

HISTORIC WAIMEA

Legend

Long a center of Hawaiian government and commerce, Waimea is an ancient settlement with its beginnings shrouded in mythology.

- ◆ National Historic Landmarks & Buildings
- State Historic Register Buildings
- Museums & Displays

Missionary Heritage

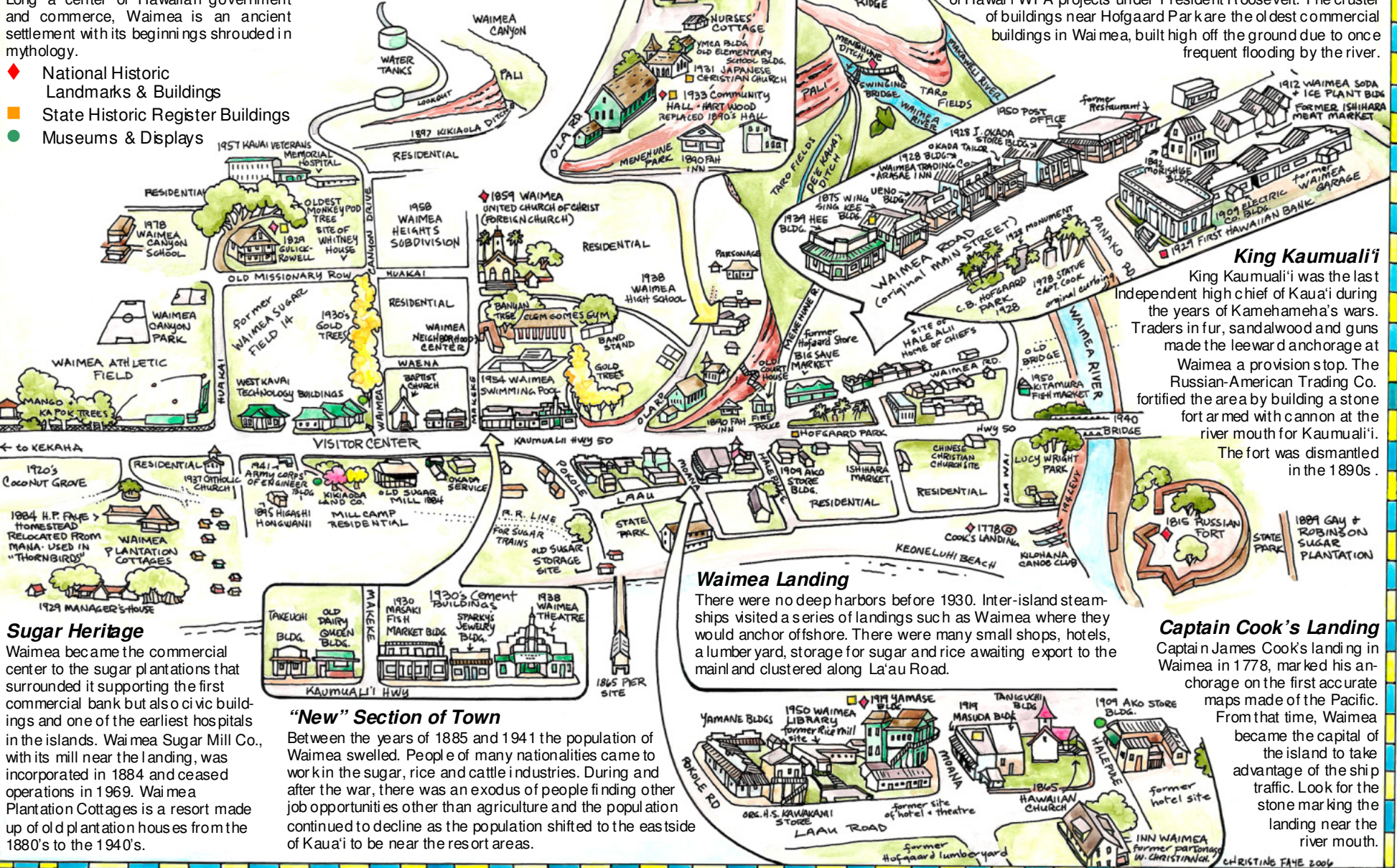
In 1820, Waimea became the center for missionary work on Kaua'i under the aspects of first the King, then the governor of the island. The stone church and two stone houses stand as a monument to their endeavors.

Waimea Valley- Heavily cultivated in taro, Waimea is famous for the Menehune Ditch that was engineered to bring water 14 feet above Waimea River around a steep cliff to irrigate taro. It is still in use today. In the 1860's rice became an important commodity and many of the taro fields were converted to rice and then later in the 1900s to sugar cane. Today some of the fields are now back in taro cultivation.

Waimea Road & Old Bridge- Waimea Road was the original main street leading to the iron bridge crossing the river, replaced in 1938 by the present bridge and highway as part of the Territory of Hawaii WPA projects under President Roosevelt. The cluster of buildings near Hofgaard Park are the oldest commercial buildings in Waimea, built high off the ground due to once frequent flooding by the river.

King Kaumuali'i

King Kaumuali'i was the last Independent high chief of Kaua'i during the years of Kamehameha's wars. Traders in fur, sandalwood and guns made the leeward anchorage at Waimea a provision stop. The Russian-American Trading Co. fortified the area by building a stone fort armed with cannon at the river mouth for Kaumuali'i. The fort was dismantled in the 1890s.



Sugar Heritage

Waimea became the commercial center to the sugar plantations that surrounded it supporting the first commercial bank but also civic buildings and one of the earliest hospitals in the islands. Waimea Sugar Mill Co., with its mill near the Landing, was incorporated in 1884 and ceased operations in 1969. Waimea Plantation Cottages is a resort made up of old plantation houses from the 1880's to the 1940's.

"New" Section of Town

Between the years of 1885 and 1941 the population of Waimea swelled. People of many nationalities came to work in the sugar, rice and cattle industries. During and after the war, there was an exodus of people finding other job opportunities other than agriculture and the population continued to decline as the population shifted to the eastside of Kaua'i to be near the resort areas.

Waimea Landing

There were no deep harbors before 1930. Inter-island steamships visited a series of landings such as Waimea where they would anchor offshore. There were many small shops, hotels, a lumber yard, storage for sugar and rice awaiting export to the mainland clustered along La'au Road.

Captain Cook's Landing

Captain James Cook's landing in Waimea in 1778, marked his anchorage on the first accurate maps made of the Pacific. From that time, Waimea became the capital of the island to take advantage of the ship traffic. Look for the stone marking the landing near the river mouth.