Queen Emma Summer Palace
"Hanaiaikamalama"

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Queen Emma Summer Palace is nested in the cool surroundings of Nuuanu and served as a retreat from the dust and bustle of Honolulu for Queen Emma and her family. Today it is a museum dedicated to the preservation of Hawaiian history and to the Queen’s legacy. It is cared for by the Daughters of Hawaii through various grants and donations.

The Palace is situated on land named Kaukahoku in Nuuanu Valley. It was through this land that Kamehameha the Great marched through during what would become the Battle of the Pali in April 1795. The battle resulted in his unifying the Hawaiian Islands. In a coincidence, Kamehameha was aided by foreigners, including John Young, Queen Emma’s grandfather, who provided the cannons used in the battle (Swenson, 6). The land was then leased to U.S. Consul Henry A. Pierce in 1841 by Governor Kekuanaoa. He named the property “Beleview” but sold it to John George Lewis in 1848 for $800.

Lewis was born in Hawaii and was a successful merchant and the heir to his mother’s estate. Because no records exist about the building of the house, no plans or permits, family tradition stated that the house frame was cut in Boston and shipped to Hawaii (Swenson, 7). When in Hawaii, Honolulu architect-builder Vincent Young was most likely employed to construct the home being one of
the few architect-builders in the city.

According to Glenn Mason of Mason Architects, the consultants to the Daughters of Hawaii, there is no physical evidence that the lore is true. However, there are other Honolulu buildings that make it plausible. The wood framed Mission House, built in 1821, was the first wood framed building built in Hawaii and was imported, with its timber pre-cut and pre-fitted, in Boston. The building materials for Washington Place, built circa 1843, were also imported from Boston.

When Lewis decided to move to Boston he sold the land and the home to John Young II in 1850 for $6000. Young renamed the home “Hanaiaakamalama” after a favorite family homestead in Kawaihae, Hawaii (Swenson, 7). It translates into “foster child of the god Kalama,” Kalama being a family protector god. When he died in 1857, Young bequeathed Hanaiaakamalama to his niece Emma, who was now Queen.

Queen Emma was born Emma Naea in Honolulu on January 2, 1836, the daughter of a British aristocratic woman and a Hawaiian high chief. She became the hanai child of Dr. and Mrs. T.C. and Grace Rooke, her mother’s sister who had no children of their own. She grew up learning British manners and culture but retained a strong relationship and concern for the Hawaiian people. Queen Emma was educated in the Chief’s Children School where she would meet her future husband, Alexander Liholiho. Liholiho was a bachelor king until they married in 1866, in an Anglican ceremony at Kawaiahao Church. Two years later they celebrated the arrival of Albert, the only prince and heir.
The family enjoyed the Palace, especially during the extremely hot weather since both the King suffered from asthma. After the untimely death of Prince Albert in 1862 and King Liholiho’s in 1863, Queen Emma spent more time at Rooke House. She did continue to entertain at the house on occasion, most notably for Albert Edward, Duke of Edinburgh in 1869 and some two-hundred guests in honor of Princes Philip and August of Coburg Gotha, grandsons of Louis-Philippe of France. She also traveled extensively to Europe and America, finding new commonalities with her old friend Queen Victoria, who welcomed her to Windsor Castle. Queen Emma died in 1885.

The Summer Palace was modeled in the Greek Revival style. It has a formal plan arrangement, wide central hall, high ceilings and floor-length hinged, in-swinging shuttered casement window. The home measures 50'-8" across and 73'-6" in depth and has one-story over a basement. The roof style in hipped over the main portion of the home and gabled over the rear lanai that was converted to a room. The entrance lanai consists of five bays with fluted Doric, hollow wood columns 13'-8" high. A transom and side lights fame the hinged, swing-in French front door, and there are fluted pilaster between the side lights and doors. The doorways and window openings are framed by a distinctive moulded trim. The large single room in the rear of the home, also known as the Duke of
Edinburgh Room, was converted from a lanai in 1869, to prepare for the reception of the Duke during a visit to Hawaii. It is the only room with wall-to-wall carpeting while all the other rooms have board floors covered in lauhala (Hawaii Survey, 1-5).

The kitchen was a small structure apart from the house. Baths were taken through large tubs brought into the bedrooms by servants and filled with buckets of hot and cold water. Three outhouses served the occupants, one reserved for the King and Queen, one for guests, and another for servants (Swenson, 8).

Around the house grew ferns and natural flora. It was also heavily wooded. A formal garden was planned by esteemed Danish landscape architect H. Augustus de Holstein and included a pond in the front of the house spanned by a rustic, arched bridge. The gardens around the back of the house also included a large fernery, vegetables, and fruits.

Today many of these structures do not remain. The kitchen area is now a rock-laid patio. The outhouses have given way to modern toilet facilities. The fernery was overgrown and the pond filled in. Two additions were made, a gift shop and an adjacent meeting house available for public use through the Daughters.

After the Queen died, the Palace was in major disrepair and heavily in debt. The profit from selling
the furniture was still only able to cover a small part of the outstanding accounts. The land and house were put at auction and were bought by the Hawaiian government on August 1890 for $8000 (Tiahrt, 3).

In 1906, the government announced that they would resell that land after plans for a water filtration plant failed. Due to large public outcry the land was instead reserved for a public park in 1911. The large disrepair, however, made it almost inevitable that the house had to be torn down. Until, in 1914, the Daughters of Hawaii stepped in to preserve the home. In 1915 the home and part of the land was ceded to them. They immediately began collecting donations for repairs that included the entire roof and ceiling woodwork that was thoroughly eaten by termites. Occasional repairs continue to this day and have recently included a repainting of the home after utilizing modern technology to see through six previous coats of paint on the house, all the way to the original coat color. The Palace is now a museum and is on the National and Hawaii Register of Historic Places.
References

Books

Publications


Other