The Waialae Building

Before any of the land known as Kaimuki was owned by the United States government, the majority of it, around 324 acres, was possessed by William Lunalilo who acquired it though Kamehameha III in 1848. It sold for $2,325 in 1884 to Daniel Paul Isenberg. In addition to the land that his family had previously Isenberg’s property ranged from around Kapahulu Avenue to Kahala Beach. Over one hundred years ago, the land district of Kaimuki was purchased from Isenberg. 20,000 dollars was spent by one of Hawai’i’s first real estate firms, Gear Lansing & Co., to purchase 520 acres on the east side of Oahu. What was envisioned for the kiawe covered red dirt district was a residential area for the upper class of Hawai’i. The arid land drew little attention from prospective buyers, and instead remained sparsely populated until the early 1900’s.

With the down town district booming in the early 1900’s, there was little need to travel outside China Town. Then, with the devastating China Town fire, there was need for local merchants to relocate. With many store-owners taking on a great loss, it was important to find an area which offered opportunity for expansion as well as affordable land. The many unoccupied of Kaimuki offered promise and hope for those relocating shop owners. With incoming business, people began to see reason to move into the new district. A street car line installed in 1903 up which ran from Koko Head to Kapahulu
Ave. helped to usher in residents and support the growing businesses. Then the price of land along Willhemina Rise dropped to a mere eight cents per square foot for land, and corner lots went for nine. Since then, many shops have come and gone; some have managed to stay in business while the majority have seen the end of their days. Two lucky shops who have traversed hard times into today are Kaimuki Dry Goods, who claims to have the state’s widest array of fabric and who is located on 144 10th Ave., which has been standing strong for seventy-six years and also Harry’s Music, located on 3457 Waialae Ave., which was established in 1946.

The land that the Waialae Building stands on has been previously occupied by the Kaimuki Theater which was erected in the early 1920’s and opened to the public in the February of 1922. Residents of Kaimuki had rallied against the theatre’s somewhat pornographic movie selection, but until 1982 the building remained standing. Its closing was on no part due to the protestor’s efforts, but rather due to a storm which inflicted significant damage to the building’s roof.

Today, the land is home to a four story, Spanish-colonial revival style building, built in 1994, called The Waialae Building, but also known to some as the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Building. Mauka, behind it, is a public parking lot and residential areas. Makai, or towards the ocean, of the Waialae Building is Queen Liliokalani Elementary. Ewa, westward, of the building is Goodwill, mom and pop stores, and some residential areas. Towards the Kahala side of the building is residential and the freeway on-ramp.

The purpose of the building, originally intended to be used as a mini warehouse, is for mixed-use. Within the four stories lays a variety of different entrepreneur
endeavors. Naturally, there is a branch of The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation residing here, as well as The American Liver Foundation, a number of different dentists who offer a number of services including, but not limited to, teeth bleaching and cosmetic surgery to enhance your smile, a couple of eyesight and lasic-vision centers, one of which is acclaimed to be "the best on Oahu"; two or so reality agents, The Caring For Life Foundation, Aiello Development Group, Kipco, Cosmos Designs and Cosmos Jewelry, Hawai’i State Federal Credit Union, and the frequently talked about restaurant, 3660 On The Rise.

Upon walking up to the building, one is greeted by the massive, marble archway on which a plaque is mounted and states: Halau Hana O Kaimuki/A place where people gather...to create...to build...in Kaimuki/given by Reverend Abram Akaka. To the left of the plaque is the entrance to 3660 On The Rise, a restaurant serving pan-Pacific cuisine and, on some nights, live jazz entertainment. Across of 3660 is Hawai’i State Federal Credit Union. These two establishments, as well as a public lobby and several banquet rooms, are the only areas which are open to the public.

As you walk through the marble arch entrance and through the glass doors leading to the lobby within, you see a rotating statue of two dolphins, which are entwined. This sculpture is characteristic of the local artist, Wyland, but there is no plaque attributing it to his hands. Walking around the lobby, one can travel only a few feet in a circle, giving you a wonderful sight of the directory, inside the Hawai’i State F.C.U., and then to a directory. The elevator is quite misleading, and, unless you have appointments on the upper floors, will take you nowhere; the highlighted red floor buttons announcing to the every day visitor that next stop: out the elevator doors to where you just came.
In total, this building has 36,000 sq ft with an assessed value of $1,487,500. The land which the building rests on is approximately 1.34 sq ac with an assessed value of $641,700. Annually, a near $19,000 is dished out to pay for taxes. The owner and tax payer is 3900 CORP.