

Kauai Chinese Heritage Society 快怡島華裔協會

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“The Pavilion of Happiness” on the campus of Kauai Community College; completed in 1990, destroyed by Hurricane Iniki in 1992, restored in 1995, and refurbished again in 2000

Mission: To foster understanding of the Chinese heritage by bringing together Chinese and other ethnic groups in the community, and offering programs focused on developing knowledge of Chinese culture and customs.

History: Originally known as the Kauai Chinese Club, this social club was open to anyone of Chinese ancestry. There was no formal structure and there were no officers; people would call each other to get together to cook and play mahjong, and to celebrate festivals such as the Mid-Autumn Festival and the Chinese New Year. As the gatherings for feast days grew larger, people began to request more formal programs presenting the customs and culture of China, and the new title, the Kauai Chinese Heritage Society, was adopted by unanimous consent.

In 1988, the State of Hawai‘i convened a Bicentennial Committee under each of the four mayors of Hawai‘i, to prepare for the celebration in 1989 of the 200th anniversary of the arrival of Chinese immigrants to the islands. The mayor of Kauai appointed Violet Hee chair of the Chinese Bicentennial Kauai County Committee, and Hee in turn solicited the help of the Kauai Chinese Heritage Society. On March 5, 1988, the Society elected officers and drew up a constitution and by-laws. A month later, on April 4, the general membership ratified these by-laws, but amended them to offer member status to anyone interested in Chinese culture. The Society was incorporated on September 16, 1988, and received confirmation of its tax exempt status on March 23, 1989. The by-laws of the Society were amended once again on February 24, 1995.

Activities

To celebrate the Chinese Bicentennial in 1989, the Society participated in the following events: sandalwood replanting in Kokee; a cultural fair featuring Chinese ballet dancers, Chinese opera, cooking demonstrations, and displays of Chinese plants, condiments, groceries, and calligraphy; a year-long exhibit of Chinese artifacts at the Kauai Museum; a workshop introducing narcissus water culture; a forum on Chinese and Hawaiian herbs; and a demonstration of Chinese memorial service rites conducted by a Daoist priest at the Chinese cemetery. The Society also helped raise funds to construct a Chinese gazebo, called the Kwai Yi Ting (快速亭 *Kuaiyiting*, “Pavilion of Happiness”) on the campus of the Kauai Community College as a gift to the University of Hawai‘i system.

For ongoing activities, the Society serves as the official custodian of the Park Hook Tong cemetery, located at the junction of Kekaha and Waimea, which had been established in 1896 as the burial place for Chinese laborers who could not return home. The land had been made available by Valdemar Knudsen, the agent of the Hawaiian monarch. It was heavily used by members of the plantation families of Kekaha and Waimea. After Hurricane Iniki devastated Kauai on September 11, 1992, Society members went to the cemetery to restore altars, tablet crosses and the pavilion.

The Society celebrates the Chinese New Year by presenting the lion dance, setting off firecrackers, and bringing in troupes of Chinese performers from Honolulu, all in tandem with a seven course Chinese dinner. The celebration is open to members of the general public.



Two views of the commemorative stele erected by the “Pavilion of Happiness”. The front bears the inscription: “KWAI YI TING honors the early Chinese pioneers who inspired the Chinese families to integrate their heritage and customs with a rainbow of people in the development of Hawaii. KWAI YI TING Pavilion of Happiness is a memento celebrating 200 years of the arrival of the Chinese to Hawaii: 1789-1989.”

Association presidents

1988-89	Hong Min Hee
1990-92	Teresa Yee Kunter
1993-94	Koon Ye Ching
1995-pres.	Violet L. Hee

Membership: The Chinese population on Kauai is sparse. It is being bolstered by a number of recent immigrants from Taiwan who have opened businesses on the island. Currently, there are approximately 40 active members in the Society.

Sources: UCS directory and correspondence with Violet Hee.