Kapuaiwa Hale: A Sign of Foreign Influence in the Islands

It is a largely unknown structure among many of the prominent buildings in downtown Honolulu, but Kapuaiwa Hale has stood in Honolulu since 1884. It is hard to understand why Kapuaiwa Hale is so often overlooked when discussing significant architecture in Honolulu. One reason may be that it sits on Queen Street, while most of the other historic buildings in the area are on King Street. It is a bit off the beaten path, but it deserves a closer look than it has been given in the past. Kapuaiwa Hale, along with Ali'iolani Hale, is representative of the emergence of influx of European architecture in the Hawaiian Islands as there was more travel between the islands and the United States and European countries.

Kapuaiwa Hale is located at 426 Queen Street in downtown Honolulu directly behind Ali'iolani Hale. It serves as a judiciary building, as it houses the Intermediary Court of Appeals, bail bonds, community outreach programs, and a state of the art video teleconference center. Built in a Neo-Classical Revival style it, along with many other buildings in the area, represent the architectural styles brought to Hawaii from Europe and the United States during the late 1800's. The government buildings in downtown Honolulu built during this period represent the
initial influences of the Europe and the United States not only in terms of architecture, but the influence of Europe and the United States on the government of the Hawaiian Islands.

Kapuaiwa Hale was named for Prince Lot Kapuaiwa, who became Kamehameha V in 1863. Prince Kapuaiwa was born on December 11, 1830 and his mother is the daughter of Kamehameha the Great. Prince Kapuaiwa and his brother, Alexander Lunalilo, who became Kamehameha IV traveled extensively in Europe and the United States from 1849-1850. They traveled there under the care of Dr. Garrit Parmele Judd, minister of finance, on a diplomatic mission to France, Great Britain, and the United States. The two princes served as secretaries for Judd and both kept extensive journals. They met Presidents in both France and the United States as well as many other important political figures throughout Europe and the United States. Through these experiences away from the island the Princes gained skills and ideas that would carry over into their respective reigns as King. They were both vehemently anti-American. This is probably for a number of reasons. Firstly, their largest foreign population was American. Secondly, they had a bad experience with racism on a train in Washington D.C. They were both very concerned with keeping Hawaii an independent nation.

Despite their concern with keeping Hawaii independent from the United States, they did copy architectural styles from both the United States and in

1 www.hawaiifreemason.org/resources/prince_lot.asp
Europe. Kamehameha V sponsored the building of the Royal Mausoleum in 1865, 'Iolani Barracks in 1870 and the Kamehameha V Post Office in 1871, which was the first pre-cast concrete building in Honolulu. Many other prominent buildings were initiated or completed during Kalakaua's reign Ali'iolani Hale in 1874, Lunalilo Tomb in 1876, 'Iolani Palace in 1882 and finally Kapuaiwa Hale in 1884. Kalakaua traveled extensively during his reign as well where he picked up ideas concerning architecture. Kamehameha IV and V as well as Kalakaua all had a profound influence on architecture in Hawaii.

Kaupuaiwa Hale was built in 1884 in a Neoclassical Revival Style. It was constructed of concrete blocks and stands two stories high. Relatively few changes have been made to the basic structure of the building over the past one hundred and twenty years. The building, although it is not very well known, is very important in terms of the impact it had on the architectural design of downtown Honolulu.
As is evident from the images above taken during the HABS/HAER survey in 1966\(^2\) this building was meant to be a symbol for the powerful government that existed in Hawaii. Kamehameha V was known for ruling with a strong hand. This building, along with the other government structures in the area gave the feeling that they represented the power of the Hawaiian monarchy.

This structure was built by George Lucas in 1884 and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973.\(^3\) Many of these buildings downtown were listed on the National Register during this same period including the Kamehameha V Post Office, and Aliʻiolani Hale, as well as Iolani Palace. As a group these buildings represent the influence of Europe and of the United States on Hawaii. Although Kamehameha V did not think that his people were ready for democracy, these buildings were derived from cultures in which democracy was the choice form of government. While Kamehameha V was anti-annexation, he and those who came after him began to pave the way from democracy to creep into Hawaiian culture.

Democracy eventually made its way to Hawaii, and through statehood these buildings stand as symbols of the first European and American influences in Hawaii in terms of government. Throughout the years all of these buildings have had parts of them rebuilt or reconstructed to keep up with the changing

\(^2\) www.cr.nps.gov/habshaer/coll/
\(^3\) www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com
needs of the people using them and also to repair damage the buildings incur as a result of the everyday stresses that were inflicted upon them by the people occupying these structures.

In 2000 Kapuaiwa Hale underwent a massive re-roofing project to repair damage that had occurred over the years. As is evident from the pictures above, the project repaired the crumbling railing that lines the roof as well as fixing leaks that caused water damage throughout the upper floor of the structure. The project cost $160,500 and was done by Haleakala Investment Company. The exterior of the building was cleaned to get rid of mold and dirt that had accumulating on the structure over the years. More recently, in 2004 the building underwent interior renovations, making space for a state of the art video teleconference center. Stan's Contracting was the company that completed this

4 www.state.hi.us/dags/publicworksdiv/awards_main.html
project. This project left the outside of the structure unchanged while making just
very minimal changes to the interior of the structure.\footnote{www.hawaii.gov/pwd/pwd_db/construction_awards/view_db_2003}

This building is very significant to the history of Honolulu. Although it can
often be overpowered by other buildings with more fame such as Ali`iolani Hale,
Iolani Palace, the Kamehameha V Post Office, or The Mission Houses, this is still
a very important building to the history of Honolulu. Kapuaiwa Hale is important
in terms of its concrete block construction, which was still relatively new and
innovative at the time. It is also important in that it shows its connection with
European fashion in terms of architecture and politics. These ventures by Prince
Kapuaiwa and his brother to other continents and the influx of foreign visitors to
the island are representative of the larger issue of colonization. As American and
European interest grew in the Hawaiian Islands, many Hawaiians, including
Kapuaiwa resisted the proliferation of Americans in the island. The arrival of
European styles of architecture used in buildings such as Kapuaiwa Hale is part
of the beginning of eventual take over of the Hawaiian Islands by America, and
its eventual entry into statehood.

www.hawaiifreemason.org/resources/prince_lot.asp

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