

# Orientation to Hawaii's Plantation Village

## GENERAL INFORMATION

The first successful sugar plantation in Hawaii got its start in Koloa, Kauai in 1835. By 1885, the plantation was providing workers housing, some food, some medical care and a wage of \$9 a month for men and \$6 a month for women.

From the start, sugar plantations did not pay their workers in cash. Instead, workers were paid using coupons or scrips, which were redeemable for merchandise in the plantation store. Workers were not identified by their family name but were given shaped metal disks called 'bangos' with numbers stamped on them for identification.

Expansion of Hawaiian sugar plantations occurred in part because of the increased demand for sugar in the United States. This was due to the 1848 California gold rush, the Civil War in 1861 and the 1875 Reciprocity Treaty, which granted Hawaii the right to export sugar, duty free, to the United States.

All of these factors returned huge profits to the Hawaiian sugar planters who kept trying to capitalize on the situation.

Note: During this time, Hawaii was an independent Pacific nation. It had not yet been annexed to the United States.

## WORK FORCE

Because of the shrinking native labor force, which was being ravaged by diseases brought by foreigners- the plantation owners recognized the need to look elsewhere for the cheap labor force that was needed.

The first immigrant group brought in to work on the sugar plantations were the Chinese who had some experience in refining sugar. Primarily males were recruited and many returned to China once their labor contract was completed.

With the demand for sugar increasing, the demand for cheap labor increased as well. To be able to supply the plantations with much needed workers, the plantation

owners began looking to other countries. They sent recruiters to the Azores and Madeira Islands of Portugal, Japan, Puerto Rico, Okinawa, Korea and the Philippines. Each ethnic group would work under a different wage scale and rate; the latest arrival would be paid less.

## WORKING CONDITIONS

The work day would start with the sound of the steam whistle at 5 a.m. If the worker did not leave his house by 5:30 a.m. after a quick breakfast, a policeman was sent to the laborer's home and he was chased out of bed. At 6 a.m. work began. A half-hour break was allowed for lunch at 11:30 a.m. and work ended at 4:30 p.m. in the afternoon. At 8 p.m. the steam whistle would sound again to signal "lights out."

## HOUSING

Plantation housing was situated so that the plantation manager lived at the top of the hill in a large home overlooking the plantation. The "lunas," or supervisors, lived below the managers and on the lower, flat lands were the laborers in "identical wooden frame houses" or dormitory barracks for the single men. The formation of separate ethnic camps reflected labor recruitment and immigration patterns as new camps were constructed soon after the arrival of a new immigrant group. Generally, plantation laborers lived in crowded and unsanitary camps. But by living with other individuals who spoke the same language and shared the same cultural heritage and practices, individuals in each camp developed community identity. Gradually, as workers became settled and started raising families, they improved their surroundings.

## Mission

The Friends of Waipahu Cultural Garden Park, a non-profit educational organization, has as its purpose- ensuring that the experiences, lifestyles, struggles, sacrifices, innovations and contributions of our plantation forebearers are known, acknowledged, and visible as the cornerstones of Hawaii's successful multicultural society.

The Friends operate and maintain Hawaii's Plantation Village, a collection of historic and reconstructed plantation buildings and adjacent land; and the Okada Educational Center, an archival collection exhibition, and classroom facility.

## Hawaii's Plantation Village

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## GUIDED TOURS

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Chinese Society Building (1909)



Portuguese Forno



Tofu-Ya



Wakamiya Inari Shrine (1914)



Portuguese House (1918)



Puerto Rican House (1900's)



Japanese Duplex (1910)



Japanese Christian House (1930's)



Time Tunnel



Barber Shop



Okinawan House (1919)



Korean House (1919)



Community Furo



Filipino Dormitory (1919)



Filipino House (1935)



Plantation Store (1900)



Infirmary (1915)



Saimin Stand (1940)



Garage



Sumo Ring



Halau Waa (1850)



Hale Moe (1850)



Camp Office (1930's) and Restrooms



Social/Union Hall (1920's)



Fish Pond

What you will be experiencing at Hawaii's Plantation Village is an overview of plantation buildings that could be found on many sugar plantations throughout Hawaii in the early 1900's.

The Village is not laid out as a typical campsite. Camps would often be a close cluster of small, square, three-room structures situated next to each other in a row with their front doors facing each other. A narrow road or pathway would wind its way down the center row of houses. In the Village, each of the home sites is furnished with items that reflect a particular ethnic group around the 1900 to late 1930's time period. The interior décor of each home represents a day that was selected by each ethnic historical group. For example, the Filipino family home is set for a baptismal party and the Japanese Christian Home is set for bible study. To enhance the community camp

atmosphere, a barber shop, community "furo" or bath, garage, store, camp office, infirmary, and social/union hall provide the visitor with an impression of some of the other buildings that were part of the plantation setting.

The story that we share with you is our story, Hawaii's story. It is the story of people who came from different lands to work in the sugar fields of Hawaii and their struggles, hardships, and adjustment to their new environment. From the Hawaiian people with their open and accommodating culture which enabled the immigrants from all over to adapt to what was available and to adopt useful customs, tools, foods, etc.,

from other cultures. These immigrants – with pride in who they were, where they came from, and a wonderful vision of who they wanted to become – created the multi-cultural society that we enjoy today.

We're glad you are here to visit Hawaii's Plantation Village and we're pleased to share a small part of Hawaii's historical heritage with you. Enjoy your visit and mahalo for coming.

#### Major Ethnic Group Immigration Timeline for Plantation Workforce

- Chinese 1823 (start) 1852- 1897
- Japanese (first group) 1868
- Portuguese 1878
- Puerto Rican 1900

- Okinawan early 1900's
- Koreans 1903
- Filipinos 1906 (with major immigration taking place in 1915)