

## **History of the Waimānalo Sugar Plantation**

**Based on Excerpts from [Peter T Young on Facebook](#) (photos and maps added).**

### **1835 High Chief John Adams Kuakini Cummins was born (refer to the John Cummins history).**

High Chief John Adams Kuakini Cummins was born on O‘ahu on March 17, 1835, the son of High Chiefess Kaumakaokane Papali‘ai‘aina and Thomas Jefferson Cummins, Jr. His mother was a cousin of King Kamehameha I. His father was a wealthy and aristocratic Englishman, born in Lancashire and reared in Massachusetts, who came to the Islands in 1828.

### **1842 His father Thomas Cummins first acquired interests in land in Waimānalo**

His father Thomas Cummins first acquired interests in land in Waimānalo (meaning potable water) on March 27, 1842, when High Chief Pāi leased Cummins a parcel of land on which to build a house (that he named Mauna Loke, or Rose Mount). There were no easy roads in and out of the valley. One trail was the Makapuu Saddle; horses could be led but not ridden, it was so steep. The other was a trail from Nuuanu Pali, through the winding roads of Manawili, and up over the ridge to Waimanalo. This path was called “Aniani Ku” which means “Standing Mirror”, and this trail was impassable during winter months.

### **1842 The Saint George Catholic Chapel Was Constructed (refer to St. George Chapel)**

In 1842 The Saint George Catholic Chapel was constructed. It is among the oldest parishes. Today it still has a sizable congregation, many of them descendants of the Portuguese and the Filipinos who then worked for the sugar company. Perhaps the first Portuguese came to assist Thomas Cummings.

### **1850 Cummins Leased 970 Acres From King Kamehameha III.**

On November 25, 1850, Cummins leased 970 acres in the same vicinity from King Kamehameha III. This property extended from Popo‘oka‘ala Point to the hills of Ka‘iwa and Ka‘akaupu of the Ko‘olau district. Over the years more land was acquired. Prior to 1890, Cummins leased nearly 7,000-more acres for his sugar operation.

### **1853-54 Smallpox epidemic decimates Waimanalo’s Native Hawaiian Farmer Families**

### **1855 Cattle Pasture and Horse Breeding Ranch**

The land was first used as cattle pasture and horse breeding ranch. After attending the Royal School, Cummins worked on his father’s ranch, becoming manager in 1855.

One of the goals in horse breeding is related to racing, an item of interest to the royalty and elite in Honolulu. Cummins had one of the largest stocks of race horses (and introduced some blooded stock to the islands) and was a promoter of horse racing.

### **1872 Horse Racing Track at Kapi‘olani Park**

In about 1872, a horse racing track was laid out at Kapi‘olani Park. John Cummins was a Charter member of the Hawaiian Jockey Club in 1885.

### **1873 Representative for the Ko‘olau District**

John Cummins was elected representative for his Ko‘olau district in 1873 and assisted in the election of King Lunalilo that same year. The following year, he aided in the election of King Kalākaua.

### **1875 Reciprocity Treaty with US**

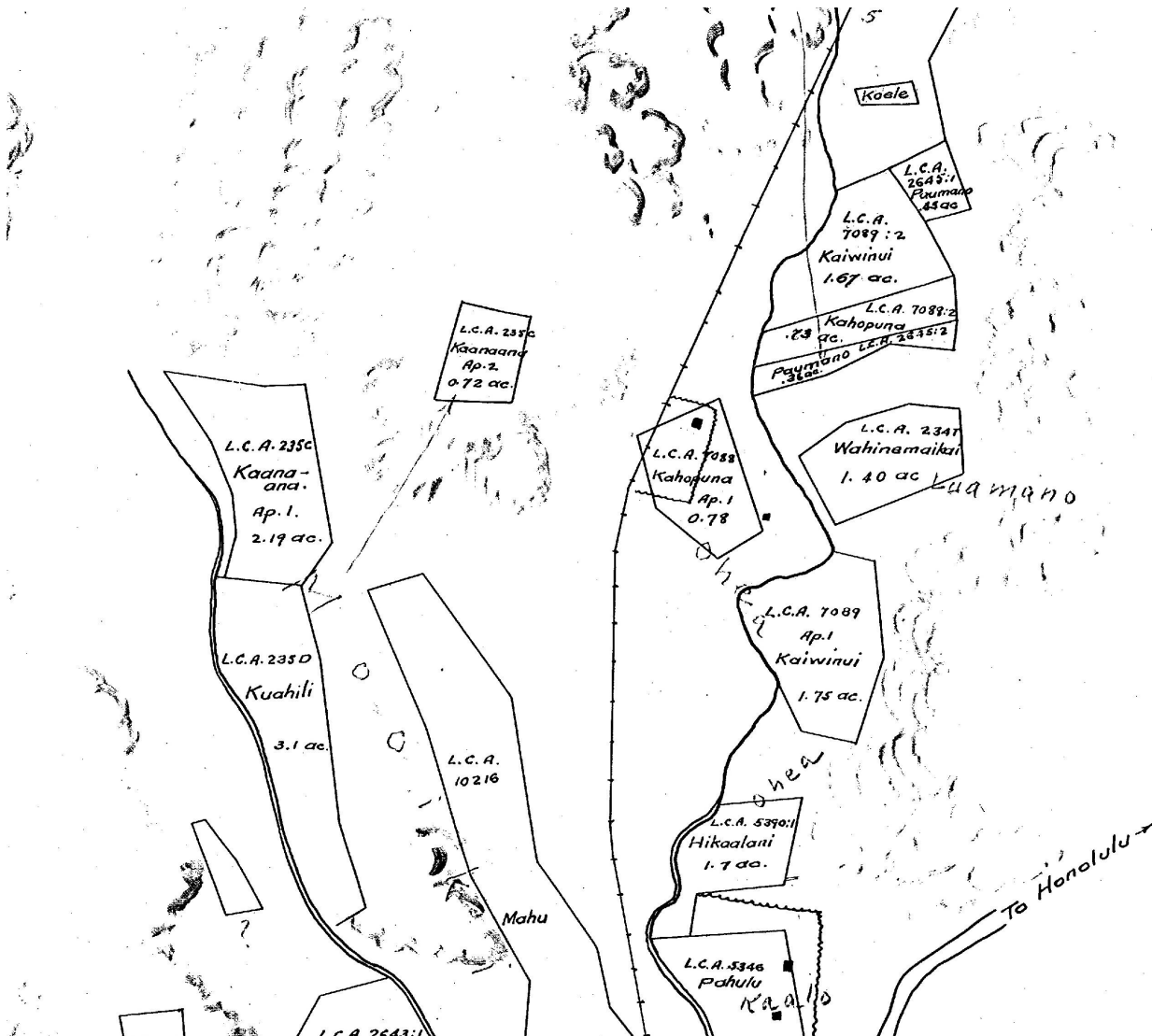
In 1874 John Cummins was instrumental, in helping King Kalākaua effect a reciprocity treaty with the United States, after which the sugar industry prospered.

### 1877 Ranch Converted into Sugar Plantation

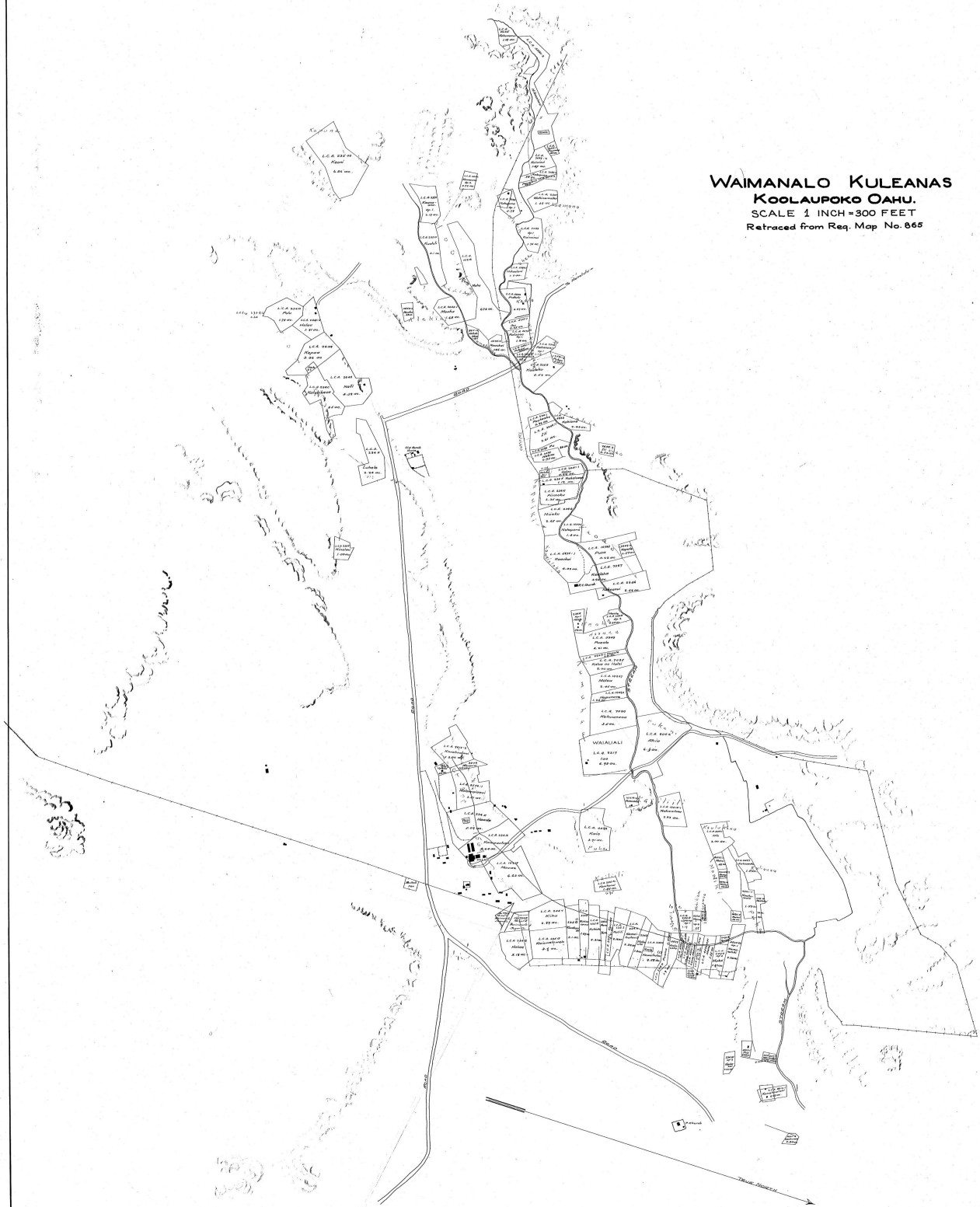
John Cummins conceived the idea of converting the ranch into a commercial sugar venture in 1877, two years after King Kalākaua had concluded a reciprocity treaty with the United States, greatly enhancing the sugar industry in the kingdom. Its first mill started grinding cane in January 1881.

### 1880 Waimanalo Kuleana Ownership under the 1850 Kuleana Act

The Kuleana Act of 1850 enabled Hawaiian commoners for the first time in Hawaiian history to acquire fee simple title to land. Such land ownership was largely concentrated along the rivers so critical for farming.



WAIMANALO KULEANAS  
KOOLAUPOKO OAHU.  
SCALE 1 INCH = 300 FEET  
Retraced from Reg. Map No. 865



### **1881 Sugar Plantation Started Grinding Cane Sugar**

The mill stood near Poalima Street behind present-day Shima's Market on Kalaniana'ole Highway. Homes were on both sides of the highway.



The Sugar mill at present Poalima Street

The sugar plantation required more water than was easily available and a ditch was built to divert water from Maunawili Stream to Waimanalo. Two million gallons of water per day was pumped through a 2-mile long tunnel through Mount Olomana and into a reservoir where it was tapped to Waimanalo Sugar Company until the 1950s. The sugar industry became a huge success.

### **1881 Rail Tracks to a New Wharf at Huli Street for Steamer "SS Waimanalo"**

Rail tracks were laid out and three locomotive engines were brought in to haul cane to the mill and the wharf. The sugar industry became a huge success.

Waimānalo Sugar Company built a 700-foot pier, Waimānalo Landing (near what is now the intersection of Huli Street and Kalaniana'ole Highway,) to use to transport the sugar, as well as serve as a landing for inter-island steamers (it was dismantled in the early 1950s.)

The railroad tracks from the mill culminated at a long wooden pier; at the end of the pier, winches and cranes lifted the bags of sugar onto the vessel alongside.

The 86-foot ocean steamer "SS Waimānalo" (later renamed "SS John A. Cummins" or "Kaena") owned by John Adams Cummins of the Waimanalo Sugar Plantation Company, made trips twice a week between stops in Ko'olaupoko (He'eia and Waimānalo) and Honolulu, exporting sugar and returning with supplies and goods.



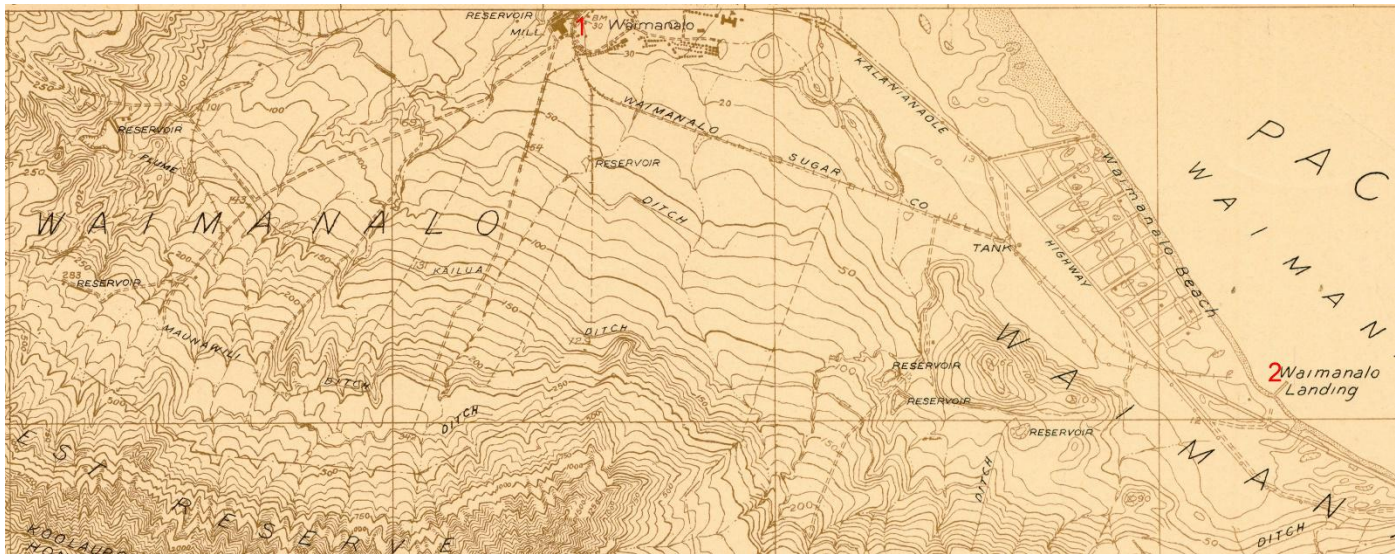


1880's- 1900's Locs. hauling cut sugarcane to the sugar mill at Poalima Street behind present-day Shima's Market.

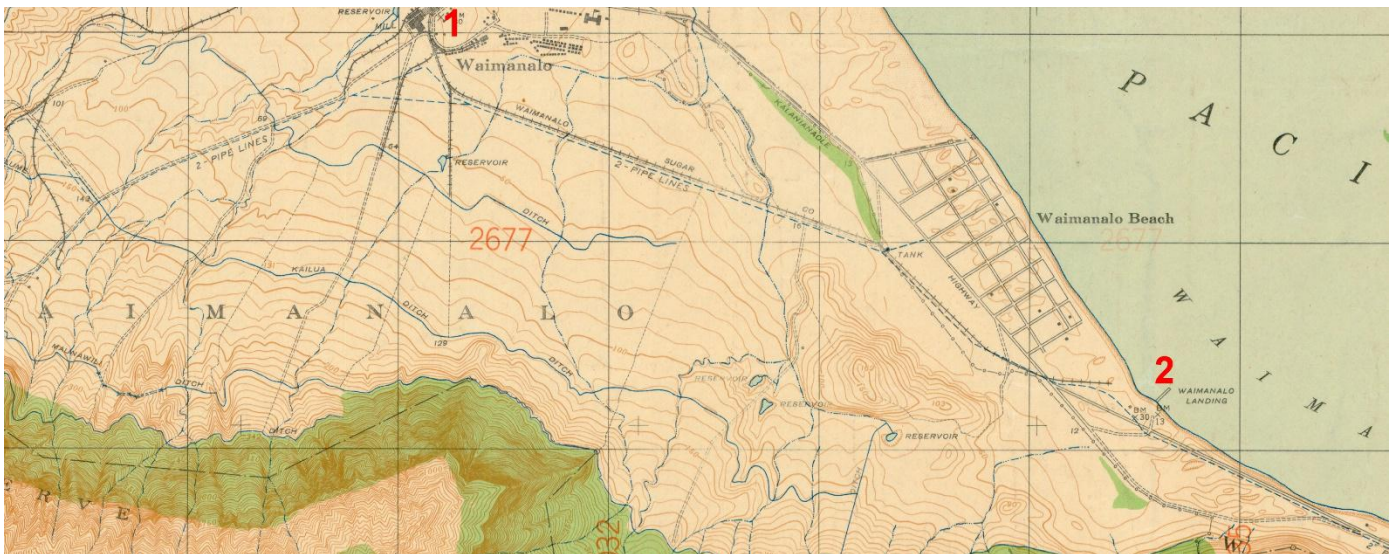


"SS Waimanalo" at the 700-foot-long pier,  
(near what is now the intersection of Huli Street and Kalaniana'ole Highway,)





1927 KokoHead USGS topo. map showing plantation roads and the railroad tracks from the sugar mill (1) to the pier (2).



1934 KokoHead USGS topo. map showing plantation roads and the railroad tracks from the sugar mill (1) to the pier (2).

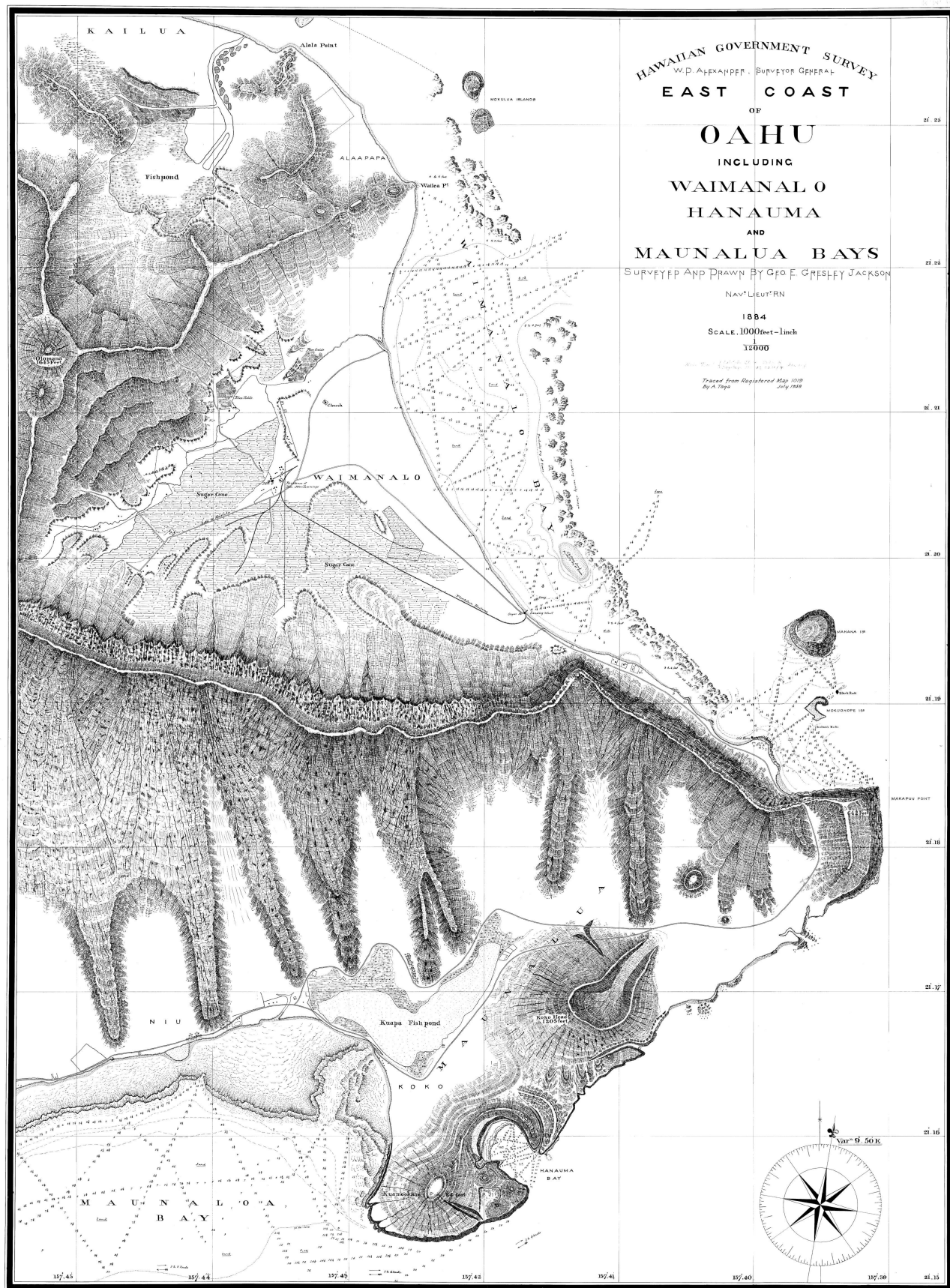
### **1885 John Cummins sells Sugar Plantation**

Control of the plantation passed to W. G. Irwin and Co. in 1885, with John Cummins continuing as manager. Cummins was ahead of the time in adopting a sort of “social welfare” plan for his employees, building a large structure containing a reading room and a section for dances and social gatherings for the plantation laborers.

It was decorated with Chinese and Japanese fans on the ceiling and pictures of King Kalākaua and other members of the royal family on the walls, and contained books, tables, an organ and singing canaries.

John Cummins left the sugar business to William G. Irwin, agent of Claus Spreckles, and developed a commercial building called the Cummins Block at Fort and Merchant streets in Downtown Honolulu.

In 1889 John Cummings represented the Kingdom of Hawai‘i at the Paris exposition known as Exposition Universelle.





### **1890 John Cummins appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs for Hawaii Kingdom**

On June 17, 1890 John Cummings became Minister of Foreign Affairs in Kalākaua's cabinet, and thus was in the House of Nobles of the legislature for the 1890 session.

### **1893 Illegal overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii (refer to [Overview of Waimanalo Native History](#)).**

It did not affect the Sugar Plantation as it depended by now largely on immigrants such as workers from Portugal and the Philippines. However, it limited/impact access to the beaches by the Native Hawaiian farmers and fisher folks as the beaches became more and more reserved for the white elite. Additionally, over time, most of the river-adjacent Kuleana ownership was lost by Native Hawaiians and they retreated to the south of the valley – also known as the desert because of more limited rainfall – where some homestead lease housing was then established.

### **1910 Nuuanu Pali already widened for horse and carriage access**



### **1913 John Cummins Dies**

He died on March 21, 1913 from influenza after a series of strokes and was buried at the O'ahu Cemetery.

### **1917 1,500 Acres of Waimanalo Sugar Co. Land Becomes Military Reservation (refer to [Bellows Air Force Station History](#)).**

Due to security concerns, an Executive Order from President Woodrow Wilson in 1917 significantly changed Waimānalo and Waimānalo Sugar Company – more than 1,500-acres belonging to the Waimānalo Sugar Company were converted to a military reservation.







Lanikai Beach subdivision development circa 1915

1928 – Pali being graded, widened as a highway for vehicular traffic





192-40's Sugar Plantation public tours

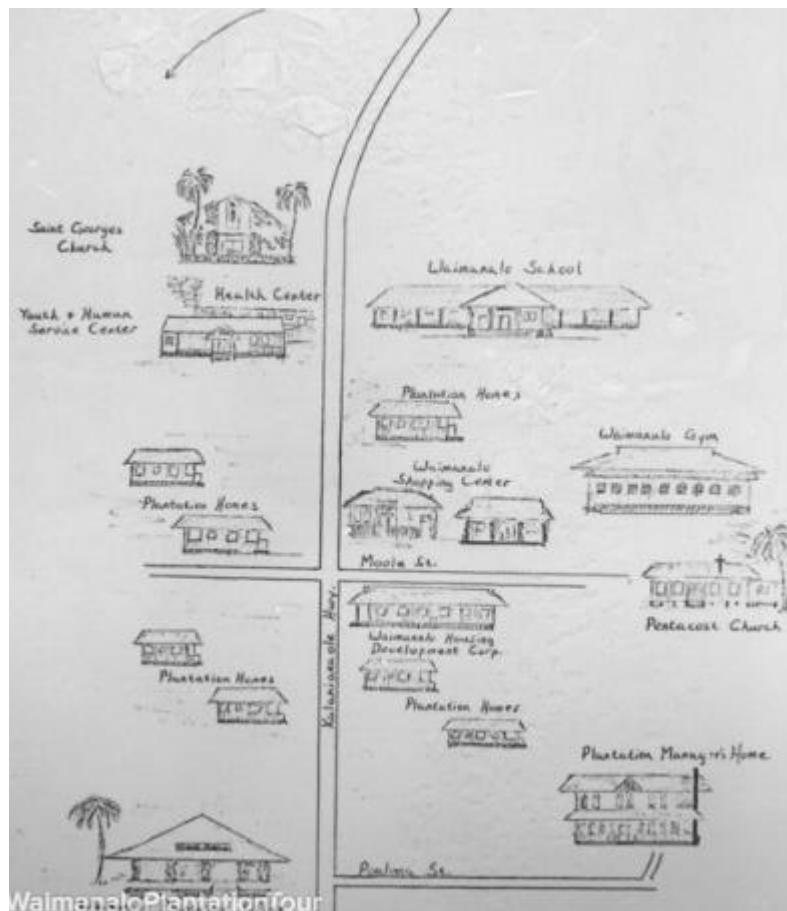


**1915 (circa) Aerial photo with expansive sugar plantation.**  
White sugar mill (chimney) at center left, worker's quarters at right center above the highway.

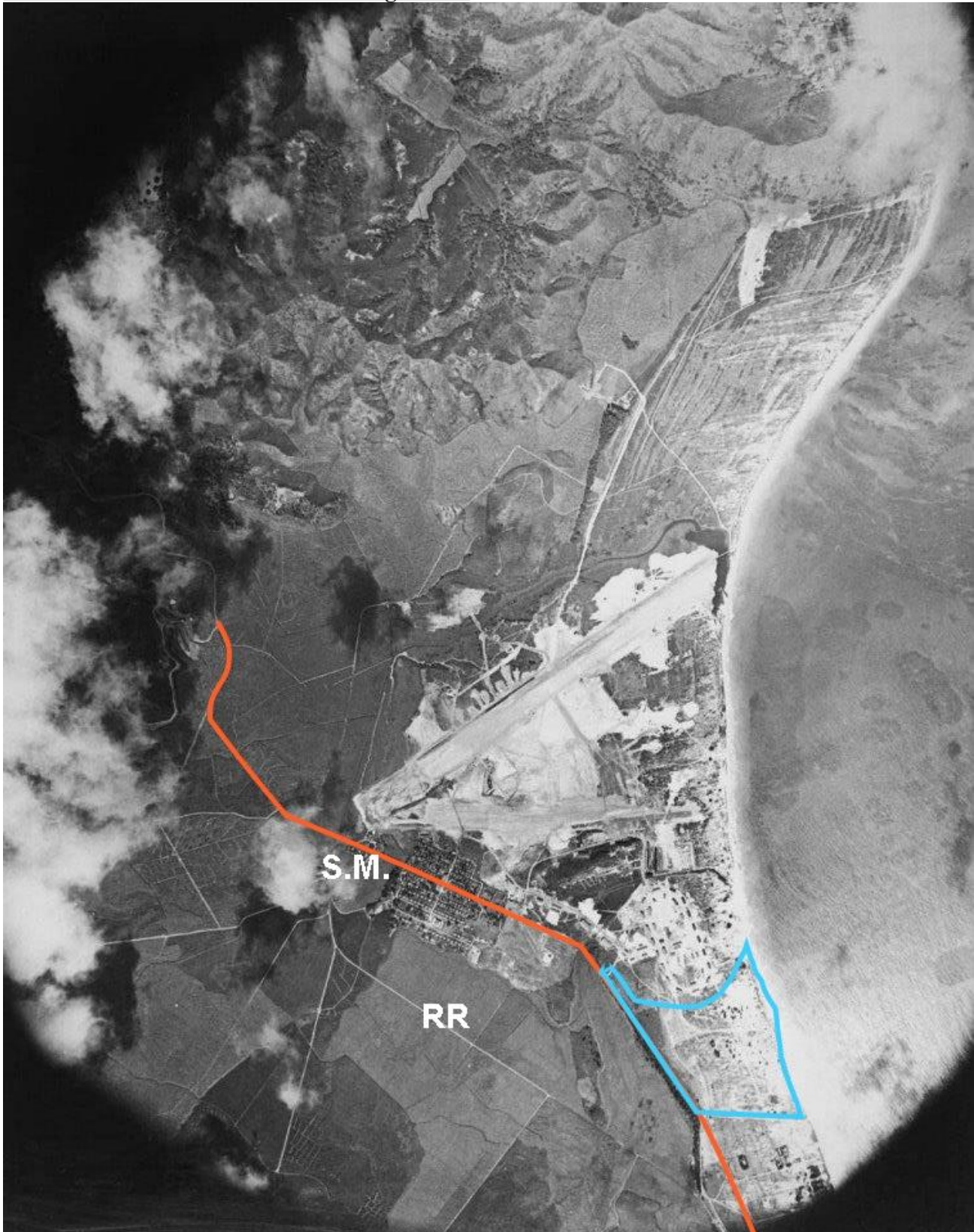


Aerial photo of sugar mill



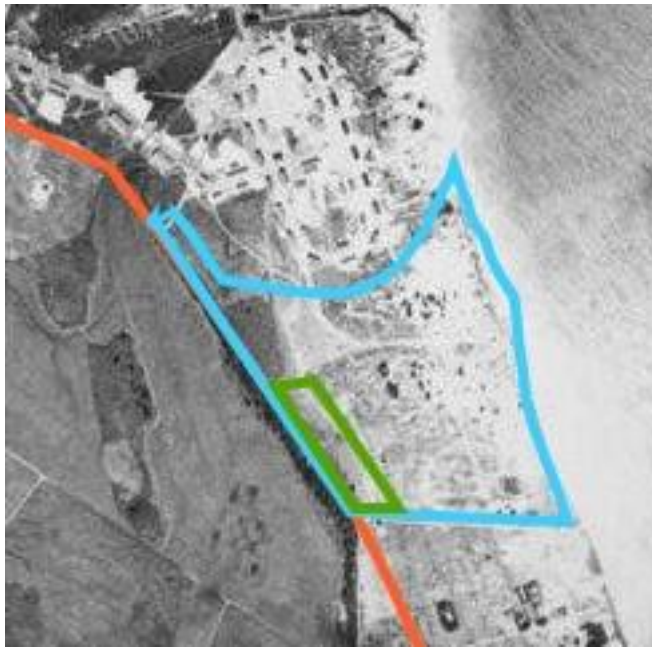


**1942 Bellows Air Force Station during WWII**



**1942 – Aerial photo of Bellows Air Force Base and surrounding Sugar plantation.**

**The present 75-acre City and County of Honolulu parcel is marked in blue. Present Kalanianaʻole Highway(72) is shown in red. S.M. = Sugar Mill. RR = Railroad tracks from Sugar Mill to Pier.**



**1942 – Aerial photo of Bellows Air Force Base enlarged showing extensive grading and a temporary road infrastructure throughout the future “Sherwood” site.**

**The present 75-acre City and County of Honolulu parcel is marked in blue along with the 9-acre proposal for the homeless village site.**

### **1947 Sugar Plantation Shuts Down**

In 1947, the sugar plantation was shut down.

### **2020**

Today, the line of broken pilings and all the landing’s machinery and crane and rigging, lies submerged beneath 12-15 feet of water at Waimānalo Beach Park.

---