saints there, and he also called and set apart Bishop Oliver Young of the Kaunakakai Ward the second stake Patriarch. Kaunakakai Branch had been given the status of a ward by this time. Nicholas Akana succeeded as Bishop.

After returning to Maui that evening, Elder Ashton called an impromptu session of all stake leaders, bishoprics, and their wives. They met at the historical Pulehu Chapel where Elder Ashton spoke on various inspirational topics. It is always a spiritual experience to be in this old chapel with numerous memories of the past. Not far from here the first baptism of native Hawaiians was performed. It is now on private property and what was once a lovely natural stream has been damned which left a dry stream bed. The hollow which once formed a pool is now a vast hole for trash and debris. But the chapel and grounds are neat and tidy, being maintained by the stake as a Church Historical Site.

Hawaii's own Elder Adney Y. Komatsu visited one year;
unfortunately the afternoon session on Molokai had to be
cancelled because a storm prohibited the company to fly to
Molokai. This was the first time in ten years such a thing
occurred.

In 1982 Elder Gordon B. Hinckley was a guest of Bonneville
Communications Cooperation. President Kimball's ill health did
not allow him this trip. Elder Hinckley made himself available
to the stake, and he spent a very spiritual time with the Saints.

Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of Twelve arrived in
April, 1985 to re-organize the stake. President Larsen had
already been called and set apart in February as Regional
Representative. At this conference he was released and Boyd P.
Mossman was sustained the new stake president. He chose as his
counsellors Colin Kailiponi and Joseph Kahananui, first and
second counsellors respectively. Larry M. Wada was named the
third Stake Patriarch.

Before each stake conference convened, flyers were printed
and taken by Home Teachers and Visiting Teachers to all the
families in the stake. More and more members attended and
participated in the spirituality of the occasion. Communication
was of vital importance.

Unique form of Communication in the stake

The biggest challenge that faced the stake was
communication. The stake was large in area, yet divided.
Members on Maui as well as Molokai, and Lanai had the right to be
informed of activities and policies. Flying from one island to
another for the sake of attending conferences and other meetings was too expensive, and with the cooperation of Larry M. Wada, an engineer with Hawaiian Telephone, the solution was worked out.

The telephone and companion units linked the stake center to Molokai and Lanai through separate lines. All stake conferences, leadership meetings, high council meetings, stake priesthood meetings and auxiliary meetings were conducted with this hook-up. Questions and answers were made back and forth when necessary. During stake conferences, the leaders from Molokai and Lanai flew to Maui if they chose to attend the priesthood meeting; but for the bulk of the brethren who remained, they met at the chapel where they participated by the telephone hook-up. This service on Saturday was also provided to the Saints in remote Hana; but, they were expected to be in attendance at the stake center on Sunday. The Saturday evening session was by telephone hook-up to these three areas. The Sunday morning session was heard by hook-up on Lanai only. The session was between 9:00-11:00 and this allowed the stake presidency and visiting authority to fly to Molokai for the afternoon session that began at 1:00. Brown bag lunches, prepared by the presidency's wives were served while the brethren waited at the airport. Every one seemed to enjoy this casual moment in a very informal setting of a commuter airport. All the General Authorities consented to fly Royal Hawaiian Air which carried only nine passengers. This procedure, second session on Molokai and the use of the telephone, drew the members of the stake closer into one working unit instead of being three separate entities.
Advancement in technology has provided better equipment and the stake has taken advantage of them. It pays the costs but this is far less expensive than flying from one place to another to conduct Church businesses. However, one member of the presidency made monthly trips to Molokai to interview for temple recommends, as well as to take care of other matters.

Organizationally, there had to be a support group on Molokai. For instance, when a Stake Young Woman's President was called on Maui, there was a YW Representative called on Molokai to carry out the program on that island. The same was for each auxiliary. Two members of the Stake High Council were from Molokai.

Auxiliary Organizations

All auxiliary leaders were competent, self starters who brought their skills and talents and taught them stakewide. Our aim was continuity among them so that the programs of the Church would not flounder. Evelyn Nitahara served ten years as YW president. Under her leadership the YW program expanded and more young women looked forward to the various activities offered. Many youth leaders were trained to catch the vision of Young Women. Dorothy Hunt also served for ten years as Primary president. A gifted, very able leader. One of her projects was to prepare a box from the Primary children to be sent to a ward in Farmington, Utah, when that city was flooded that year. Rebecca Keala of the Relief Society led her group for seven years. Many in the High Council stayed at their posts for many
years. Among the bishops were Boyd P. Mossman who presided over his ward for eight years, released only to be called to the stake presidency as counsellor to Evan A. Larsen, when Joseph Kahananui was called as bishop in Kahului I. Charles Albright and Colin Kailiponi both served eight years each. The strength of the stake lay in the commitment of members who continue in the service of the Lord.

Outstanding Events

Twice the stake participated in the Philmont Training at BYU-HC which was of great help to the stake's scouting program. At one of these Training sessions one of the brethren received his Wood Badge beads. Upon returning to Maui we approached Lanky Matsumoto, the Boy Scout Executive for the Maui Council, about conducting such training on Maui. He reluctantly agreed to this venture and all the details were set. Of the 28 trainees that attended 25 were LDS. This was a success for the Church and the Scouting program of the Church. This was the first training of this kind ever to be offered on Maui, and because of it our leaders gave added strength to the Maui Council BSA. The Maui Council is the only group in Hawaii that is not affiliated with the Aloha Council, and what the LDS leaders accomplished was of great benefit to the Council.

Jonatana Napela, a judge in Wailuku, a member of an ali family played a significant role in the formation of the Church in Hawaii. He helped George Q. Cannon by sheltering him, protecting him, introducing him to Pulehu, and helping with the
translation of the Book of Mormon into Hawaiian. He aided in colonizing Lanai and tried to bring order in the chaos created by Walter Gibson, helped establish Laie, traveled to the Salt Lake temple, shared Father Damein's yoke on Kalaupapa, and finally died and was buried in an unmarked grave on the lonely peninsula.

Mission President William Cannon, a grandson of George Q. Cannon, wished to make a contribution in memory of Jonatana Napela. The stake declared April 13, 1978, Jonathan Napela Day, and at a colorful ceremony on the Pulehu grounds, under the spreading jacaranda tree that has seen many other historic events, President Cannon placed a commemorative plaque on the existing monument. Elder John H. Groberg brought his whole family to this event. Many other honored guests also were present.

Long remembered will be the rededication of the Hawaii Temple in 1978. The Kahului Hawaii Stake was invited to participate in one of the sessions. Marilyn Hanneberg, living in Hana at that time, was given the task of organizing a choir to represent the stake. She proved herself a near genius. Singers were recruited from all three islands and rehearsals were kept. The groups practiced separately, and on Oahu managed to rehearse only two times. Sister Hanneberg's masterful conducting led this choir to sing with outstanding force. On June 15, the challenge had been met and accomplished.

Within the stake there is a group known as the Youth Developmental Enterprises which is made up of young men recruited from Utah, Arizona, and Idaho. These young men are employed by
the pineapple industry. Group leaders are appointed to oversee the activities of the men. Most of them are members of the Church. Although the group is independent of the local ward, they do attend stake conferences and thereby swell our ranks. Presently the program for the YDE has expanded to eleven months instead of the original 3 summer months. This may indicate a move for involvement by the stake leaders in the future.

**Maintenance of Buildings**

A report about the stake is not complete without mentioning maintenance of our buildings. When the Church spends so much money in providing adequate meeting places, it is natural to assume that these buildings will be clean and neat for the members' continued use. As a district presidency, we noticed that the maintenance was inadequate. Radio playing, cord stretched out, vacuum cleaner standing upright indicated a custodian was in the building; but, he could not be located. The presidency set in motion, what was called the team concept. All the custodians were grouped into a team with a designated one to supervise the work. All the buildings on Maui except Hana would be cleaned by these men. For instance: Mondays they cleaned the stake center, Tuesdays they went to Kihei, Wednesday was Pukalani and Pulehu's day, Thursdays they went to Lahaina, and Fridays back to the stake center. The interior of the buildings and the yards began to wear a cleaner, fresher look. The members were taught to straighten the areas of activities afterward and not to depend on the custodians for clean-up.
This team concept is gaining support in the mainland stakes. It was initiated in the North America West Areas; and because of its success, will eventually spread in the Church throughout America.

Conclusion

Statistics in 1975 when the new district presidency was called showed attendance at sacrament meetings to be 450 members or 28%. First quarter reading for 1985 was 1550 members or 56%. Each year there was an increase of 2-3%. Most dramatic growth happened when the meetings were consolidated, and sacrament meeting was scheduled first. All the charts and graphs brought to the stake by visiting general authorities indicated that the stake in all areas, including tithing, to be a high achiever. Compared to other stakes of the area Kahului Hawaii Stake did very well.

In 1975 there were approximately 1700 members. Records were not accurate, since we were not yet on the automated system. Also, many of the records were lost, some were found in dusty drawers, and others had not been up-dated. At the end of 1985 there were 2700 members, and increase of 1000 members. Today the stake tops 3000. This is very dramatic when we consider it took 125 years to reach 1700 membership and it took 14 years to reach 3000.

Growth of the Kahului Hawaii Stake is attributed to three factors: 1) Baptisms by missionaries were quality baptisms. New members were quickly taken into the mainstream of the wards
through fellowshipping and given responsibilities in the wards. The men were ordained to the priesthood and given callings. As an example, Boyd P. Mossman was a branch president after 11 months of his baptism and became bishop in 1 1/2 years.

2) Reactivation of members resulted largely through the Home Teaching efforts as outlined earlier. We believe this is the key to keep members active and to reactivate the less active.

3) Families from other areas moved in with their various skills and talents. For example, Ernest Fernandez moved into the Haleakala Branch with his wife, Pat and three boys. He was quickly put to work in the elders quorum; his wife was also put to work; but most important to this small unit, she played the piano. Previously, no one played. The need for a musician was drastic. Two families immediately took advantage of the opportunity and sent their daughters for piano lessons. Almost as soon as they could read and finger the keys, the girls were called to be Primary and Sunday School pianists.

We encouraged espirite corp. We pushed every means to strengthen the membership. We saw blessings being poured down in abundance on the Kahului Hawaii Stake.