

Remembering Where La'ie Gathered: The Dedication of the Lanihuli Home and Social Hall Historical Markers

R. Eric Beaver

Two pieces of Lā'ie's colorful past were commemorated on July 28, 2006, when Hawai'i Reserves Inc., in partnership with the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation, the Mormon Pacific Historical Society, and the Lā'ie Community Association, placed historical markers at the former sites of the Lanihuli Home and the La'ie Social Hall. Dozens of community residents, many of them beloved *kūpuna*, came to remember, sing, laugh, and honor the great memory of places, people, and times past.

The two sites were selected because they were important gathering places for the town's first families. "Although the structures are gone, these places live on in the memory of so many of the old *kama'āina*," says local historian Riley Moffat. "These two buildings were really the center of the community for a long time."

The markers added to a Church historical trail in Hawai'i that includes the LDS Mission School and old Plantation Store (both also in Lā'ie), as well as the valley of Palawai on Lana'i. The Palawai marker—placed to remember the first official gathering place for LDS saints in the Pacific—was dedicated by Church leaders in October 2004. The store and school markers were placed and dedicated in October 2005 by HRI and its partners.

The newest markers were placed to remember two of the town's historic gathering places. The Lanihuli Home, built in 1893, was located at the top of Lanihuli Street on the Kahuku side of the current site of the Lā'ie Hawai'i

R. ERIC BEAVER is president and CEO of Hawai'i Reserves, Inc. An earlier version of this article appeared in *HO'OMUA*, no. 1 (Summer 2006).



Lanihuli Home, La'ie, Hawaii ca. 1900. Photograph courtesy Brigham Young University-Hawaii Special Collections.



Lanihuli Home historical marker located at 55-648/652 Lanihuli Place, La'ie, Hawaii, August 2007. Photograph by Alexander L. Baugh

Temple. The home—once considered the finest on the windward side of the island—served as headquarters for the Hawai'i Mission until 1919. Mission presidents and their families resided in the great Hawaiian-Victorian mansion with its octagonal turret, cupola, and second-story lanai facing the sea. In fact, the house was used as a symbol on the personal stationery of one mission president and became a popular symbol of the Church in Hawai'i. Spiritual meetings, as well as much of the temporal business of the Church, were conducted there. The Lanihuli Home was razed in 1958 to make room for the Church College of Hawai'i (now Brigham Young University—Hawai'i).

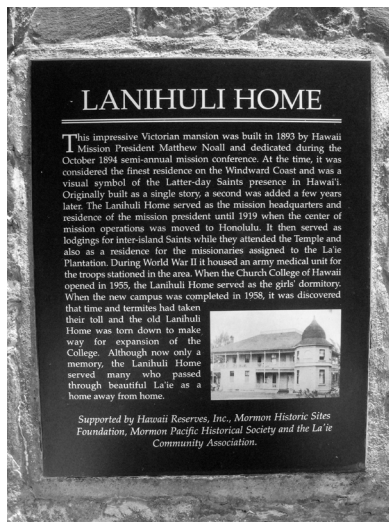
“It was such a beautiful building,” says lifelong resident Gladys Pualoa-Ahuna. “I remember temple visitors from out of town staying there in the 1930s, and every year at Halloween it was our spook house.”

The marker for the Lanihuli Home reads:

LANIHULI HOME

This impressive Victorian mansion was built in 1893 by Hawaii Mission President Matthew Noall and dedicated during the 1894 semi-annual mission conference. At the time, it was considered the finest residence on the Windward Coast and was a visual symbol of the Latter-day Saints presence in Hawai'i. Originally built as a single story, a second was added a few years later. The Lanihuli served as the mission headquarters and residence of the mission president until 1919 when the center of mission operations was moved to Honolulu. It then served as lodgings for inter-island Saints while they attended the Temple and also as a residence for missionaries assigned to the La'ie Plantation. During World War II it housed an army medical unit for the troops stationed in the area. When the Church College of Hawaii opened in 1955, the Lanihuli Home served as a girls' dormitory. When the new campus was completed in 1958, it was discovered that time and termites had taken their toll and the old Lanihuli Home was torn down to make way for expansion of the College. Although now only a memory, the Lanihuli Home served many who passed through beautiful La'ie as a home away from home.

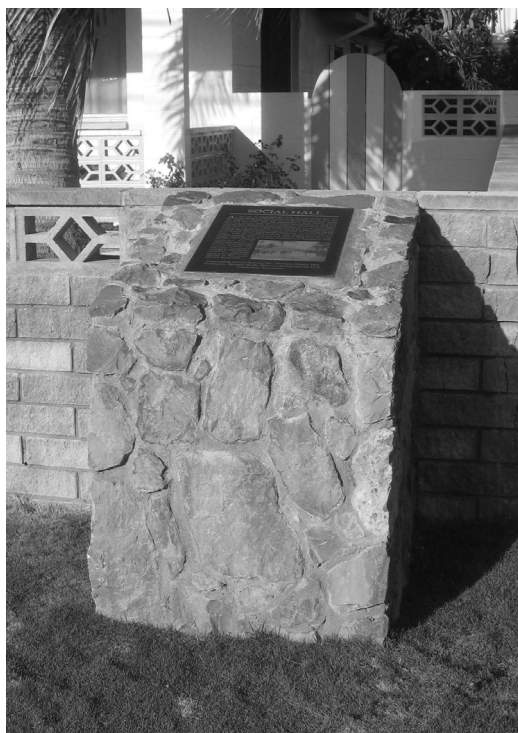
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Lanihuli Home historical marker inscription, August 2007. Photograph by Alexander L. Baugh.



Social Hall, La'ie, Hawaii, ca. 1920. Photograph courtesy Brigham Young University--Hawaii Special Collections.



Social Hall historical marker located at 55-647/649 Loala Street, La'ie, Hawaii, August 2007. Photograph by Alexander L. Baugh.

The Lā'ie Social Hall, located on Loala Street, was built in 1913 as a gathering place for balls, talent shows, plays, movies, funerals and weddings. Even during the war years, it hosted community dances every weekend. After painters accidentally set Lā'ie's first chapel, *I Hemolele*, on fire in 1940, the hall was also razed in 1958 to make way for the expansion of the Church college.

“For a long time, the Social Hall was the most lively place in town,” says Lā'ie born Larry Au. “On weekends there was always something going on but even during the week I remember walking over from elementary school to the Social Hall and paying a dime to watch cowboy movies—Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, and that kind of stuff.”

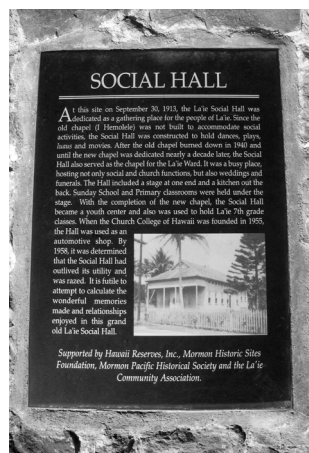
The marker for the Social Hall reads:

SOCIAL HALL

At this site on September 30, 1913, the La'ie Social Hall was dedicated as a gathering place for the people of La'ie. Since the old chapel (*I Hemolele*) was not built to accommodate social activities, the Social Hall was constructed to hold dances, plays, *lauas* and movies. After the old chapel burned down in 1940 and until the new chapel was dedicated nearly a decade later, the Social Hall also served as the chapel for the La'ie Ward. It was a busy place, hosting not only social and church functions, but also weddings and funerals. The Hall included a stage at one end and a kitchen out the back. Sunday School and Primary classrooms were held under the stage. With the completion of the new chapel, the Social Hall became a youth center and also was used to hold La'ie 7th grade classes. When the Church College of Hawaii was founded in 1955, the Hall was used as an automotive shop. By 1958 it was determined that the Social Hall had outlived its utility and was razed. It is futile to attempt to calculate the wonderful memories made and relationships enjoyed in this grand old La'ie Social Hall

Supported by Hawaii Reserves, Inc., Mormon Historic Sites Foundation, Mormon Pacific Historical Society and the La'i Community Association.

“Supporting the placement of these markers is important to us, not only as a company with deep roots in La'ie but as the relatives and descendants of the people who made these places live,” says HRI CEO Eric Beaver. “We are committed to honoring the past and building on our community's great heritage.”



Social Hall historical marker inscription, August 2007. Photograph by Alexander L. Baugh.