



Foundation Document Overview

Honouliuli National Historic Site

Hawai'i

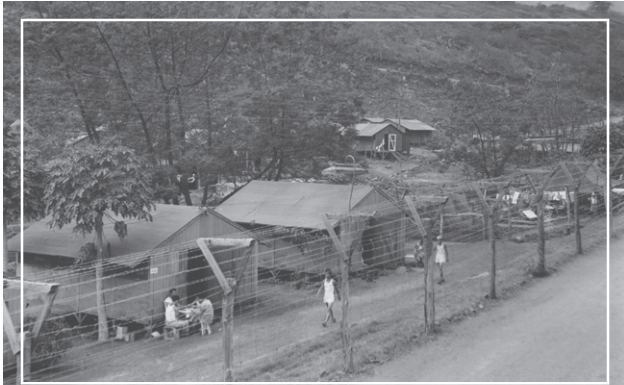


Contact Information

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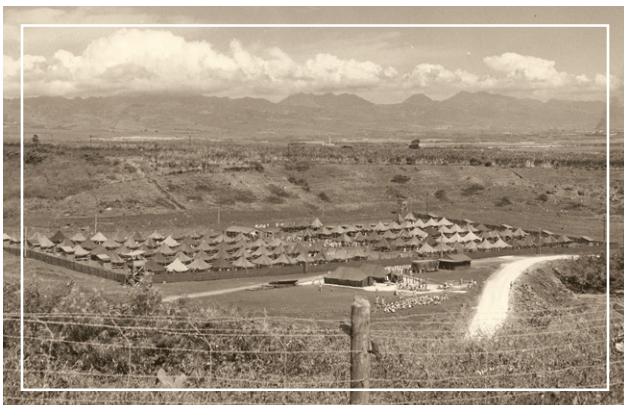
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Purpose



Barracks in the civilian internment area of Honouliuli, Compound V (c1945-1946). Courtesy of the Japanese Cultural Center / Japanese American Relocation & Internment: The Hawai'i Experience Archival Collection.

The purpose of HONOLIULI NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE is to conserve and interpret the largest and longest-used World War II incarceration site in the Hawaiian Islands. The national historic site provides opportunities for public education about the World War II internment story in Hawai'i, invites reflection on wartime experiences, and recommit us to the pursuit of freedom and justice.



Southernmost POW area, Compound VII (c1945-1946). Courtesy of the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i / Hawai'i Plantation Village collection.

Significance

Significance statements express why Honouliuli National Historic Site resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- **Honouliuli Internment Camp.** The Honouliuli Internment Camp was the largest and longest-used incarceration facility in Hawai'i during World War II. Run by the U.S. Army, hundreds of civilian internees from Hawai'i were co-located with thousands of prisoners of war from both the Pacific and European theaters. Set in an isolated gulch, the national historic site is in close proximity to Pearl Harbor, the catalyst to America's involvement in World War II.
- **Internment in Hawai'i.** Public awareness of the incarceration of Japanese Americans and European Americans in Hawai'i during WWII is lesser known than the history of incarceration on the U.S. mainland. In bringing this history to the public eye, Honouliuli illustrates the government's strategy to selectively target and detain civilians under martial law, as well as the crippling impact and stigma on those affected.
- **Martial Law.** The United States government imposed martial law on Hawai'i from December 7, 1941 to October 24, 1944. In terms of duration, and the total population and land area affected, this use of martial law is unprecedented in United States history and had a lasting social impact on the Hawaiian Islands.
- **Injustice.** Honouliuli Internment Camp represents one of 17 known sites in Hawai'i used to unjustly incarcerate people of Japanese and other ethnicities. It serves to remind us of the critical importance of safeguarding civil liberties and maintaining our national values during times of crisis.
- **Portal to World War II History on the Home Front and Abroad.** Honouliuli National Historic Site serves as a portal to broader themes associated with World War II in Hawai'i; including Japanese American military heroism, transnationalism, and community advocacy and activism. The legacy of this time period is reflected in thousands of personal stories that illustrate the diverse experiences, impacts, and perspectives of individuals and multi-ethnic communities.
- **Cultural Resources.** Honouliuli National Historic Site contains rare archeological sites and cultural landscape features, contributing to the distinctive character of the former internment camp and exhibiting the many entwined layers of history and culture that encompass hundreds of years of human occupation at Honouliuli.

Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Environmental Conditions and Geographic Context**
- **Public Understanding, Education, and Involvement**
- **Cultural Landscape and Archeological Features**
- **Personal Stories, Museum Collections, Archives, Documents, and Inventories**
- **Cultural Traditions and Values**



On site tours, historic photos are used to illustrate the World War II conditions (2016). NPS photo.



Obon ceremony to celebrate the finding of a taiko drum used at Honouliuli in 1944 (2017). NPS photo.

Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- The bombing of Pearl Harbor by Japan intensified public fear, hysteria, prejudice, and racism, which ultimately resulted in the unjust incarceration of people of Japanese and other ancestries throughout the Hawaiian Islands.
- Implementation of martial law began in the minutes after the bombing of Pearl Harbor; in the three years that followed, military control spread over nearly every facet of civilian life, dividing an already wounded community and resulting in the institutionalization of fear and mistrust.
- The realities of wartime in Hawai‘i tested the nature of community, civilian-military relationships, family, patriotism and identity—catalyzing moments of courage, sacrifice, resilience, advocacy, and ganbate (translated from Japanese as “do your best” or “work hard”).
- Honouliuli is a place to reflect upon the guarantees of the United States Constitution and American democratic principles of justice and equality; it is a powerful reminder of our shared responsibility to avoid fearmongering and the rationalization of systemic discrimination in times of crisis.
- Honouliuli’s rugged “natural prison” created by the physical geography of the Honouliuli Gulch was Hawai‘i’s largest POW camp—thousands of soldiers, conscripted laborers, and refugees from Japan, Okinawa, Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Italy were held in compounds adjacent to civilian internees. Given the shared heritage of many POWs and the local population, their experiences in Hawai‘i and the Pacific provide an opportunity for meaningful reflection on the effects of war on transnational communities, as well as the wide-ranging impacts and tragedies of war on both sides of the battlefield.
- The name Honouliuli is derived from the traditional Hawaiian land division (ahupua‘a) within which the camp was constructed. The prewar history of the Hono‘uli‘uli ahupua‘a spans hundreds of years of human habitation and provides a vantage point from which to view the impacts of the introduction of an agricultural-based economy, land privatization, and the legacy of the U.S. military presence in Hawai‘i.

Description

On February 24, 2015, Honouliuli National Monument was established to preserve and protect 123 acres of the original 160-acre Honouliuli Internment Camp where civilian internees and prisoners of war (POWs) were incarcerated during World War II. Constructed on the 'Ewa Plain, Honouliuli is located within the deep gulch of the Honouliuli Stream, three miles northwest of Pearl Harbor. The unit was redesignated as Honouliuli National Historic Site in 2019.

The name Honouliuli (translated as “dark bay”) is derived from the traditional Hawaiian land division (ahupua'a) within which the camp was constructed. The traditional history of the Hono'uli'uli ahupua'a is one of hundreds of years of human habitation, with cultural sites and natural resources bearing significance to the Native Hawaiian community.

Western contact starting in the late 18th century led to land privatization and the introduction of an agricultural-based economy in Hawai'i, including the proliferation of the sugarcane industry. Heralding vast ecological, demographic, and social changes, it was at the onset of the “sugar era” that much of the Hono'uli'uli ahupua'a was converted into cane fields and contract workers from Asia, Portugal, Puerto Rico, and other countries were recruited to work the fields. By World War II, approximately 37% of Hawai'i's population (159,000 people) could trace their ancestry to Japan.

The devastation following the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, led to the immediate declaration of martial law in Hawai'i, granting the U.S. military civic authority until October 24, 1944. Among hundreds of orders issued, the FBI and U.S. military were extended authority to single out, interrogate, and detain civilians suspected of disloyalty to the United States. Nearly 2,000 individuals were arrested in the days and weeks to follow. Despite the suspicions and numerous rumors, the government found no sabotage or fifth-column activities were committed by Hawai'i's Japanese American populace. Those arrested were held at 16 ad hoc confinement sites established on six of the main Hawaiian Islands. Most of the detainees would be transferred to camps on the U.S. mainland until Honouliuli Internment Camp opened on March 2, 1943.

In contrast to the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans on the U.S. West Coast under Executive Order 9066, arrests in Hawai'i affected a smaller group of individuals, with business and religious leaders and educated individuals in the Japanese American community being targeted as well as a small number of civilians of European ancestry.

Resistance from multi-ethnic community coalitions, regulatory powers granted under martial law, and the need to maintain the island's workforce were all reasons why mass incarceration did not occur. Because those affected were singled out and set apart from their communities, the social and psychological stigma they endured for being wrongfully accused was particularly devastating.

Honouliuli was the only camp in Hawai'i sited and constructed with the express purpose of confining civilian internees during World War II. Containing seven compounds and situated amidst sugarcane fields, approximately 364 civilians were interned at Honouliuli until its closure in 1946. Honouliuli also became the largest prisoner of war camp in the Hawaiian Islands, holding approximately 4,000 Japanese, Korean, Italian, Okinawan, Filipino, and Taiwanese (Formosan) enemy soldiers, non-combatant laborers, and conscripts in compounds directly adjacent to the civilian internees. POWs came to Honouliuli bearing the emotional burden of their own struggles and losses, with their diverse impressions impacted by wartime political status, and daily experiences in and out of camp. Many POWs shared heritage or even familial ties with the ethnically diverse population of Hawai'i, making interaction common.

After Honouliuli closed in 1946, the camp was dismantled and the history went largely unnoticed for many years. In 2002, volunteers from the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i learned of the camp and located remnants of it in Honouliuli Gulch, inspiring scholarship and awareness campaigns to bring these painful memories into the public eye. Today, Honouliuli National Historic Site serves as a place to reflect on wartime experiences and recommit ourselves to the pursuit of freedom and justice.

