

Kapūkakī

Kapūkakī (Red Hill, O‘ahu)

The goal of this Information Sheet is to explore some of the cultural and historical narratives of Kapūkakī and the surrounding area. This Information Sheet will also strengthen the agency’s foundation of knowledge for this wahi pana (storied, legendary place).

Kapūkakī is located within the ahupua‘a (land division) of Moanalua at the westernmost edge of the larger moku (district) of Kona on the island of O‘ahu. It lies mid-border of the ahupua‘a of Moanalua and Hālawā, thus separating the moku of Kona (a.k.a Honolulu) from the moku of ‘Ewa respectively.

Kapūkakī is the “old name for Red Hill,” according to Puku‘i and Elbert (1974). No translation was provided by informants or other sources. In *Archaeology of O‘ahu*, Bishop Museum ethnologist, J. Gilbert McAllister, described the area as such: “Site 88. On the north side of the rather level top of Puukapu [sic, Pu‘ukapu, Sacred Hill, added], or Kapukaki...” (see Fig.1).

“Red Hill” probably came into use as a common descriptor of the red ochre soil and rock that is a distinguishing feature of the area. The name first appeared on a government map by Alexander Lyons in 1881. Thus, when the U.S. government purchased the land in the 1940s they probably used the name “Red Hill” as it appeared on Lyons’ map.

Left: Kapūkakī and surrounding area; Lyons, C.J. 1881. Hawaiian Govt. Survey



Research Division
Information Sheet, March 2022

Suggested Citation: Akana, K. (2022). *Kapūkakī (Red Hill) Information Sheet*. Honolulu, HI: Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Research Division.

He palena. A boundary.

Kapūkakī stands prominently in Hawaiian traditional lore and history. It is from this area that Kāne and Kanaloa challenged one another to see who could throw a stone the farthest. In doing so, they marked the boundary of what would be called ‘Ewa (crooked) when one of the stones went crookedly astray. The stone was eventually found at Pili o Kahe, the boundary marking the beginning of the moku of Wai‘anae. These landmarks, Pili o Kahe and Kapūkakī, are identified as the boundaries of the ‘okana (subdistrict) of ‘Ewa by King Kākuhihewa of O‘ahu in *He kaa no Pikoikaalala*. Kamakau (1869) called this border “Kanau o Kapukaki.”

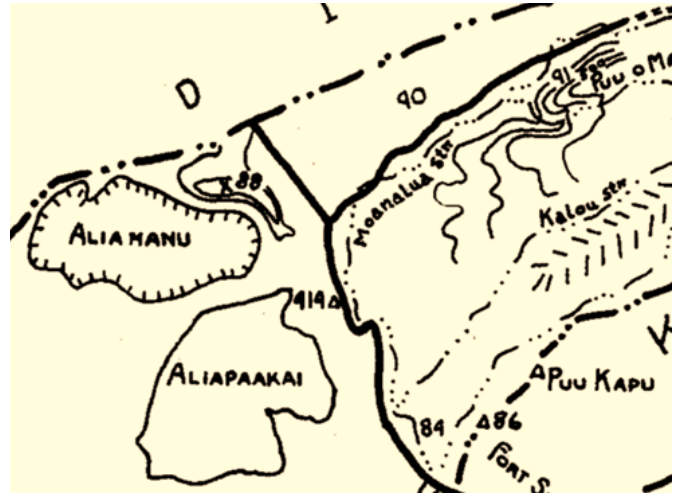
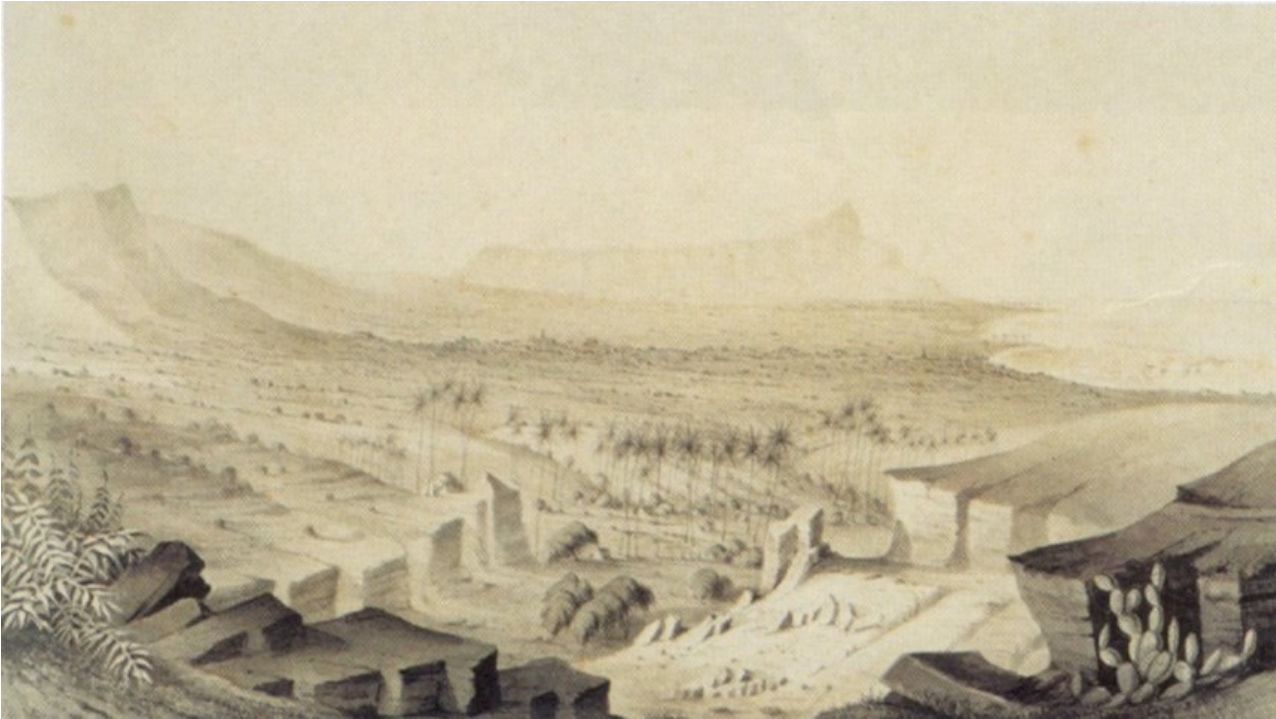


Fig. 1. Kapūkakī lies between Site 88 and 90 (McAllister).

In 1884, Kapūkakī was certified as a boundary marker of Land Commission Award (L.C.A.) 7715 - “the ancient landmark of Kekaaniau o Kapukaki.”¹ Much later, Wise (1979) identified Kapūkakī as the western boundary of the district of Honolulu. Throughout the centuries, Kapūkakī was a place name known and used in discourse and documents.



Aerial view of Moanalua and Āliapa‘akai (Salt Lake) from over Kapūkakī Source: 1928 Peter Young.



View overlooking Āliapa‘akai from the hills above Kapūkakī, Paul Emmert, 1853-1859.

He wahi pana. A storied place.

Kapūkakī is a wahi pana and is mentioned in numerous mo‘olelo (story, history). Readers and listeners of stories knew of this o‘io‘ina (resting place) after a pi‘ina li‘ili‘i (small climb) from either Honolulu or ‘Ewa. In Moses Manu’s *Keaomelemele*, Kamo‘oinanea led the mo‘o (lizard, water spirits) people from Kuaihelani to Waialua, O‘ahu, then to Nu‘uanu through Kapūkakī. Koleana, a pool in Moanalua Stream, was named for one of the two leaders of the mo‘o procession.

The great prophet of O‘ahu, Ka‘ōpuluhulu, took his last trek through Kapūkakī to his fatal destiny in Waikīkī as told in Thrum’s *The Land is the Sea’s*. As a prominent landmark on the Honolulu to ‘Ewa trail, Kapūkakī is referenced in Fornander’s accounts of Hanaaumoe and Kalelealuaka.² Indeed, it was a well-known landmark as it offered a high vantage point of the plains and shorelines of Honolulu and ‘Ewa.

He wahi kapu. A sacred place.

In Moses Manu’s *Laukaieie*, Lauka‘ie‘ie and her brother, Mekanikeoe, traveled through the island chain searching for water sources. In ‘Ewa they found the underground freshwater caverns of Waimano, which stretched as far as Hālawā, where Napehā, the famous pool of King Kualī‘i, was visited by travelers on their way to Kapūkakī. In the story, Manu mentioned “Kaleinakuuhane [sic, Kaleinaaka‘uhane] o Kapukaki” or “The leaping point of the spirits of Kapukaki.”

The ghost (kino aka) of the ravenous dog Kaupē was said to have lingered at Kapūkakī and Nu‘uanu lookout.³ An ali‘i (chief) of Hawai‘i Island was captured by Kaupē and brought to Līhu‘e in Wahiawā. His father comes to rescue him. With the aid of Kahilona, a powerful priest of Kaheiki in Pauoa, the father is taught to pray for their eventual escape and for the death of the menacing dog. Kapūkakī and nearby Kapapaikawalalo, a stone

in Kahauiki (Ft. Shafter), are places that the father prayed.

The aforementioned Site 88 was the site of the heiau (temple) called Leilono. Kamakau reported that is where the tree Ulu-o-Leiwalo was located, the place that souls would go to leap into the world of the ancestors via the ‘ulu (breadfruit tree) that grew there.⁴ If an ‘aumakua (family guardian) was present, the soul could be brought back to life or be led to the world of the ‘aumākua. If no ‘aumakua was there to help, it would grasp onto a decayed branch and fall to endless night. The blind chanter of Moanalua, Nāmakahelu, also referred to Kapūkakī as “leinakauhane” [sic, leinaka‘uhane], a place where spirits leaped into the netherworld, thus confirming its known location.



Figure 2. Dog petroglyphs of Nu‘uanu associated with Poki and Kaupē.

It may be for this reason that victims of the 1895 cholera epidemic in Honolulu were hastily brought to be buried at Kapūkakī. The last remnant of the graveyard was near the present First Assembly of God Church and Kaiser Permanente Moanalua’s ‘Ewa parking lot. It was called “Ilina Aloha,” or “Aloha Cemetery,” as the land donor, Samuel Damon, wanted compassion for the victims to overshadow the memory of the pain and misery of the cholera epidemic.⁵

In a kanikau (lament) published in *Hoku o ka Pakipika*, the soul of a child named Apuki is directed to head up from the plains of Hālawa to Kapūkakī. So, too, did Kapūkakī appear in a lament published in *Nupepa Kuokoa* for Paulo Kanaka‘ole, an alderman of Kawaiha‘o Church. These laments highlight the prominence that Kapūkakī had in the minds of their composers as an important landmark for the departed to seek on their path to the afterlife.



Fig. 3. Land Commission Award (L.C.A 7712 & 8516B)⁷ to Mataio Kekūānoa‘a and Kama‘iku‘i. Kīpuka Database, TMK 111012004.

He wahi holoholo. A well traveled place.

As a thoroughfare, Kapūkakī was well known throughout the history of Hawai‘i. Traveling was tiresome for those who went by foot and quite precarious for automobiles making the ascent and descent to and from Kapūkakī, with numerous reports of accidents in Hawaiian newspapers. A 1925 account in *Nupepa Kuokoa* described the collision of a mokokaila (motorcycle) carrying two servicemen that hit a

fleeing truck. Another *Nupepa Kuokoa* account reported the flipping over of a ka‘a oto (automobile) transporting four servicemen down the alanui kike‘e (crooked road) of Alanui Kapukaki (Kapūkakī Road). After many accidents, the Territorial Legislature of Hawai‘i finally appropriated \$72,000 in 1923 to properly grade and pave what eventually became Moanalua Freeway (Interstate H-201).⁶

He ‘āina i mahele ‘ia. A divided land.

Kapūkakī lies within the ahupua‘a of Moanalua. The Hālawa side of Kapūkakī was given as a Land Commission Award (L.C.A. 7712 & 8516B)⁸ to Mataio Kekūānao‘a and Kama‘iku‘i (see Fig. 3). At the time of the award, Kekūānao‘a was governor of O‘ahu. The Kama‘iku‘i listed was Grace Kama‘iku‘i Young Rooke, the aunt and hānai (adoptive) mother of Queen Emma.

Within Moanalua, many small, mostly half-acre kuleana (property) plots were awarded to native tenants but the bulk of the ahupua‘a of Moanalua was awarded to Lot Kapuāiwa Kamehameha V (9,045 acres⁹) and to William Sumner (6,918 acres); however, his lands did not receive a final patent. Kamehameha V’s holdings passed down to Princess Ruth Ke‘elikōlani in 1872, then to Princess Pauahi Bishop in 1883, and later to Samuel Damon in 1884 after Pauahi passed away.



Vertical fuel tanks at Red Hill fuel storage facility. Tanks 1 & 2 are to the bottom right.

Samuel Damon was a business partner of Charles Reed Bishop and later an executor of Pauahi’s estate. On May 12, 1884, he submitted an application¹⁰ on behalf of Bishop and Pauahi to the Commission on Boundaries to establish the boundaries of Moanalua, a.k.a. L.C.A. 7715,¹¹ which descended from Lot Kamehameha to Ruth and then to Pauahi. The judgement to approve the boundaries by Commissioner R.F. Bickerton, esq., affirmed the boundaries of the ahupua‘a of Moanalua from mountain to sea. However, the judgement only pertained to the boundaries of Moanalua (L.C.A. 7715) and did not resolve the claims of the kuleana landholders. Thus, the lands of Kapūkakī and the ahupua‘a of Moanalua were konohiki (headman of the ahupua‘a) land. The government interest was relinquished by the Privy Council per Royal Patent 7858.

Damon died in 1924 and his estate was left in trust to his grandchildren. In 2008, the upper valley of

Moanalua, Kamananui, was sold to the Trust for Public Land and the State of Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) to protect the land in perpetuity.

The U.S. government later acquired land at Red Hill for easements, tunnels, and storage areas through civil action. According to Blackard (1993), “three tracts of land comprising 344.910 acres were acquired through the filing of a Declaration of Taking on February 14, 1941, in the United States District Court for the District of Hawai‘i, Honolulu” (p. 210). Another tract of land comprising 33.747 acres was also acquired through the filing of a Declaration of Taking on May 8, 1945 (Ibid). Other land parcels were acquired by transfer (27.647 acres) or by reservation (4,130 acres) for the purposes of road and fuel line rights-of-way.

He ‘āina alapao.

A land of tunnels.

The Red Hill Underground Fuel Storage System began construction on December 26, 1940. Tunnel workers were recruited from the copper mines of Colorado; the gold mines of California, Montana, and the Dakotas; the silver mines of Idaho and Nevada; and the coal and lead mines of Missouri and Arkansas. About 800 local Japanese workers were employed as welders with a comparable number of local Filipino workers hired to excavate the facility, which measured 2,000 feet long and 400 feet high.

The facility was built to hold 20 vertical tanks, each 100 feet in diameter and 250 feet high. The tanks are connected by tunnels with conveyor pipes that extend a quarter mile past Tanks 1 & 2 to the harbor tunnel, then another two and one-third miles to the surface at a bombproof, secret pump station. There are two other huge entrances, one of which is visible from the bottom of Kaiser Permanente Moanalua’s parking garage.



Aerial view of Kapūkākī marked with Land Commission Award 7712 & 8516B boundaries. Kipuka Database, TMK 111012004.

Endnotes

- | | | |
|----------------------|--|---|
| 1 See Bickerton | 7 Final 1890 award via Royal Patent 6717, Liber 25,45. See TMK 111012004 | 9 L.C.A. 7715, Apana 2 |
| 2 See Fornander | | 10 See Bickerton |
| 3 See Ka Moololelo | | 11 See Helu 7715 for diagram of allotment and original boundaries |
| 4 See Kamakau (1870) | 8 Final 1890 award via Royal Patent 6717, Liber 25,45. See TMK 111012004 | |
| 5 See Ilina Kolera | | |
| 6 See E Hoomaka | | |

References

- Bickerton, R.F. (1884, Jun. 16). Certificate of boundaries, island of Oahu, district of Kona, ahupuaa of "Moanalua." Commission of Boundaries for the Island of Oahu. Retrieved at: <http://kipukadatabase.com/Docs/BCert/Oahu/079.pdf>
- Blackard, C. M., Shields, J.E., & Rice, L.E (1993, Feb. 1). Inventory of real property owned or controlled by the United States under the custody and accountability of the Department of Defense in Hawai'i. Retrieved at: <https://evols.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/handle/10524/47191?mode=full>
- E hoomaka aku ana ke alanui Kaukaki. (1923, Jan. 25). *Nupepa Kuokoa*. Buke 63, Helu 4, p. 3
- Fornander, A. (1916-1917). Hanaaumoe. *Fornander Collection of Hawaiian Antiquities and Folk-Lore*, Volume 4, pp. 476-483. Honolulu, HI: Bishop Museum Press.
- Fornander, A. (1916-1917). Legend of Kalelealuaka and Keinohoomanawanui. *Fornander Collection of Hawaiian Antiquities and Folk-Lore*, Volume 4 pp. 464-471. Honolulu, HI: Bishop Museum Press.
- Helu 7715 Lot Kamehameha. Retrieved at: <http://kipukadatabase.com/Docs/BCert/Oahu/079.pdf>
- Hooku'i elua kaa a pakele ka ola. (1925, Aug. 27). *Nupepa Kuokoa*, Buke 64, Helu 25, p. 6. Honolulu: HI.
- Ilina kolera o Kapukaki. (1895, Sept. 23). *Ka Makaainana*. Buke 4, Helu 13, p. 5. Honolulu: HI.
- Kahuli ke kaa oto a eha ke kalaiwa. (1924, Sept. 4). *Nupepa Kuokoa*. Buke 63, Helu 36, p. 2. Honolulu: HI.
- Kamakau, S. (1869, Nov. 11). Ka moololelo Hawaii. *Ke Au Okoa*, Volume V, Number 30, p. 1. Honolulu: HI.
- Kamakau, S (1870), Oct. 6). Ka moololelo Hawaii. *Ke Au Okoa*, Vol 6, Number 25, p. 1. Honolulu: HI.
- Ka Moololelo o Hawaii Nei. (1865, Jul 22). *Nupepa Kuokoa*. Buke 4, Helu 29, p. 1. Honolulu: HI.
- Keliheleia. (1862, Mar. 13). He kanikau no Apuki. *Ka Hoku o ka Pakipika*, Buke 1, Helu 25, p. 1. Honolulu: HI.
- Lyons, A. (1881). Oahu survey map. Retrieved at: https://evols.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/bitstream/10524/49300/1/Oahu_Alexander_Lyons_1881_282619b5.jpg
- Manu, M. (1885, Apr. 11). He moololelo kaa no Keaomelemele, *Nupepa Kuokoa*. Buke 24:15, p. 1. Honolulu: HI.
- Manu, M. (1895, May 3). Laukaieie. *Ka Oiaio*. Volume VII, Number 9, p. 1. Honolulu: HI.
- McCallister, J. G. (1933). *Archaeology of Hawai'i*. Honolulu, HI: Bishop Museum.
- Mokumaia, J.K. (1920, Feb. 20). Moanalua no ka makaikai ma kona kahakai la. *Nupepa Kuokoa*, Buke 58, Helu 7, p. 2. Honolulu: HI.
- Nailielua, A. (1865, Jan. 12). He kanikau no Paulo Kanakaole i make au nei. *Nupepa Kuokoa*, Buke 4, Helu 2, p. 2. Honolulu: HI.
- Puku'i, M.K. & Elbert. (1974). *Place names of Hawai'i*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Territory of Hawai'i. (1929). Indices of awards made by the Board of Commissions to Quiet Land Titles in the Hawaiian Islands. *Star Bulletin Press*. Honolulu: HI.
- Thrum, T. G. (1907). The land is the sea's. *Hawaiian Folk Tales: A Collection of Native Legends*. Chicago, IL: A.C. McClurg & Co.
- U.S. Naval base, Pearl Harbor, Red Hill underground fuel storage system. *Historic American Engineering Record*, HAER No. HI-123. U.S. Government. Retrieved at: <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/master/pnp/habshaer/hi/hi1000/hi1016/data/hi1016data.pdf>
- Wise, D. (1979, Nov. 1). *Ke Alahou*. Vol 1, Number 1. Honolulu: HI.

Suggested Citation: Akana, K. (2022). *Kapūkākī (Red Hill) Information Sheet*. Honolulu, HI: Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Research Division.