

HISTORIC HAWAII FOUNDATION

To: Gerald Ida, Chair
Susan Remoaldo, Vice Chair
Kaua'i Historic Preservation Review Commission

From: Kiersten Faulkner
Executive Director, Historic Hawai'i Foundation

Meeting Date: Thursday, August 17, 2023; 1:30 p.m.
4444 Rice Street, Suite 300
Līhu'e, Hawai'i 96766

Subject: **Church at Kōloa - Proposed New Additions and Alterations**
3269 Po'ipū Road
Kōloa, HI 96756
TMK: 2-8-010:008-0000

On behalf of Historic Hawai'i Foundation (HHF), I am writing with comments and recommendations related to the Church at Kōloa (aka Old Kōloa Church) and the proposed new additions and emergency exits.

Interests of Historic Hawai'i Foundation

Historic Hawai'i Foundation is a statewide nonprofit organization established in 1974 to encourage the preservation of historic buildings, sites and communities on all the islands of Hawai'i. As the statewide leader for historic preservation, HHF works to preserve Hawai'i's unique architectural and cultural heritage and believes that historic preservation is an important element in the present and future quality of life, environmental sustainability, and economic viability of the state.

Identification of Historic Properties and Context

The **Church at Kōloa**, also known as the Old Kōloa Church, is listed in the KHPRC Inventory of historic sites.

The Church is not listed on either the Hawai'i or the National Registers of Historic Places, although evidence suggests that it would be eligible under the following categories:

- (A) That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to broad patterns of our American or Hawaiian history;
- (B) That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
- (C) That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic value.

The following dates are significant to the history of the church:

- The first [protestant] missionaries arrived in Kauaʻi in the year 1820. They were brought to the island by George Kaumualiʻi, son of King Kaumualiʻi, the last ruling monarch of Kauaʻi before unification.ⁱ
- The Reverend Peter J. Guilick organized the mission in Kōloa in April 1835.ⁱⁱ Founded in the same year, the Ladd & Company's Kōloa sugar plantation was the first successful large-scale sugar manufacturing enterprise in the Hawaiian Islands.ⁱⁱⁱ
- In 1837, the mission built a chapel on the premises where the current church now stands. Reports say that the early congregation numbered anywhere from from nine to 1500.^{iv}
- The chapel served the congregation until 1857 when it was destroyed in a gale.
- In 1859 Dr. James W. Smith directed the construction of a new building. It was recorded in the Missionary Herald of 1860 that this church stood on the high ground and could be seen from far out to sea, forming a landmark, which ships used for navigating as they approached port.
- In 1929, the church underwent repairs and was given a New England style finish, adding the Portico and Steeple.

While Kōloa is not officially listed as a historic district, the area is rich with historic sites. The context and setting of Kōloa includes Old Kōloa Town Center as well as commercial, institutional, religious and community properties that comprise this heritage area. Historic Hawaiʻi Foundation has previously noted that there is a potentially eligible Kōloa District; if so, the Church would be a contributing resource of the district as well as being individually eligible for listing in the Hawaiʻi Register of Historic Places.

Proposed Project

As summarized in the Church's letter to the Planning Department dated July 4, 2023, the congregation is concerned about restrooms, ADA/accessibility, emergency exiting and security surveillance.

- The Applicant is proposing to construct two 2-story additions, one to the north and one on the south side of the church just behind the entrance portico.
- The Applicant is also proposing to create two exits from the worship hall by removing two of the significant windows and replacing them with doors.

HISTORIC HAWAIʻI FOUNDATION COMMENTS and RECOMMENDATIONS

Historic Hawaiʻi Foundation's historic architect reviewed the design plans for consistency with the Secretary of the Interior's (SOI) Standards and Guidelines of the Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings.^v Key standards include:

2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.

5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

The Guidelines attached to the SOI Standards provide further clarification of intent.

- The Rehabilitation guidelines emphasize that new additions should be considered only after it is determined that meeting specific new needs cannot be achieved by altering non-character-defining interior spaces.
- New additions should be designed and constructed so that the character-defining features of the historic building, its site, and setting are not negatively impacted. Generally, a new addition should be subordinate to the historic building (emphasis added).

Historic Hawai'i Foundation recognizes that contemporary uses and systems may require adaptations to historic properties. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards are written to allow for such adaptation while still preserving the characteristics of the property that convey its historic status.

HHF finds that the proposed additions would not meet the SOI Standards and would have an adverse effect on this significant historic property. Specifically:

- The proposed 2-story additions are too close to the front elevation and are not secondary in scale to the historic structure. The 'wings' detract from the overall form of the historic building and alter the relationship to the site.
- The proposed new exits destroy significant historic windows and require the removal of the first row of pews, thus distancing the congregation from the pulpit and alter/stage area

HHF recommends:

- The existing conditions plan should show the rear additions and the use of all spaces.
- Studies should be done to show alternatives to accommodate the required uses within non-character defining spaces.
- Accommodation for ADA restroom facilities should be done within the existing footprint of the building. This could include adapting the restrooms to unisex facilities.
- Security office and equipment facility should be accommodated within the extensive non-contributing addition at the rear of the building.

- For site security, we would recommend installing a perimeter fence with access-controlled gates (both pedestrian and vehicular) rather than placing the hardening around the building itself. This is the layered approach that is used at military bases. Basically, the point of entry is moved out from the building. That is both more secure and is reversible. It doesn't affect the historic materials, design, workmanship, setting or other aspects of integrity.
- Additional emergency exits, if needed, should be placed and detailed to avoid impacting significant historic spaces and features. Building codes do allow for some flexibility in design and location within designated historic structures.
- Applicant should make best effort to adapt the existing historic building without altering character-defining features and present the findings in the proposal.
- Applicant should make a new proposal which includes the above.

Historic Hawai'i Foundation appreciates the care and maintenance that has preserved this historic property for more than 160 years. We are supportive of continuing the functional use of the church and accommodation to meet contemporary uses and safety.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We are happy to continue discussions with the KHPRC, the Planning Department and the applicant if you have any questions.

ⁱ Hawaiian Mission Children's Society (1901). *Portraits of American Protestant Missionaries to Hawaii*. Honolulu: Hawaiian Gazette Co.

ⁱⁱ "Fruitful Fields – American Missionary Churches in Hawai'i", Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources, Preservation Division, 1993

ⁱⁱⁱ National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/places/old-sugar-mill-of-koloa.htm>

^{iv} Church at Kōloa website: <https://www.oldkoloa.com/history/> Portions of this text were taken from the writings of Judge Henry Blake

^v The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings (2017); <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/secretary-standards-treatment-historic-properties.htm>