



Pa'auilo Mauka Kalopa Community Association

Photo courtesy of Karl Backus

Monthly News & Updates

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December 2020 Newsletter

Kalōpā Park History

“How Did We Get this Beautiful Park?”

By the Kalōpā Park Committee



In the grove dedicated to Quentin Tomich are Rob Culbertson, Mike Crosson, Dave DeEsch,

Linda Gallano, Kristina Adams and Francis Higgins

The Park Committee of the Pa'auilo Mauka Kalōpā Community Association (PMKCA) wants you to visit Kalōpā State Park. The 100-acre State Park is a native forest, made up of mostly native endemic or indigenous plants. The large lawn areas feature a statewide representation of *Hibiscus*. The 500 adjacent acres are designated State Forest Reserve and include the Kalōpā Gulch Trail System and a planted forest of eucalyptus, silk oak, paperbark, ironwood and tropical ash.

This month we will share some history of the Park and next time tell you what is going on in the Park these days. Kalōpā Park is a unique and amazing asset in the Hāmākua District, and you should be enjoying it.

We gleaned much of our information reading P. Quentin Tomich's book *Hawaii, Perspectives on Hāmākua History*. He opened our eyes to the fragility of the park's existence over the years and to the times the land was almost lost. He outlined the many local initiatives held at bay that could have had us today looking at old cane fields, grazing land, a high value timber forest, or an agricultural experiment station, instead of the beautiful park we have. It took the community working together to finally say it wanted a park and community members were willing to do the planning, bulldozing, planting, and other hard work to make the park happen.

According to Tomich, the 2000-foot level was the upper limit of intensive land use by early Hawaiians, so Kalōpā was likely never farmed. Cattle were introduced to the islands around 1800 and were grazed in forests for years. In 1903 the First Territorial Reserve Act provided that certain government forests be fenced to act as watershed to protect sugar lands below. This helped protect the Kalōpā tract. In the 1930s large tracts of forest were planted on depleted lands and fencing protected the native forest. The best patches, like Kalōpā, were left alone. Thus, 100 acres (our present park) were saved. The contiguous 500 acres of Forest Reserve land was planted with the eucalyptus, silk oak and other trees as part of a soil conservation plan.

Late in the 1950s, Kalōpā was proposed as an Agricultural Experiment Station but a local sugar company executive touted that the land be saved for sugar production so the land was saved again (but not taken over by sugar). In 1962 the Hāmākua District Development Council (HDDC) was founded and again sugar was proposed for this prime land. The community resisted, preferring the land to become a park. Many volunteered their expertise to clear, bulldoze and plan the park, including Alfred Ferreira, Daniel Freitas, William and George Ferreira, Eddie Boteilho, Ernest Alfonso, Abraham Ramos, Tara Sonomura, and the Cordeiros - Alfred, Alfred Jr. and Manuel. We should be very grateful to those folks who had not only the foresight to act but who put in the hard labor to make it happen. If your parents or grandparents helped in this effort in any way, you should be very proud and tell them so.



Diana Nui is working in the section dedicated to Abraham Ramos

In 1967, 100 acres of Kalōpā were set aside as a new state park. Construction took place from 1969 to 1970 at a cost of \$204,000 and the grand opening was in August 1970. By 1975 it was apparent that the State Parks Division did not have the funds or staff to further develop the park so the HDDC stepped in to add new features to the park. The community volunteered again, laid out the trail system and inventoried the trees and shrubs in the park and Forest Reserve. In 1976 the Youth Conservation Corp (YCC) began a 5-year project to construct and clear trails and plant native species.

Over the ensuing years many community groups and volunteers have contributed to the park by giving time and expertise to the projects. An important addition to the park is the Polynesian Garden, an effort that was suggested by Quentin Tomich and spearheaded by Linda Gallano.

Linda tells us that the Polynesian Garden began as a Hawaiian History class project at Honoka'a High School in 2002. Students researched which plants were brought to the islands during the Polynesian migrations. Twelve plants were most suitable to the park's altitude, rainfall and soil conditions. The next step was to find huli (starts) of these plants to begin our garden. The students' families provided plant starters and the garden preparations began. Mahalo to Kenneth Waikiki and family for the taro huli.

Water had to be brought to the garden, as well as fencing built to keep pigs out. The pig lesson was learned early on when we discovered all the newly planted huli gone during one of our weekly visits. Many of the boys who did the fencing came from ranching families. The fence they built has kept pigs out until today, mahalo to the DeLuz and DeRego families' training. Funds to buy the fencing materials came from PMKCA donations.

As the project progressed, students were required to document and present their project to the community at public meetings. Crystal Umeda and Ricky Tabucbuc handled that job well.

By 2006 the students had graduated but the garden still needed care. Community members from PMKCA formed the Kalōpā Park Committee and have cared for the garden since then. One of the garden's most steadfast members was Delores Ramos, who not only worked in the garden but guided us in our efforts to continue the project. Catherine and Don Levy (Catherine made the sign at the entrance), Francis Higgins, and Dave DeEsch have contributed time, effort and materials to this and other park projects.

Mahalo and Aloha to Linda Gallano for her commitment to the garden. She organized the students to develop it and is still devoted to organizing us to keep it up.

We have tried to mention families and individuals who helped with the park from its inception to its continuing life in 2020. If you or your family were involved but we did not mention you, please forgive the omission and contact us with your memories so that we can add the names to our records and recognize the work.

During our research we spoke to many community members who told stories of the park development and a special man who gave so much. The words of Dave DeEsch "I especially remember walking with Uncle Quentin, like I was a sponge for his knowledge of the native trees, diversity of habitat, and especially his passion . . . endless gratitude." We are indebted to P. Quentin Tomich (fondly called Uncle Quentin) who passed away in 2014, for his involvement in saving the land, working in the Park for so many years, and for his work documenting the history of the Hāmākua. His book, Hawai'i, Perspectives on Hāmākua History, is an invaluable source of information on the Hāmākua District and a wealth of photographs both historic and from his own exploration. As Quentin always said, "Community Matters".

(Look for Part 2 of our Kalōpā Park series coming in January, 2021!)

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## PLEASE READ AND CONSIDER:

### Open Board and Officer Positions!

***If you have an interest in the welfare of our communities, appreciate what PMKCA does, and want to join a great group of similarly motivated folks, please consider volunteering for one of these two positions on the PMKCA Board:***

#### **Secretary:**

Our current Secretary, Diana Nui, will be resigning her position at the end of 2020. Diana will continue to be active in our association, in particular, by working on the Kalōpā Park Committee. We will miss her insightful participation on the Board and are very grateful for her contributions over the years.

The Secretary is an officer position in PMKCA and involves taking minutes at General Membership and Board meetings, maintaining the records of PMKCA and handling a small number of other communications on behalf of our association.

### **Water, Health & Utilities Committee chair:**

Jami Sales, our Water, Health and Utilities committee chair, has resigned from the Board after many years of service. Jami has been very active in support of our community in many ways and we will miss her contributions to PMKCA board activities. Thank you, Jami, for all your hard work.

The Water, Health & Utilities Committee keeps in touch with county and other utility providers to address problems or provide information to our Pa'auilo Mauka and Kalōpā communities when changes are planned. The committee also maintains maps of utility services in our Pa'auilo Mauka and Kalōpā communities (water lines, in particular).

***If you are interested in volunteering for either position, please contact any of our Board members by phone or email. Contact information can be found at [www.PMKCA.org](http://www.PMKCA.org).***

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### **Next Meetings**

Here's a lineup of the next PMKCA meetings:

**Thursday, Jan 14, 2021, 7PM** PMKCA Board of Directors Meeting  
(Possibly by Zoom Videoconference)

**Tuesday, Jan 26, 2021, 7PM** PMKCA Annual Meeting  
(COVID 19 guidelines permitting, the annual meeting will be held at Paauilo School.)

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Visit our website



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