Alphonso Mitchell  
History on Kokoiki Branch  
March 26, 2001

Brother and Sisters, Aloha. I think I did some work in the Kona Temple for her ohana. My name is Alphonso Mitchell. I was asked to talk about the Kokoiki branch, and I just would like to recollect a little bit about the Kokoiki branch because I was a little boy at that time. My father is John Mitchell. It's supposed to be Malchell, but he changed his name to Mitchell when he joined the Army in the first World War and he came home and joined the American Legion. He didn't go to war, but they wanted to change his name so we were known as Mitchell, M-I-T-C-H-E-L-L. My Mom, born in Kauai, Elizabeth Ah Sing, and when she grew up she moved to Laie and then to Kohala. At Laie she fell down from a tree and break her back. She's Hawaiian/Chinese and my Dad is Filipino/Spanish.

I'm a twin, so if you notice or have met someone in Honolulu that looks like me that is my brother Joseph. Joseph K. Mitchell. He went on a mission, Hawaii Mission. He went to Maui, at Kahului district and then to Oahu, at Nanakuli ward and then he was sent to Kauai--Hanapepe Branch. So if you see someone I look a lot like. A couple came to church yesterday and as soon as she came through the door I was one of the greeters with the missionary and she looked at me and said, "I know you. You're Brother Mitchell." She thought she knew me, but she knew my brother Joe.

My recollection of Kokoiki branch: I was really a young boy at the time. I was born in 1932, so when the war started I was only nine years old in 1941. Our homestead was about one mile from the chapel. The old Kokoiki Chapel is on the Akoni Pule Highway at the John Bell's property. If you look mauka to his property, the chapel was on the makai right side, just the edge of that. That was given to the church to build a chapel. I don't recollect who built the chapel, and I don't recollect who came and mowed the grass. But I know my Mom took us as little children to clean the chapel. The most fun part was as soon as we finished cleaning the chapel we jumped on the organ. Apparently there was an organ or piano in each of the branches, and it was an old organ there and the building wasn't new as I recollect. But there is some write-up about it in your handout. I remember jumping there, me and my brother Joe, and my brother John, and just having such a great time pounding on the organ.

Now, the interior - we didn't have electricity at that time, so it was kerosene lamps on the walls and hanging from the ceiling. But I remember the bell tower and I think one of the pictures I've seen there was no bell tower; maybe that's not the chapel. The chapel had a bell tower. The Honomakau one didn't have any bell tower or the new one didn't have, but the Kokoiki one had a bell tower, and as a young boy we'd try to jump up and grab the rope and ring the bell each Sunday morning.

The families that I remember - they were active in church. Not many of the brethren. It was mostly the sisters who were active in church. They were the Kanipa'e's, the Richards, the Mitchells, and the Kapaonas. And apparently our branch was so small, Brother Sproat thought of uh... he was the district north Hawaii district president, thought of closing that little branch and moving it to Mahukona. So that was the fun part.
I remember the outhouse was in the back of the chapel on the left side. We had an outhouse. And I also remember playing underneath of the chapel on the higher part. There was a slight decline in the back, so behind was higher than the front. Have you gone there to visit the property? I can take you there if you want to. It's right off the main highway.

Then we moved to Mahukona Branch. They didn't have any chapel there. We borrowed a old Japanese school, a one-room school with a veranda, and that's where we had our church - our branch. It was an inactive branch, but we also didn't have any adult male. It was mostly children and those parents that allowed their children to come to church. Let me name some. Maybe you know some of them. The families: The Puhi’s, the Kapaona’s, the Temple’s, the Sugiyama’s, the Lincoln’s, the Timoteo’s, the Casio’s, the Kama’s, the Kumakoa’s, the DelaCruz’s, the Poliahu’s, the Mitchell’s, and then my wife, just one in her family to join the church. She’s a Tanaka, Kihara’s, the A’i’s, and then Nishimura’s. Of all these families, all of you know Chieko (Nishimura) Okazaki, the first counselor in the Relief Society Presidency. Where she got her start from? The little area of Mahukona. I remember Brother Sproat coming, Brother Te’o working in the mission, coming to check my books; he came to audit the book to see if it was all right. Now his father Brother Bill Sproat was the District President at that time. Every Sunday we went proselyting, missionaries come down to teach the priesthood lessons to us, and they blessed the sacrament and when they were not there we had to adult leaders from Honomakau branch and the Niulii branch that came down. William K. Sproat, Akoni Pule, Solomon Pule, Kamaile Kapeliela, Gabriel Kapeliela, George Ka’o’ahu Sen., Philip Philip, even Matt Soaki came down a few times and Mano Kapeliela. These are some of the faithful brethren that came from all the small branches to do service for us because we were too young to hold the priesthood.

I guess from the history you know that from Kokoiki, we went to Mahukona. From Mahukona we closed the branch and went to Honomakau. And then Hala’ula had a branch and they closed Hala’ula and Hala’ula merged to Honomakau. And then Niulii closed and they came to Honomakau branch eventually became Honomakau ward. And now we are Kohala ward. That’s a brief history. I lived at Mahukona for a couple of years. It was a thriving beach community. When the Matson boat came to haul the sugar out and bring equipment for the plantation, fertilizer and so forth, things for the mill. We had people from the community go down and man the boats and the launches. I moved to Mahukona about the year 1944 or 1945.

Going back to Kokoiki, I remember on Dec. 7 when they bombed Pearl Harbor. We didn’t have any radio at our homestead. We didn't know we were at war until we went home and they told us, oh, we are at war. And that night we had our lights on, our lamps on, and here comes the warden knocking at the door, "you need to close all your windows because we don't want the light to shine." But our home was in a bunch of trees, so it won't matter, but we yet needed to do that. Are there any questions? If you have any questions maybe if I could explain.

*Dale Robertson: You moved so often, did you lose members each time?*

I think in Kokoiki the membership was so small that they thought we needed to move it to Mahukona where they were more members because the members of Mahukona were coming up to Honomakau for church. So we started there. My Mom was a stalwart member. My father was a non-member, until we moved to Mahukona he
joined the church. But he wasn’t as stalwart as my Mom was. So you ladies, you should be proud of yourselves. You are the backbone of whoever your husband is. And my wife is to me. The greatest influence in my life is my Mom and my wife. I would like to thank Brother Frandsen for inviting me to say a few words about the Kokoiki and Mahukona.

Mark James: From the answer you gave it sounded like a fair amount of missionary work was taking place in all of the sugar plantation camps. So missionary work began to move quickly from the Hawaiians to the plantation camps?

Some of the names are the grandparents in the church. So automatically the children joined the church and their grandchildren also. I just picked the names that I remember and those that came to church. I know there was the Poliahu that Brother Frandsen is related to. He lived right at the back of our house, but I never seen him at church. I don't know if he was a member or what. Grandpa Poliahu— was he a member? He was a member. But as a branch president with 52 members in Mahukona branch. This is all I have to present to you. I appreciate meeting all of you. I say these things humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.