

# Walk #5: The Living Archive

Aug 26, Sept 2 + 3



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ISLAND  
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HAWAII  
COUNCIL  
FOR THE  
HUMANITIES

our kaka'ako





# Key Events in Kaka‘ako’s History

**Pre-1800:** The area now known as Kaka‘ako comprises ‘ili known as Ka‘ākaukukui, Kukuluāe‘o, and Kewalo, and even smaller areas—portions of ‘ili—called Kawaiaha‘o, Honuakaha, Ka‘ala‘a, ‘Āpua, ‘Auwaiolimu, Pualoalo, Pu‘unui, and Kolowalu. The area consists of low-lying marshes, tidal flats, fishponds, lo‘i kalo, lo‘i pa‘akai and reefs.

**1848:** During the mahele, Kukuluāe‘o is awarded to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and associated with Punahou School. Ka‘ākaukukui is awarded to Victoria Kamāmalu, later to become part of the Bishop Estate.

**1850s:** Princess Ruth Ke‘elikōlani donates land on the makai side of Kaka‘ako known as Fisherman’s Point for a leper hospital. David Weston opens the iconic Honolulu Ironworks.

**1870s:** Curtis Perry Ward marries Victoria Robinson and purchases 111 acres of land in Kewalo and Kukuluāe‘o and establishes their home at Old Plantation.

**1900s:** Honolulu Brewery opens on Queen Street. Walter “Pop” MacFarlane hires Japanese fisherman and a small fleet of sampans to start his tuna business. Honolulu Construction and Draying Company deepens Honolulu Harbor, filling in parts of Kaka‘ako with the dredged materials. The former site of the leper hospital is claimed by the American government after annexation and becomes Fort Armstrong. Pohukaina School opens.

**1920s:** Kaka‘ako is home to 2,640 residents. Kewalo Harbor is dredged and Fisherman’s Wharf is constructed. 700 Hawaiians live in shacks near Olomehani Street in an area known as Squattersville, until they are forced to leave in 1926. An incinerator and landfill are built near the former site of Squattersville.

**1930s:** Atkinson Park is converted to a warehouse. Mother Waldron Park opens in 1937, a year after Margaret Waldron’s death. Designed by Harry Sims Bent in the art deco style, the park is built with funds provided to the territorial government as part of the New Deal.

**1940s:** Despite a population of over 5,000 residents, Kaka‘ako is rezoned from residential to industrial use. Residential leases begin to expire but World War II slows the neighborhood’s transition.

**1960s:** Kaka'ako Brewery closes. 90 percent of Bishop Estate land is in industrial use. Kaka'ako's residential population dwindles. An arena and concert hall are constructed by the city on the former site of Old Plantation, which was acquired by the City and County in the 1950s.

**1976:** The Hawaii Community Development Authority is created and Kaka'ako is dubbed the first community development district, slated to be revitalized under the agency's purview. The Honolulu Ironworks is demolished to make way for Restaurant Row.

**1980s-2000s:** Pohukaina Elementary School is demolished. The HCDA focuses on infrastructural improvements in Kaka'ako—mostly to streets and sewers—but a few residential towers are constructed. In 1992, the 35-acre Kaka'ako Waterfront Park opens atop 28 acres of landfill and ash from the incinerator.

**2013:** Master plans are submitted to HCDA for the development of 29 acres owned by Kamehameha Schools and 60 acres owned by General Growth Properties/Howard Hughes Corporation (formerly the Victoria Ward Estate). OHA submits a Kaka'ako Makai framework plan for 30 acres given to the agency by the state as a settlement for ceded crown lands.

**2017:** Since the HCDA's creation, 30 development projects (mostly condo towers) have been completed in Kaka'ako, with ten additional projects currently permitted or under construction. The Howard Hughes Corporation's master plan also includes a dozen or so more towers that have not yet been permitted.



*Kewalo Basin, Hawai'i State Archives*

# Urban Mo‘olelo

**Craig Howes**

*Director, Center for Biographical Research  
Professor of English, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa*

In her 2007 book *Nā Kua‘āina*, Davianna Pōmaika‘i McGregor writes about “cultural kīpuka”—small rural communities “bypassed by major historic forces of economic, political, and social change.” These people have preserved resources necessary to regenerate and revitalize “Native Hawaiian culture” today.

Kaka‘ako might be the least likely site for a cultural kīpuka in Hawai‘i. Its last 120 years have been marked by rapid, almost violent transformations. People sweep or are swept in and out. Buildings rise and fall and rise and fall, almost always because of decisions made elsewhere. For these eighty-eight blocks, uncertainty punctuated by extreme change has been the norm.

Our 1920s guide has the most positive take on this. Born into a Kaka‘ako with dirt roads, bad sewage, and little or no community, he’s excited by the improvements he’s seen—factories, stores, fee simple homes, paved streets, community activities. And he looks forward to his home becoming one of Honolulu’s “best residential and business districts”—right up there with Kaimuki!

But other signs do trouble him. The infrastructure improvements came only after dredging debris flooded the area, and when Hawaiians living in “Squattersville” ask about paved roads and lights, police raid their homes for illegal liquor, which then becomes an excuse for eviction.

The post-war 1940s speaker focuses on the brutality of rapid change. Kaka‘ako’s continuing reputation for crime helps justify turning it into “an industrial area.” As leases expire, the landowners rent the residents’ addresses to large businesses. The war has traumatized many local Japanese, and people clash with the military, who consider those in Kaka‘ako “as foreigners” with “no rights.” Urban life is hard; children go to work the moment they can, to help out at home. And Kaka‘ako still floods.

By the early 1960s, radical redevelopment defines the place. “Have you been down here lately? Things sure have changed!” begins our student witness. But unlike our 1920s guide, he doesn’t see his future as being here. “Robberies and muggings” have increased, as the “new warehouses and office buildings” that followed the “mass-eviction” of residents make it dangerous for the few remaining children. Drunks lounge in Mother Waldron Park. Houses are falling apart—why keep up a place that could be taken at any time? Though “a modern industrial center,” the student concludes that “Kaka‘ako is a dead place.”

What has happened since the 60s suggests that “dead” was an exaggeration. But the pulse of change has accelerated, and while the art and cultural explosions are exciting, *carpe diem* is the vibe. Play now, because it’s going to disappear soon.

So what can this history teach us? McGregor writes that examining “the lives of kua‘āina in Hawaiian cultural kīpuka” will show us “the strongest and most resilient aspects of the Native Hawaiian culture and way of life.” Kaka‘ako has hardly been such a kīpuka, and from Squattersville until today, Hawaiians have been the most likely to get pushed out by each development wave. But our students’ testimonies reveal some shared convictions to remember when confronting the current round of alien gentrification.

What’s been of true value in Kaka‘ako is not surprising. Despite its shady reputation, in the 1920s it was “a lively family-oriented community.” When people could buy in, then did, and although they lived in ethnically separated camps, school and community activities created a shared sense of pride in the second, local generation. Though an upgrade in civic reputation did not follow, our 1940s guide describes a hard-working community where families, cultures, and work intermingled. The 1960s speaker watched this Kaka‘ako disappear in the face of industrial development. The second and third generations are waiting for the first to die, so that they can escape. But like the thread and Dixie Cups running between the homes, people still felt connected, despite massive industrial and demographic change. The 1960s student reports that “sentiment for the community is still strong.” For many, it remains “‘Ichiban numbah one . . . . Kaka‘ako no ka ‘oi.’”

The future we face is not promising. As Tina Grandinetti explains, although developers describe an “exciting, welcoming, cultural, and convenient” Kaka‘ako, and “a mixed-use, mixed-income gathering place,” the physical facts are “dozens of towers,” largely for high-income residents and international investors. Meanwhile, houseless people, often Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, camp out in the areas to be developed. Squattersville has returned—and yet, like all Kaka‘ako communities, it has developed “its own way of policing, governing, and supporting each other.”

“Rather than allowing a select few to sell us a prepackaged urban identity,” Grandinetti concludes, “we will need to discover our own.” This tour reveals what “the strongest and most resilient aspects” of urban communities actually are—and generally, they have little to do with buildings, or the people who put them up. The more these eighty-eight blocks can provide homes for those who need them, and points of contact for those drawn here by what it offers, the better Kaka‘ako—and O‘ahu—will be.

Grandinetti, Tina. “Whose Kaka‘ako?” *Flux*. March 26, 2015.

<https://fluxhawaii.com/whose-kakaako/>

McGregor, Davianna Pōmaika‘i. *Nā Kua‘āina: Living Hawaiian Culture*. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2007.

## Tour Credits

### **Adele Balderston**

Writer/Producer

### **Daniel A. Kelin II**

Director

### **Joseph K. Pa'ahana**

Audiovisual Technician

### **Craig Howes**

### **Annie Koh**

Consultants

## Cast

*(In chronological order)*

**Jahdi Maunakea-Stamler**.....1920s

**Michelle Umipeg**.....1940s

**Tyler Tanabe**.....1960s

# Director's Notes

**Daniel A. Kelin II**

*Director of Drama Education  
Honolulu Theatre for Youth*

It is interesting to learn about history, but endlessly fascinating to experience the personal stories that are the foundation of our human past. We can respect and admire the intense creativity and work that went into the design and construction of India's Taj Mahal, but we become mesmerized by the romance of a powerful man enshrining his passion for love of his life in the form of a glistening white palace. Stories infuse places and spaces with emotion, transforming a place from concrete and wood, or grass and bushes into an engrossing film played out in our collective imaginations. It is a uniquely human experience to form emotional attachments to places and spaces, such that we can easily tear up at seeing our old elementary school, or revisiting a favorite family beach. It is this shared commonality of space and story that form the foundation for community and culture. And it is through sharing our stories and experiences that we can reach across communities and cultures to find connections with others, for once we know a stranger's story, just as once we know the story of a place, we see it, we experience it, with different eyes and very possibly begin a new relationship with that person or place.

For many years I conducted an oral history and performance program in local elementary schools. Once such project happened in the Wahiawa area. We brought several older members of the community into the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades to share stories about their experiences as kids on Dec 7, 1941. Needless to say, the children were fascinated about stories of growing up at that time period, but were awe-struck that these people standing in front of them had witnessed bombs dropping, planes crashing and even seeing the faces of the pilots as the planes flew so close to the ground. The teachers said that after that project the children no longer looked at older folks in the community in the same way. They saw fascinating people with amazing tales who helped bring a new appreciation of their community.

88 Block Walks, and other living experiences like it, are a valuable service to the community, as stories that have been confined to archived filing cabinets come back into fascinating full life that can inspire us, touch us and bring a whole new appreciation of the community where we live and breathe. Certainly we can respect the history of our island, but through these stories we can, for a moment, relive the experiences of our predecessors that are the foundation of who we are as a community.

**ADELE BALDERSTON** (*Tour guide, writer, producer*) is a Honolulu-based geographer and new media producer. Her work focuses on interactive cartography and creative intervention in the urban environment. Adele's involvement with storytelling through mapping, public art, and urban exploration began with the New York/Berlin-based Soundwalk Collective for whom she developed audio walking tours for various international cities narrated by the likes of Matthew Broderick, Paz Vega and Jeanne Moreau. In 2010, she served as assistant director of Conflux, the first contemporary psychogeography festival in the United States. Adele returned home to Hawai'i in 2013 and created 88 Block Walks—an ongoing series of walking tours through the Honolulu neighborhood of Kaka'ako.

**JAHDI MAUNAKEA-STAMLER** (*1920s*) is extremely grateful to take part in *Walk #5: The Living Archive*. Jahdi lives in Punalu'u and is currently waiting to be accepted to the University of Hawai'i for Tourism Industry Management and Theatre. He has appeared in various performances throughout his life but most recently, *O'okala* and *The Monkey King* at Windward Community College. Jahdi would like to thank Adele Balderston for inviting him to take on this role in her performance, as well as Daniel Kelin for helping him develop his character along the way.

**TYLER TANABE** (*1960s*) made his first stage appearance with the Honolulu Theatre for Youth *Theatrefest* 1997-2000 and *Young at Art* 1996-1998, and at Kaimuki High School. He has also appeared at Kumu Kahua Theatre in *Uncles Regularly Scheduled Garage Party is CANCELLED Tonight*, *The Statehood Project*, *The Hilo Massacre*, *House Lights and Prolonged Sunlight*, *Voices from Okinawa*, *Ghosts in the Plague Year*, *The Holiday of Rain*, *Sound and Beauty*, *Will the Real Charlie Chan Please Stand Up?*, *Flowers of Hawai'i*, *Moa A Mō'i* and *Cockadoodledoo*.

**MICHELLE UMIPEG** (*1940s*) arrived to Hawai'i by way of evacuating the Mount Pinatubo eruption. She has explored her creative interests with acting, music, writing, as well as designing hair and makeup for theatrical productions. She has a teenage son and shares her love of performing and helping others with him. She was recently seen at Kumu Kahua Theatre this spring in *Buffalo'ed* by Jeannie Barroga and *Puzzy* by Kiki. She designed makeup and hair for all three productions of the Hawai'i Shakespeare Festival in the summer of 2016 and received a 2017 HSTC Po'okela Award for Excellence in Service (Hawai'i Shakespeare Festival). Michelle is fortunate to have so much love and support to be able to pursue her love of lifelong learning and sharing.

# Archives and the Power of Place

**Annie Koh**

*Co-organizer of Kaka'ako Our Kuleana  
Ph.D. candidate in Urban & Regional Planning  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa*

Why go to the archives? Histories are not immutable facts frozen on a page, by digging into the archives we begin to see the meandering and unexpected pathways that led us to the present day. The student essays in the University of Hawai'i's Romanzo Adams Social Research Library Collection remind us that there have been many Kaka'akos. Tasked with generating firsthand research about a neighborhood and its ethnic composition, the undergraduate students conducted interviews, wrote down observations, and produced carefully drawn maps and charts. Their sociological assessments are flavored by their own prejudices and those of their eras as well as their own relationships to the place. Some of these student authors were Kaka'ako residents at the time of writing, while others were outsiders recording their observations.

What they wrote has become "history" with the passage of time, but these historical facts cannot be contained within tidy narratives of decline or renewal. Contradictory evaluations of Kaka'ako's condition by students, even those of the same period, reveal the subjective definitions of "progress" and "development." One person looks at the closely packed residences and sees neighbors on porches, another dismisses hanging pots of laua'e ferns as "pathetic attempts" to decorate a "sordid environment" of backward slums. The mixed-use Magoon Block tenement could be hailed today as a livable and affordable model community with its cheap rents, poi shop and two groceries. One student interviewed his Uncle Nani who had built his own shack and lived self-sufficiently from the fruits of the sea until the territorial government evicted all the Hawaiians from the shore. What is the meaning of a place? And who gets to decide? Some students worry that what they value is being erased in the name of modernity. Others drew maps of real estate values.

In these archives we can hear and smell the Kaka'akos that time has ruptured. The tradewinds blow the scent of the tuna packers and Mrs. N's spicy banana cake off the page. The sentences reverberate with the shouts from the boxing bouts and the sound of the trolleys. Change seems relentless. Before the pavement, the macadam road. Before the crushed gravel of macadam roads, the dirt road, and before that the marsh and the coral reef. Yet the archives also show continuities in Kaka'ako's social and environmental spaces. Low-lying Kaka'ako has always been prone to puddles: "Good place for swim when we get heavy rain." The anxieties and disputes over changes that permeate the papers echo contemporary public discourse surrounding Kaka'ako's development trajectory today.

The Hawaiian proverb “I ka wā ma mua, i ka wā ma hope” can be translated as “The future is in the past”. By opening up the archives and making the past present again we can also open up possibilities for change. Urban planning scholar Dolores Hayden wrote about the “power of place” in her call to make memories of multi-ethnic Los Angeles into public history. The multiple Kaka’akos that appear in these student essays remind us of our own power to make meaning, tell stories, and define what we value.



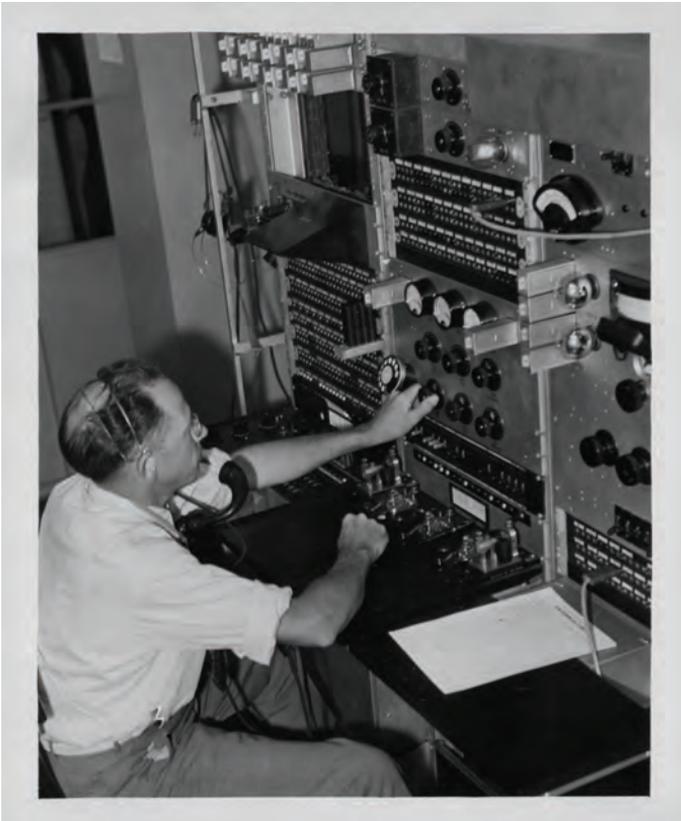
*Hawai'i State Archives, circa 1920*

## What's your story?

What is your connection to Kaka'ako? What brought you on this tour tonight? If you have a memory, a story, a secret or other knowledge of this place, share it! A recording station is available at 449 Cooke Street from 7-10 pm August 26 and September 2, and from 7-9 pm on September 3.

If you are unable to share your story in person or prefer to remain anonymous, call **(505) 916-1838** and record it as a voicemail.

Recordings collected during *Walk #5: The Living Archive* will be featured in an interactive installation at the Honolulu Museum of Art School in February 2018.



*Switchboard Operator, Hawai'i State Archives*

## **88 Block Walks was created by Adele Balderston in 2014**

Named for the 88 blocks which comprise Kaka'ako, this ongoing series of walking tours explores themes of gentrification, displacement, urbanization and generational change within the neighborhood's cultural, historical and physical landscape. By providing greater public access to archival materials and other diverse histories of the neighborhood, 88 Block Walks aims to remove the lens through which landowners and developers present Kaka'ako's history to the public and invites the community to develop their own understanding and stories about this place, which has continually undergone change for nearly a century.

For more information, visit [88blockwalks.com](http://88blockwalks.com).

## **The RASRL Archive**

The Romanzo Adams Social Research Library collection is housed in the Moir Reading room at Hamilton Library. For excerpts and additional information, visit Lori Pierce and Christine Kirk-Kuwaye's online exhibit [LocalCiting.com](http://LocalCiting.com)

## **Mahalo!**

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BARRIO VINTAGE



IN MEDIAS REZ

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