

MAUI NEI



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The only high school on the island had been in Lahaina, where early missionaries had built a seminary in 1831 in order to train Hawaiian preachers. Lahainaluna, the only public boarding school in the state, became a public school in 1925. But until the 1950s, getting from Central Maui to Lahaina meant

Today it seems strange to turn up Holomua Road from Hookipa and at the end of a tunnel of overarching trees find the remnants of what must have been a very imposing structure in the middle of nowhere. When the gracious C.W. Dickey building at Maui High School was built at Hamakuapoko in 1921, it made sense. The school building with its concrete colonnades, spires and cupola was centrally located.

driving a road so torturous that the town might as well have been on another island.

Wailuku, Paukukalo, Waihee and Waikapu were plantation villages with most of the residents working for Wailuku Sugar Co. Kahului was a harbor facing a scattering of plantation camps and a lot of sandy scrubland and a few stores. Kihei was deserted. There were villages, remnants of early Hawaiian settlements, scattered along Maui's green shorelines. There were ranch and plantation camps scattered across the slopes of Haleakala.

Most Mauians lived in Puunene, Paia, Hamakuapoko and Haiku. Paia extended all the way from Hana Highway to and beyond Rainbow Park. At a time when the entire population of Maui County totaled less than 40,000, more than 10,000 lived in Paia, Hamakuapoko and Haiku.

It was a time in the history of Maui when nearly everyone lived within walking distance of their jobs, mostly in sugar cane and pineapple fields or at sugar mills and pineapple canneries, and it was a rare Mauian who attended school beyond the 8th grade.

As early as 1919, the Maui County Board of Supervisors (predecessor of the County Council) wanted to build a Maui High and Grammar School either at Paia or Hamakuapoko, then a fairly large village with a store that wasn't closed until 1950. The gram-

mar school at Hamakuapoko dated back to 1899. And in 1920, The Maui News reported that a principal recruited from the Mainland failed to show up because he thought Hawaii had been annexed by Japan.

The Kahului Railroad, the first train line in the islands, was originally built by Claus Spreckels to move sugar to Kahului. The railroad bought its first passenger coach in 1901 and extended the line from Spreckelsville to Upper Paia and into Wailuku in 1906, and two years later ran to Hamakuapoko. The line was extended into Haiku in 1922 when the highest and longest bridge in the islands was built over Maliko Gulch.

Maui High School, aided by its central location and the railroad, made it possible for most of the youngsters on the island to go to public school beyond the 8th grade for the first time. They are getting gray these days, but there are still individuals who remember climbing on the train at one of the two Wailuku stations and riding to school every day.

It got even easier when Kahului Railroad started running buses islandwide in 1935. A separate bus line ran between Kahului and Hana from 1938 to 1947. Private cars were only for the well-off in those days.

Maui High at Hamakuapoko hit its peak enrollment in 1940, the same year Baldwin High School

was opened at a cost of \$589,000 -- half of it in federal Public Works Administration funds.

The trains stopped in 1966 and the bus lines were shut down about the same time. That was during a time when there were more Mauians living in Honolulu or on the Mainland than on the island itself. There were few jobs.

The big population shift on Maui began in the 1950s when Dream City was developed in Kahului and Maui families moved out of plantation camps and into homes of their own for the first time.

Maui High School kept in step with the population shift. The school was moved from Hamakuapoko to Kahului in 1972. The graceful old buildings shaded by huge trees were mostly abandoned, although government agencies used some of the 1950s-era buildings and the old gym was used as a county recreation facility into the 1990s. First the gym burned down. Last weekend, the dilapidated main building burned, but the concrete walls still stand.

Saturday, the Friends of Old Maui High School, who want to restore and use the old buildings again, are holding a "Rise From the Ashes Rally" at the school at 9 a.m. The more Maui changes, the more its history needs to be preserved.

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