THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
IN KAILUA, O‘AHU, HAWAI‘I
by Brian S. O’Brien

The history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereafter referred to as LDS) in Kailua, O‘ahu is one of quiet, steady growth. Kailua is a popular suburban community which has grown substantially since World War II. The history of the Latter-day Saints in Kailua is not spectacular, and is largely the sum of unrecorded private experiences with occasional public events that have been gathered and are retold here.

Community

The LDS experience in Kailua follows that of the Kailua community. Kailua is known to have been an O‘ahu population center in ancient Hawaiian times but was essentially devoid of people by the end of the 19th century. While the neighboring communities of Kaneohe and Waimanalo supported agriculture and plantations, Kailua had only a few residents. Not until the introduction of automobiles and the opening of the Pali road did Kailua become a destination for Honolulu residents.

Old Pali Rd. & Horse Trail leading to the windward side of O‘ahu
(Courtesy Kaneohe Ranch Co.)
By the 1920's, wealthy Honolulu families had built weekend cottages on Kailua beach and the planned development of Lanikai homes began. There was little growth during the depression years that followed.

Zoning changes in 1937 made homes easier to build in Kailua. By the eve of World War II, there were 1,500 people living in Kailua, which was still mostly a recreation area for a weekend-only population. Kailua boasted an equestrian racetrack near what is now Kainui Street. Homes were concentrated near the beach. Beyond the beach area, the region was dominated by Harold Castle's Kaneohe Ranch. In the late-30's, Castle leased out Mokapu Peninsula ranch land to the US Navy. A naval air station (NAS) was built in 1939-41 and was home to amphibious patrol plane squadrons. The Kaneohe NAS was among the Japanese targets on the morning of Dec 7th, 1941. Following the attack, few noteworthy events in or near Kailua were recorded. Kailua remained a recreation area during the war, but included servicemen in addition to the Honolulu elite.

"Kailua Town" 1950's  (Courtesy Kaneohe Ranch Co.)

The post-war years saw rapid changes as Hawaii's economy and population both grew. Kailua's population increased four-fold to 6,000 by 1948 as developers began building more homes in Kailua. By the early 50's, Kaneohe Ranch sold or leased its land in Kailua as it realized the profit potential. Castle's development of the new community included many benevolent contributions to expand Kailua's infrastructure. Although the Naval Air Station closed in 1949, the Marine Corps reopened the same property as the Kaneohe Marine Corps Air Station in 1952, bringing in many servicemen, their families, and a substantial contribution to Kailua's economy. Kailua's population continued to grow through the 50's which, along with Kaneohe's growth, mandated the construction of the new Pali Highway. Kailua's population was 25,000 by 1960. By the 1970's however, Kailua had seen almost all available land developed and growth slowed. The population was 36,000 by 1980. Hawaii real estate prices exploded in the late 80's, and Kailua saw
significant inflation of home prices as it was a desirable community for foreign investors and new Mainland arrivals, as well as local residents. The consequence of high property prices was that only relatively affluent people were able afford Kailua homes after 1990. However, many existing homes have had additions to permit more family members to live in the same home, thus increasing the population density without building new homes. Today, Kailua remains a desirable suburban community characterized by both kama’aina and recent arrivals from the mainland. The adjacent Kaneohe Marine Corps Base Hawaii remains a significant part of the community.

The Latter-day Saints (LDS) missionaries first arrived in Hawaii in 1850. They traveled about the islands gaining converts and established small congregations known as branches. Records from the 19th century document missionary efforts and establishment of branches in O'ahu's windward communities of Waimanalo and Kaneohe, but not Kailua. It was not until after World War II that there were enough Kailua LDS residents to coalesce into a Kailua congregation.

Kailua Latter-day Saints, prior to having their own congregation, attended either the Kaneohe or Waimanalo Branches. It was not until 1946 when Lawrence Petersen, newly arrived from the mainland, initiated the first LDS meeting in Kailua. Having had previous church leadership experience, he knew what to do. On the first of October of 1946, the dependent Kailua Branch was established, consisting only of a Sunday School which was dependent upon the Kaneohe Branch for leadership and other Church functions. The Sunday School met Sunday mornings in a quonset hut at Kailua School (now Kailua Elementary School). Although the beginnings were modest, this Sunday School was the spark that initiated further growth and brought out the Latter-day Saints living in Kailua but who had not previously participated because of the long drive to Kaneohe. The congregation grew and by 1 June 1948, Kailua Branch became an independent branch, separate from the Kaneohe Branch. The Branch continued to hold Sunday School at Kailua School while Sacrament meeting was held Sunday evenings at 7:00 at the Kailua recreation center (where the Kailua Library now stands.) Typical Sunday meetings in 1950 saw only 13 people in attendance. Nevertheless, enough growth and optimism for the future existed to begin plans for a permanent meeting place. Plans for a chapel were finalized in 1954 and a chapel was completed in January of 1956, giving the Kailua Saints a true sense of place. At the time of the chapel completion, the branch became Kailua Ward. Six years later, in 1962, a second ward was established but it took 18 more years before Kailua Third Ward was established in 1980. Kailua’s population was quite stable by the 1990s. Similarly, the Kailua wards also reached a plateau of sorts; there was little growth since the community population stopped growing. The Marine Corps changed the Kaneohe Base according to national defense down-sizing and consolidation requirements by the late 1990s. The result was an increase in the number of military families with a slight increase in the number of LDS military families attending the Kailua wards.
The LDS church organizes geographic groups of wards into stakes. Over the years, as stakes have grown and reorganized, Kailua has belonged to the O‘ahu Stake, Honolulu Stake, and, since 1971, the Kaneohe Stake. Prior to the creation of the Kaneohe Stake, a substantial number of Kailua Latter-day Saints assisted in the administration and leadership of the Honolulu Stake, and traveled extensively over the Pali to fulfill their leadership duties.

**Church Life in the late 1940s**

Latter-day Saints were few but busy in Kailua. Sunday School meetings were held Sunday mornings at Kailua School (now known as Kailua Elementary School) while Sacrament meetings were held on Sunday evenings at the Recreation Center, where Kailua Library now stands. Attendance was modest, with numbers between 13 and 20; several non-members staffed positions such as music director and branch clerk. The greatest challenge was the lack of priesthood holders to adequately staff the necessary positions. Consequently, the branch president and his counselor would conduct meetings, administer and serve the sacrament, teach Sunday School and priesthood classes, and transport children to and from meetings. Families at that time included Peterson, Duker, Schimmer, Kamalani, Burton, Parker, Kanahele, Kahumoku, and Woffinden.

**A Place of Their Own**

The Kailua LDS experience of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s hinged upon a meeting place. As previously mentioned, Kailua Latter-day Saints first met in "borrowed" accommodations at Kailua School and the Kailua Community Center. While grateful for these places, the saints were desirous of having a place of their own. As the branch grew, leaders were quietly searching for a site to build a chapel. It was their good fortune that at this time Harold Castle's Kaneohe Ranch was developing Kailua town and was generously providing community infrastructure and offered a building site to the LDS Church, as well as to other churches. The details of this acquisition were recorded by Oahu Stake President Clissold at the time of the groundbreaking for the Kailua Chapel in December 1954 and is on file in the Kailua 2nd Ward Clerk's Office:

"I am happy to be here today and participate with you in the breaking of ground of the new Kailua Branch chapel. This is an auspicious occasion and one which will be recorded in the annals of the Church and live out memories for as long as we live.

"The members of the Kailua Branch are particularly fortunate in that the land comes to them as a gift through the generosity of Harold K. L. Castle. Perhaps you would be interested in a brief summary of the events leading up to the acquisition of this land.

"Several years ago Ralph E. Woolley, then President of the Oahu Stake, talked with Mr. Castle, his friend, about the possibility of obtaining a chapel in Kailua. Mr. Castle
designated a lot near the coconut grove which he indicated he would give to the Church. The branch membership was very small at that time and it was felt that sufficient manpower or money could not be raised to build a chapel. As time went on, the area around the proposed site became built up and Mr. Castle found it expedient to dispose of the land. At the end of 1951, the new Stake Presidency asked President Woolley about the possibility of contacting Mr. Castle again about the lot. He did this and then suggested that the President of the Stake see Mr. Castle personally. This I did in February of 1952. Mr. Castle was very gracious and said he would be very happy to donate sufficient land for a chapel in Kailua. He stated, however, that the building design and landscaping plan must meet the standards set by the Kaneohe Ranch Company, owners of the land. I explained that Mr. Burton, the Church architect, would be in Hawaii soon and that I would bring him to meet Mr. Castle. According to previous arrangement I took Brother Burton to Mr. Castle on March 8, 1952 and Mr. Castle took us on a tour of Kaneohe and Kailua areas.

"On this same day we met with the Branch Presidency (Daniel Kamalani, Milton Allen, Ben Dibble and Warren West) at the Kailua School and all came to this spot. Mr. Castle pointed out the surrounding boundaries of his land here and stated that he would give us whatever area we needed. It was estimated then that two acres would be required for a chapel, social hall and parking space. Mr. Castle stated he would take up the matter with his associates and suggested in the meantime that we draw preliminary sketches of the chapel. Brother Burton made general observations of the area and stated that he could design a chapel and classrooms that would cost in the neighborhood of $60,000 that would accommodate the present and immediate future branch membership.

"It was necessary to get authority from the Church to accept this gift of land and approval of the building project. This required the writing of many letters but was finally accomplished. Brother Burton was commissioned by the Church to draw plans and after several months sent a preliminary sketch. This was shown to Mr. Castle and his associates and approved. The branch worked out a financial program and it was agreed that construction could begin when the branch had raised $15,000.

"After several more months, Mr. Castle requested that plans for the building go forward immediately as he was desirous of having the chapel come along with the other developments in the neighborhood. Under this urgency the authorities of the Church granted a loan of $15,000 to the Kailua Branch in order that construction might begin. Final plans were received from Brother Burton at the first part of 1954, but when they were submitted to Mr. Castle they showed the building as occupying only part of the land and the balance of the property being reserved for future expansion. Mr. Castle felt that with the increase of the value of the land since the initial offer, he could not donate the full 95,000 square feet originally discussed and reduced the gift to about 56,000 square feet with a frontage of 235 feet on Kailua Road.

"Since the plans had been drawn up for a larger plot, negotiations were opened with
Mr. Castle for the purchase of additional land needed and also with the Bishop Estate for the acquisition of a triangular piece to the south which would serve in case Mr. Castle was unwilling to sell additional land or the price was prohibitive.

“Building operations which were expected to be started almost daily were postponed from time to time as these negotiations proceeded. It was necessary to get Mr. Castle’s approval of a new plot plan embracing the smaller area, and when this was obtained word had not yet come from Bishop Estate as to the possibility of purchasing its property.

“After another long delay, it was finally agreed that the plan of the building would be reversed and that the chapel would be built on the property donated by Mr. Castle with the social hall to be built in the future on the Bishop Estate land if and when it could be obtained. With this decision Brother Robertson was ready to start and built this shack which we are now using as a shelter from the rain.

“This, my brothers and sisters, brings us to this point (Dec 1954) in the history of the Kailua Branch land and chapel. It has been a long period of involved negotiations and I am grateful to our Heavenly Father for his blessings and direction and that we are finally to the actual point of construction. The membership of the Kailua Branch is small and for that reason great responsibility rests upon the Branch Presidency and the members. You will be required to make physical and financial sacrifices in the next few months, the like of which you have never made before for the Church. All this, however, will increase your faith and bring great blessings down upon your heads. It will also bring you a beautiful chapel in which you can meet with your family to worship the Lord and learn of His ways. I pray that He will bless you with fortitude and physical and mental strength as well as great faith to carry on this important task, and all this I do in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.”

The site itself was on the edge of town at that time, bordered by the Campos Dairy and a limestone quarry, which made for dusty and "fragrant" neighbors. As mentioned by President Clissold, the Church was not able to act fast enough on Castle’s offer and ended up with a smaller, triangular lot. The Church later tried to purchase additional Castle land where the Countryside Apartments now stand, but Castle would not sell. Subsequent to this, the Church acquired land on the opposite side, another triangular piece, by exchanging another piece of Church-owned land with Bishop Estate. Years later, in 1972, a third land acquisition was made when a small rectangular piece was purchased from Hawaiian Electric Company to expand the parking lot. What started out as free ended up being quite complicated and not so free. It should be noted that the first buildings on the site were two surplus Quonset huts purchased from Frank Fasi’s surplus to provide temporary storage for the construction project; eventually the quonset huts were pressed into classroom service and living accommodations for labor missionaries during the building of the cultural hall. Both were removed by the 1965-68 time frame.
The Kailua Chapel

Plans for a chapel were drawn up by the leading architect of the Church at that time, Harold W. Burton. This is the same man who designed the Hawaii Temple, along with Pope, in 1915 and the exquisite Honolulu Tabernacle in 1937. He was responsible for most, if not all, chapels built in Hawaii during the 50's. Burton designed four wooden chapels which were built in Hawaii but only the Kailua Chapel remains. Burton was strongly influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright, Asian and Pre-Columbian art, and had a strong "sense of place" for his buildings.

Kailua Chapel (349 Kailua Rd.) (Courtesy Mark James)

The Kailua Chapel was loosely specified to have an open and tropical atmosphere. Burton fulfilled that requirement by designing an open-sided chapel and adjacent rooms surrounding a garden courtyard. The chapel was constructed of wood, an affordable medium for Burton to execute some of his signature ornamental trim work, chiefly in the posts and lintels surrounding the courtyard. It was design with consideration for future expansion, as the original plans were only for a chapel, Relief Society Room and a few offices. A cultural hall and classroom wing came later. Additionally, the plans were drawn up prior to Castle withdrawing his offer for the full size lot. When the lot was subsequently reduced in size, the chapel plans had to be reversed to a mirror image of the original layout in order to adequately fit the property. A high technology feature for that time was the use of glue-laminated wood that formed the beams supporting the roof of the chapel. The use of
these beams was advertised by a local building supplier in a 1956 newspaper ad, featuring photos of the Kailua Chapel while under construction.

Groundbreaking for the chapel occurred on 8 December 1954 and construction began immediately, continuing through 1955 and finishing in January 1956. Construction was supervised by Russell Robertson, a member of the Oahu Stake High Council and professional builder. His full-time employees consisted of only two carpenters. The remaining labor consisted of volunteers from the Kailua Branch membership who would work on the chapel in the afternoons after their regular jobs and on Saturdays. Few of these volunteers had any construction experience but they were supervised by Alfred "Mustang" Gonzales who was a professional builder. While men were occupied with construction labor, women did landscaping and provided meals for the men. Once the chapel was completed, many of the same people were asked to provide similar labor for the construction of the Church College of Hawaii in Laie. It is a tribute to their diligent efforts and skillful supervision that the Kailua Chapel remained structurally sound and without noticeable defect 50 years after completion.

The chapel was completed in January 1956, at the same time that the Kailua Ward was formed from the branch. Most LDS Church buildings are dedicated at the time of completion, but dedication of the Kailua Chapel was not to occur for another 17 long years. Church policy mandated that buildings and land had to be free of debt prior to dedication; Kailua was heavily in debt and it still lacked significant features such as a cultural hall. There was a point in 1963 when the wards (Kailua II Ward was established in 1962) thought they were ready for dedication, but at the last minute, Church headquarters discovered that debt still encumbered the Kailua property. Continuing building expansion over subsequent years brought on additional expenses and postponed payoff of the debt.

The Cultural Hall

By the early 60’s, there were significantly more Latter-day Saints in Kailua, allowing the formation of Kailua Second Ward at the beginning of 1962. This increase of membership amplified the requirement for expanded facilities as well as increasing the population base from which to pay for it all. While their place to worship had been obtained, a place to socialize and build lives still had not fully materialized. Most LDS chapels have a cultural hall that predominantly features a basketball/volleyball court and a stage. These halls are heavily used for dances, socials, dramas, sports, dinners and many other miscellaneous activities that constitute the LDS lifestyle. Eight years after the Kailua Chapel was built, the cultural hall finally began.

Nothing is known of the architectural plans for this masonry structure, who made them or when. However, Jack Pierce, an older labor missionary with his family, was called to supervise two or three young labor missionaries who worked days. The day crew’s
efforts were augmented by volunteers from the two Kailua wards who worked evenings and Saturdays. Once again, "Mustang" Gonzales supervised the efforts of the volunteer laborers who largely had no building skills. These people did masonry, carpentry and roofing, working at heights to which they were not accustomed. Women prepared the building site which had numerous large rocks and haole koa bushes, prepared meals and occasionally worked alongside the men. (Sister Mathilda Gonzales was on the ladders installing the roof). However, not all labor was out of love; some was convict labor! A few youth from the nearby Youth Correctional Facility came and worked for short periods under an experimental arrangement made by a ward member. Brother Pierce recalls that working with the members of the two Kailua Wards was great. They were faithful and reliable, always turning out to help and being there when they were needed. The builders exhibited great faith; one instance occurred just prior pouring the concrete slab between the kitchen and the cultural hall. It appeared that rain was imminent, which would ruin the pour. Bishop Dean Jones asked "you're not going to pour in the rain are you?" The reply was "we have to pour today, so it will not rain." And it did not. Regardless of skill or motivation, the hall remains standing more than 40 years after its completion in July of 1965.

**The Classroom Wing**

Church programs involve a great deal of instruction, both on Sundays and throughout the week. Upon completion of the Cultural hall, plans were almost immediately drawn up to build more classrooms. By the early 60’s, the few classrooms of the original chapel building were woefully inadequate. Classes were being held in the kitchen, in the old quonset huts and anywhere space could be found, regardless of how unsuitable they were for instruction.

Ground was broken for the new classroom building on 22 Jan 1968. Over 4,000 hours of volunteer labor went into the project which was completed by October of that year. Nothing is known regarding the source of the plans for the building. By 1968, there were no longer any labor missionaries and apparently all labor was performed by ward members. By this time there were at least a few members who were professional builders, such as Edmund Char. Not everything about this project went flawlessly, though. A misunderstanding between the church appointed supervisor, Brother Lewellyn, and the ward members made for a difficult relationship, at least initially.

**Remodeling**

With the completion of the classroom building, the facilities appeared complete. But some deficiencies remained. As previously mentioned, the chapel was open-sided, designed to be cooled by the trade winds. When originally built, the location was on the
edge of town. Over the years, the town expanded bringing heavier traffic on the fronting Kailua Road and neighboring apartment buildings. Campos Dairy remained on the mauka side. The combined effect resulted in distracting Sunday Church Service from traffic noise, swatting mosquitoes, quarry dust, and the smell of cows and burning mosquito punk. Pregnant women were occasionally overcome by the smell of the dairy on kona wind days. The solution was to enclose and air condition the chapel, but church headquarters was reluctant to pay for it. The prayers of Kailua Latter-day Saints were answered on one particular Sunday when members of the Presiding Bishopric Office (PBO) were visiting from Salt Lake City. On this particular day, the kona winds brought in the dairy smells. During the course of the services, numerous hot-rodgers "burned rubber" at the stop light in front of the chapel and a record four fire trucks and ambulances wailed past the chapel. The PBO visitors agreed then and there that air conditioning would be installed.

Subsequently, plans were drawn up to give the chapel a major remodeling which began 1 May 1972. A new roof, enclosure of chapel, elimination of mothers' cry room, addition of back overflow area, addition of side pews, new carpeting and glass doors were all added to the chapel. The library was relocated, a classroom and clerk's office created, and an extension to the mauka end of the classroom building were made at this time. Additionally, a 0.31 acre area was purchased from HECO to expand the parking lot. It should be noted that some leaders had felt from the very beginning that the Kailua Chapel should have been able to accommodate more people. This remodeling was able to comfortably increase the number of pews under the same roof.

The remodeling was completed on schedule in early 1973. At long last the Kailua Chapel complex was done and clear of debt; it was time to finally dedicate it. This was accomplished on 13 May 1973 when Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles (and later President of the Church) came to Kailua and performed the dedication.

Later years saw additional changes. During the 1980's the cultural hall was enclosed and air conditioned. This came as a relief to the ward leaders as well as to the neighbors: when youth dances were held in the hall prior to air conditioning, the loud music frequently resulted in visits by the police answering complaints of the neighbors. Several young men performed Eagle Scout projects by making small additions, such as preparations for the flag pole or a concrete slab for a service area. Related to the flagpole, the chapel still possesses a 48-star US flag that had once flown, briefly, over the US capital. Oddly, the Kailua chapel lacks one of the new-found "symbols" located at most church buildings: a large satellite dish to receive television broadcasts from Salt Lake City.

Throughout the state of Hawaii, there is no other LDS Church building anything like the Kailua Chapel: built on land acquired from three different sources; constructed in stages over a 17 year period; built largely of volunteer labor; one of very few Burton designed chapels remaining; and the only wooden chapel in use on the island. The importance of these buildings might be subtle, but they become more significant as the story of the people who built them unfolds.
Experiences of the Saints

Building the physical facilities of the Kailua Chapel complex is one of the key experiences of the Kailua LDS. Another was their struggle to pay for all these structures. From the very beginning they were in debt. As previously mentioned, the original property was a gift from Kaneohe Ranch; but it was jeopardized due to the excessive amount of time it took to raise the money to begin building a chapel. LDS Church policy prior to the 1980s required that the local church wards or branches to come up with 50% of the expense of their buildings while Church Headquarters would pay the other 50%. In more recent years this policy has been modified so that local wards and branches no longer have such a burden.

Paying for it all was quite a burden. Expenses included the original chapel, the cultural hall, the classroom building, the parking lot extension and finally the major remodeling of 1972-73. The financial debt began prior to the erection of the chapel and continued into the early 70's. Methods of paying off the debt are interesting. Of course the most basic was to solicit branch/ward members for donations to the building fund, but with the small membership in the early years, that could not do it all. This led to a series of creative fund raisers. One of the earliest was the creation of the 1955 Oahu Stake Directory, which Kailua Branch organized and published. This directory sold advertising space between pages listing officers and members of each unit of the stake. The next dozen years or so saw an intense period of many projects. Sales oriented events aimed towards the community at large included numerous luaus and carnivals. One particular carnival during the sixties is a common memory among many of the old-timers. It was to be held on the grounds of Kailua field, next to Kailua elementary school using tents and equipment provided by E.K. Fernandez. The members had fasted the day before the event with faith that the carnival would be successful. On the evening before, it rained heavily. If the rain would continue on the day of the carnival, it would ruin their chances. But with a prayer in their hearts and eye on the sky, the carnival went on and was a total success. The sky was gray and the ground muddy, but it did not rain. Additional events were direct sales which included almost every kind of merchandise imaginable: bake sales, Portuguese sweet bread, Portuguese sausage, kulolo, huli huli chicken, animals as pets and much more. Money raising events aimed at the members included variety shows, dinners, concerts and other performances. The dinners were such that you donated food and then had the privilege of paying to eat it; another was the famous "dime-a-dip dinner". Movies would be shown at the church and sales would be generated from snacks and admission. Other activities were more spiritually oriented. Bishop Kamaouha, using the parable of the talents, gave each family a crisp, new, one dollar bill and asked them to increase it. It was then each family's responsibility, not the ward's, to make the increase. Some would just make a donation while others would have sales events of their own to increase that dollar.
It should be noted that while all of these events were a lot of work, one of the benefits was that it brought the members together, including many people who were less active. People were united and did what was asked of them, and had fun doing it. Financially though, while these events helped, they were not making progress fast enough towards elimination of the debt. What finally put them over the top was ward leaders obtaining pledges from members to pay off the entire amount. Although it took time and sacrifice, it worked and by the late sixties, the wards were in better shape. The 1972 remodeling brought on more expense. Bishop Heinz is said to have invited the members to dinner one evening, not knowing his intentions. After the dinner, the doors were closed and people could not leave until they made a commitment to pay. It worked and the debt was eliminated. The chapel, finally clear of monetary burdens, was dedicated by Elder Ezra Taft Benson in 1973.

**Fellowshipping and fun**

While the 50s, 60s and 70s were clearly marked by struggle to pay off the debts, there was more to life than debt. This period was known for unity, fellowship, and many activities to strengthen the youth. Such events were the Gold & Green Balls, ward speech festivals, "Miss & Her Mom" Parties, MIA Plays, fine arts exhibitions, Japanese Dinners, ward reunions, and numerous sports events. Ward competition in sports and roadshows occurred frequently, with Waimanalo Ward usually dominating the youth sports events. Bishop Don Austin was remembered for randomly choosing a family and with little notice ask them to live off of their food storage for the following week, with the prohibition of any shopping during that week. The stake president eventually heard about this and put a stop to it. Members were asked during the 1950s and early 1960s to provide labor to construction projects around the island. Additional service was frequently given at the welfare farms, first in Kaneohe-Waikalua where bananas were grown and later at Hauula-Kapaka tending corn and sweet potatoes.

**Military**

Separating the communities of Kailua and Kaneohe is the Mokapu Peninsula. In 1939 the US Navy leased the peninsula from Kaneohe Ranch to establish a naval air station (NAS) for patrol planes. It was fairly well developed by Dec 7th, 1941 when Japanese forces attacked, bringing war directly into Kailua. The war years brought many servicemen to Hawaii, including to the Kaneohe NAS. The first recorded LDS service men's meeting at the NAS occurred 27 August 1944 under the direction of Chaplain Milton Widdison. The services continued through Dec of 1945, and can be considered the first LDS services within the Kailua area. With the war over, the NAS was shut down completely by 1949.
War touched Kailua again during the Korean War. During this period, the Marine Corps required a "combined arms" facility where USMC ground and air forces could be co-located. In 1952, the Kaneohe Marine Corps Air Station was established on the grounds of the former Naval Air Station. This brought young servicemen to the Kailua community once again, and for the first time, service families, who quickly became part of the Kailua LDS community.

The Viet Nam war was felt in the following decade. One particular event was the mobilization and mass departure of Kaneohe-based Marines in 1965. The sudden departure of so many men and priesthood holders caused many problems for the wards by leaving many church positions vacant. Home teaching suddenly fell to very few available men who could do it.

The 70’s were characterized by "floats", USMC deployments to the Western Pacific aboard Navy ships, usually for a duration of six months. This made life difficult for families with their husbands/fathers routinely gone for such a long time. Additionally, these men were unable to hold substantial callings since they were seldom home long enough to fulfill callings. But not all servicemen were associated with the Marine base, since Kailua has been a desirable community within commuting distance of other bases. Tragedy occurred when Kailua Ward member, Air Force First Lieutenant Keith Strong bailed out from his distressed aircraft flying out of Japan on 16 January 1959; he was never found.

Far away war came home again in 1990 when Kaneohe Marines were mobilized for service in the Gulf War. Just as in 1965, numerous priesthood holders were gone overnight, leaving their families and callings behind. There were numerous families to be home taught, but few to do the home teaching. Fortunately, all of the Marines were home
within a few months. Those who saw combat had faith promoting experiences to relate. Since the inception of Kailua II Ward in 1962, the Marine Base has been within the boundaries of that ward. It has been the mutual benefit of both the civilian and military members of the ward over these many years. The civilians have demonstrated and taught the "aloha spirit" to the servicemen and families, while Marine families have brought a wide variety of experience that has benefited the civilian members. Some of those experiences happened here. One example is a helicopter crash on the base in 1977 when the LDS pilot was injured and burned. His rapid recovery was miraculous to those unfamiliar with priesthood blessings. The constant coming and goings of individual families has given Second Ward a degree of transient nature, but as one good family departs, another soon arrives to take their place.

**Challenges**

The Kailua Branch and Wards have had their share of challenges. Already mentioned were the financial difficulties. These were complicated with the small number of LDS in Kailua, particularly in the early days. The 60s and 70s were "fat" years with many members who were "anxiously engaged" in the work and enjoying themselves. But the 40’s and 50’s were lean years and required the few members to carry large burdens. The 90’s brought new membership challenges, particularly within Kailua Second Ward. The changing real estate market of the late 80s resulted in great inflation of home prices throughout Hawaii, and especially so in Kailua. The result was that very few families could afford to buy a home in Kailua. Additionally, the Marine Corps downsized and reduced the number of Marines and their families at the Marine Base during the early 1990s. At the same time, many older ward members, who raised their families in Kailua, moved away to be near their grown children and grandchildren on the mainland. The result was that the Kailua Wards experienced little or no net growth in their membership.

Challenges in earlier years included the Sunday distractions facing youth. Walking to church on Sunday mornings frequently meant a route via the beach with its ensuing distractions such as canoe paddling and swimming. Once at church, kids were lured away by the "adventure" of the adjacent quarry and empty fields. Another challenge was the cramped space prior to the completion of the classroom building, when classes were taught anywhere and everywhere, including in the kitchen.

Among the cumulative experiences of the Kailua LDS, several stand out. One well-intended attempt to raise money involved bringing canned pineapples to Kailua to sell. Unfortunately, the young man driving the truck experienced brake failure while coming down the Pali Highway. Approaching Castle Junction, he chose to drive up the right shoulder rather than colliding with the cars stopped at the red light. While going off to the right, he struck a phone booth which, unfortunately, was occupied. The booth was knocked over, the truck tipped over and the load of canned crushed-pineapple was spilled.
The most tragic experience was the death of the Touchette family beginning on 25 August 1991. An arsonist set their house on fire during the evening; children Kayla and Joshua perished in the fire that night while father Michael died a month later of his burns. This crime remains one of the most notorious in Hawaii’s history.

Equally saddening is the spiritual loss of members from the Kailua wards. Some members drifted away from the faith. And there were a few men who served as branch presidents, bishops and other positions of responsibility who subsequently fell away after years of dedicated service.

Perhaps the most dramatic experience to occur within the Kailua Chapel occurred on 30 April 1963. On this day Sister Ella Brunt Kamauoha stood during the fast and testimony meeting to bare her testimony. She spoke of a dream in which she had heard her father (referring to Heavenly Father) calling for her, at which point she collapsed to the floor. An ambulance soon arrived but she was dead on arrival at Castle Hospital.

Expansion

Kailua Branch became Kailua Ward in 1956; Kailua Second Ward was formed in 1962, and Kailua Third Ward was established in 1980. The neighboring community of Waimanalo expanded from one to two wards on the same day that Kailua Third ward was established in 1980. However, Waimanalo Second Ward was later realigned with the Maunawili area of Kailua, becoming the Olomana Ward on 16 May 1999. The Kailua area was served by four wards as of 2006: Kailua First, Second, and Third Wards, and Olomana Ward.

Keolu Hills Chapel

The growth of the Church in Kailua was sufficient enough that by the mid 1980’s Church leaders desired to acquire an additional Kailua property. Kailua had been built out to its geographic limits by the late 1970s so finding a property large enough to accommodate a church was challenging in the mid 1980s. Local and Salt Lake City Church leaders recognized a rare opportunity when the 10 acre former base yard of Lone Star Hawaii Properties, located at the corner of Keolu Drive and Kanapuu Street in the Enchanted Lakes area, became available. Acting with speed, 1.1 million dollars cash was paid and the deal was closed in less than 45 days, in December 1986. Some years passed before the Church was ready to build and in the meantime the property was used for garden plots. By the early 1990s, when the Church was ready to build, community opposition to growth or development of any kind delayed city approval for chapel
construction. The Kailua wards and stake leadership exerted considerable effort to ease the concerns of neighborhood residents and eventually opposition dwindled to a single individual on the Kailua Neighborhood Board.

Once the county approvals were granted, the Church had gone to standardized building plans: the Heritage design for chapels, and the Legacy design for stake centers. The Heritage design was chosen for the Keolu Hills Chapel, which is now common throughout North America, and is the same design as the Wahiawa (Oahu) Chapel. Ground was broken for the new chapel in mid 2001 and construction of the wooden frame building was completed in fall of 2002. The first services were held 13 Oct 2002, and it was dedicated the following week, 20 Oct 2002, by Elder Duane B. Gerrard of the North America West Area Presidency. The community that originally opposed the chapel now appreciates the chapel’s beauty and regard it as an asset to the community.

When permission was initially obtained from Church headquarters to acquire the Keolu Hills property, it was conditioned upon selling the existing Kailua Road property. Best efforts were made to market that property and a bona fide developer held the purchase contract for a couple of years before defaulting. By that time, and before construction of the Keolu Hills Chapel, both the local leaders and Church headquarters agreed to keep and continue to use both chapels. The Kailua Chapel remains in service fifty years after its completion.

**Conclusion**

The experiences of most Kailua Latter-day Saints over the past sixty years have been profoundly positive but seldom dramatic. The Church is a place for individuals to gain personal experience a little bit at a time and that makes the historian’s role challenging, as the undramatic experiences are seldom recorded or even remembered. The histories of properties and buildings are relatively easy to obtain from official records. The bulk of Kailua LDS experiences have seldom been recalled as distinct, individual events but rather as pieces of a greater overall experience. For the Kailua Latter-day Saints, the whole has been greater than the sum of the parts.

**Kailua LDS Chronology:**

1935 26 Jun: Oahu Stake formed
1937 Kailua residential zoning changed, easier to build homes in Kailua
1939 Kaneohe Naval Air Station established
1940 Kailua population: 1500
1944 27 Aug: First LDS servicemen’s meeting held on Naval Air Station
1946 1 Oct: Kailua Sunday School established as a dependent branch of Kaneohe Independent Branch
1948 1 Jun: Independent Kailua Branch formed  
   Kailua population: 6000
1949 Kaneohe Naval Air Station closed 
1950 Castle Ranch approached for land to build chapel  
   Kailua population: 7740
1952 Jan: Kaneohe Marine Corps Air Station established  
   Feb: Harold Castle again approached for chapel site
1954 2 Mar: Land deal closed  
   8 Dec: Chapel groundbreaking ceremony
1955 28 Aug: Kailua becomes part of newly formed Honolulu Stake
1956 15 Jan: Kailua Ward is formed  
   Late Jan: Chapel is completed
1959 Pali Highway tunnels completed, allowing more growth for Kailua
1960 Kailua population: 25,000
1962 7 Jan: Ward splits into "Kailua Ward" and "Kailua II Ward"
1964 Construction of Cultural Hall begun
1965 Jul: Cultural Hall completed
   Viet Nam war mobilizes many Marines from Kailua 2nd Ward  
   Nov: Planning for classroom building begun
1967 29 Jun: 0.65 acre acquisition from Bishop Estate closed
1968 22 Jan: Groundbreaking for classroom building  
   7 Apr: First televised General Conference session available on TV
14 Sep: Classroom building completed
1971 21 Nov: Kailua wards become part of newly established Kaneohe Stake
1972 19 Jan: acquisition of 0.31 acre from HECO finalized, used for parking lot  
   1 May: Chapel renovation begun
1973 Jan: Chapel renovation completed  
   13 May: Chapel dedicated by Ezra T. Benson, Quorum of the Twelve.
1974 8 Nov: Kailua Ward changes name to "Kailua 1st Ward"
1980 31 Jan: Kailua and Waimanalo wards split, forming three Kailua and two Waimanalo wards  
   Kailua population: 36,000
1987 Kailua 1st ward moves to Waimanalo Chapel after Waimanalo wards are consolidated.
1990 Sep: Kailua 2nd ward Marines ship out for Gulf War
1995 22 Oct: Waimanalo Ward shares Kailua Chapel with Kailua 2nd and 3rd Wards while Waimanalo Chapel renovation takes place.
1999 16 May: Kailua 1st ward returns to Kailua Chapel  
   16 May: Olomana Ward established, meets at Waimanalo chapel
2002 Oct: Keolu Hills Chapel completed, occupied, dedicated
Kailua LDS Church Leaders:

Kailua Branch 1 Jun 1948:
Charles Burton, Charles Woffindin 1st Counselor, Harry Keaweehu Sr. 2nd Counselor
Daniel K. Kamalani 20 Jun 50, John Kanaeaupuni 1st, Ed Ludloff, 2nd Nov 1950, Feb 1952:
Milton Allen 1st, Ben Dibble 2nd, Richard Davenport, Jr, John H. Morris 1st, 26 Apr 1953,
later: Hugo D. Patterson 1st, Daniel Kamalani 2nd, 6 Feb 56: William Amona 1st, Solomon Kane 2nd.

Kailua Ward 13 Jan 1956:
Hovey Aldous Lambert, 1st Bishop, set apart 5 Feb 56 by Spencer W. Kimball, William
Koomelani Amona, 22 Jul 56, Robert Reed Detton, 18 Aug 57

Kailua 2nd 7 Jan 1962:
Theron D. Stewart, 28 Jan 62 Everett L. Rogers, 31Dec 61 R. Dean Jones, 14 Apr 63 Garner
D. Wood 6 Oct 63, Andrew N. Kamauoha Jul 65, Donald S. Austin 2 May 65, Wade W. McCall
6 Feb 72, Don Heinz 19 Dec 71, Blaine F. Bradshaw 5 Jan 75, Darryl Rose 22 May 77.

Kailua 3rd Feb 1980:
Glen A. Wilcock 77, John W. Welton 17 Oct 82, Bill Coates Feb 80, William Wilson 26 Feb 78,
Alfred L. Gonzales Aug 84, Meinert MacKenzie Sep 85, Robert Uyehara Sep 84, Darl Gleed
12 Jun 88, Richard Holokahi 89, Henry Vincent May 89, John Connelly Sep 94, Ken Gibson
May 93, Wayne Hikida Jan 91, Ed Motosue Sep 2000, Lester Tamashiro Nov 97, Scott
Whiting May 92, Mike Holland 12 Mar 2004, Dean Nakamaejo Aug 2000, Scott Morgan Jun

Kailua has belonged to the following stakes, under these Stake Presidents:

Oahu Stake established 30 Jun 1935
Ralph Woolley (Jun 1935 - Sep 1951)
Edward Clissold (Sep 1951 - Mar 1963)

Honolulu Stake established 28 Aug 1955
Jay A. Quealy Jr. 1955-1962
Max W. Moody 1962-1971

Kaneohe Stake established 21 Nov 1971
Robert Finlayson 21 Nov 1971-1975
Alva Robert Schutte 1975-1985
Don Heinz 18 May 1985-1992
Scott Whiting May 2001-
Notable Ward Members:
* Patricia Petersen Pinegar, General Primary President 1995, as a child she was a member of Kailua Branch in 1946-48, her father organized the first Sunday School.
* Harry & Louise Brooks, Hawaii Temple President & Matron 1965-71
* Robert & Beth Finlayson, Hawaii Temple President & Matron 1982-86
* Diana Hansen, aka Diana Hansen Young, painter
* Morgan White, aka "Pogo Poge" of KGMB TV's "Checkers & Pogo" show
* Richard Kwak, Japan Sendai Mission President during the late 1970's

Significant visitors to Kailua Wards:
* Apostle Spencer W. Kimball set apart Bishop Lambert in 1956.
* Victor L. Brown, second counselor to Presiding Bishop, and later the Presiding Bishop, in 1962.
* Harold B. Lee, Apostle and later President of the Church, came to dedicate chapel but discovered it was still in debt just prior to arriving; could not dedicate it. He visited chapel anyway, and dedicated Lanakila chapel same day, 16 Aug 1963.
* Ezra Taft Benson, Apostle and later President of the Church, dedicated the chapel in May 1973.
* Gordon B. Hinckley, Apostle and later President of the Church, occasionally attended church meetings while visiting his daughter and ward-member Kathryn Barnes 1975-76.17

Bibliography

Unto the Islands of the Sea, R. Lanier Britsch, Deseret Book, Salt Lake City, UT, 1986

Interviews in person, by phone, or by mail: