



# HUI LIMA KOKUA NEWSLETTER - Ianuali 2024

## Hawaii Club of Ventura County Newsletter - Ianuali 2024

### Calendar & Upcoming Events

#### Ianuali | January

- 1 - New Year's Day
- 13 - Hui Lima Club Meeting
- 15 - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

#### [Hui Lima Meeting Location](#)

Club House of the Bonaventure  
10949 Telegraph Road  
Ventura, CA 93004

### [Hau'oli Makahiki Hou!](#)

Hope everyone enjoyed their holiday season and are having a great start to the New Year. Apologies for the delay with the newsletter this month.

January's meeting included some good rounds of Bingo. To the surprise of everyone, the club house is undergoing renovations, but fortunately the meeting was relocated to a different room in the main building. Hopefully all will be finished by next month.

In regards to our previous gathering, a big mahalo to Jerry Matsukado for leading our Holiday Sing A Long! What a great way to kick off the December holiday season.

### January is Kalaupapa Month in Hawai'i

Just three years ago in 2021, Kalaupapa Month was signed into law by former Hawai'i governor Dave Ige. The idea for this initiative came from non profit organization Ka 'Ohana O Kalaupapa, who are descendants, family members, or friends of those who were exiled to Kalaupapa after a leprosy diagnosis.

Members of Ka 'Ohana O Kalaupapa recognized that as the years passed, fewer and fewer would be around to share the stories and experiences of the residents of Kalaupapa. Since its formal establishment in 2003, Ka 'Ohana has dedicated itself to preserving these memories, remembering the individuals with dignity, and educating descendants and the general public about the people of Kalaupapa.

Leprosy, now primarily called Hansen's Disease, appears in the Hawaiian historical record around the 1830s, but it's unknown when it was first introduced to the islands. Because Hawaiians had no immunity to this and other foreign diseases introduced, the population was exceptionally vulnerable. In 1865, under pressure from the foreign-influenced Board of Health, King Kamehameha V passed the "Act to Prevent the Spread of Leprosy". This allowed for land to be set aside to isolate those with leprosy, and mandated the report of diagnosed individuals. Unfortunately, this led to effectively criminalizing the disease and aggressive efforts by authorities to find and forcibly remove affected individuals from their homes and communities. Families were torn apart; even children were separated from one or both parents.

In the same year, the peninsula on northern Moloka'i was chosen as the site for the isolation settlement for a few reasons. The pali, or steep cliffs, provided a natural boundary to the area, and even the seaside terrain could be precarious. There was land suitable to grow taro, fruits, vegetables, etc. and land for livestock, plenty of sea fishing, and a stream for fresh water.

While the setting sounds rather idyllic, the experiences were not. First, those detained by the Board of Health often underwent humiliating examinations by a panel at a detention center. If the Board determined the disease

## KALAUPAPA MONTH

*A Time To Remember*

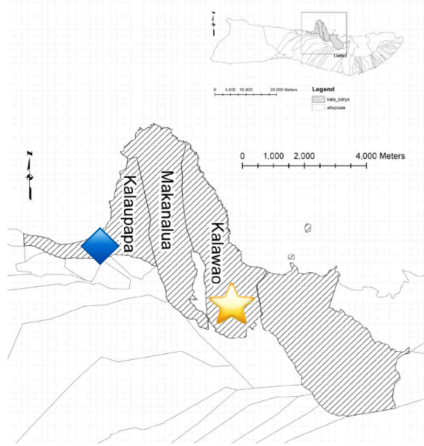


*Ka 'Ohana O Kalaupapa*



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was advanced enough, a person would be shipped off to the peninsula.

Kalawao (star, left) was the initial location of the settlement, and the first group of 12 with leprosy arrived on January 6, 1866. In addition to the 12, at least five non-afflicted family members accompanied as their kokua (help/helper). A personal account from Ambrose Hutchison, one of the 12, described being lined up two by two, each person carrying their own possessions and flanked by policemen as they boarded the ship, where two Board of Health officials met the passengers. The steamer ship left Honolulu mid evening and arrived off of Kalaupapa around 7am the next morning. The steamer anchored, and the passengers were taken the final length to the rocky shore by row boat. Hutchison recounts they were essentially just left there, with no real provisions, left to just figure it out.

The government had obtained these lands and essentially removed the prior residents of the area. They had assumed the new residents would just settle in to the houses left behind and sustain themselves by tending crops

on the fertile land. What the government didn't consider was that these people were too ill and depressed to farm and cultivate a self-sustaining colony. Many of the residents were traumatized and felt hopeless. The deplorable conditions were reported to the Board of Health. Word got around, and many Hawaiians did everything they could to hide afflicted relatives and friends, for fear they would be exiled to this hell on earth.

The Board of Health did attempt to send supplies to the colony. Additionally, by the late 1860s - early 1870s, religious missionaries began arriving at the settlement to provide care and kokua to the residents. The first church group was organized in 1866 and their church built in 1871, which became Siloama, Church of Healing Spring, a Protestant-based church. In 1873, Mormon elder, Jonathan N. Napela (or Jonatana Napela) arrived at Kalawao as kokua to his wife Kitty, who was diagnosed with Hansen's disease. Elder Jonathan led the Kalawao congregation of Latter Day Saints.

The most well-known kokua at the settlement was Father Damien. He arrived at Kalawao on May 10, 1873. He, as well as the other religious leaders, are credited with improving the lives of the patients.

Father Damien's carpentry skills came in clutch and resulted in numerous new shelters, coffins, and two new chapels that he built alongside the residents. Some of his other contributions include designing a water system to obtain fresh water from nearby sources, planting trees, organizing schools, choirs, bands, among other things. What truly stood out for the residents was that Father Damien and other religious leaders and missionaries were willing to *live and be present* among these people who had been coldly cast aside because of their disease. Father Damien shared food with them, eating from the same bowls. The fact that he built the coffins demonstrated his belief that these individuals were deserving of respect and dignity in life and death. Father Damien ended up contracting Hansen's Disease after eleven years in the colony. He also had a comorbidity of tuberculosis, which





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complicated his condition. He worked and practiced through his illnesses as long as his body would physically allow.

Towards the end of the 1800s, some of the settlement started to relocate to Kalaupapa area (the diamond on previously-pictured map), at the opposite part of the peninsula for the warmer, dryer weather. It was also easier to access for passenger and freight drop-offs. The entire peninsula was eventually taken over by the Board of Health to expand the colony, and though Kalawao and Kalaupapa were two different areas, the whole peninsula and settlement are referred to as Kalaupapa.

In November 1888, another significant figure arrived at the settlement: Mother Marianne Cope. She had already been working extensively with Hansen's Disease patients on O'ahu and Maui since 1883. She was called to Moloka'i to open a women and girls' home at Kalaupapa. In addition to this work, she started taking over the tasks of Father Damien as his illnesses progressed. She also cared for Father Damien until his passing on April 15, 1889.

There are definitely mixed feelings from those who lived at Kalaupapa. Their lives did improve with the kokua from various religious leaders, helping them create infrastructure, community, and purpose at the settlement. There was still the pain from being exiled from family and friends back home. Many healthy babies born at the colony were often separated from their mothers and adopted outside of the settlement. Despite these tragedies, the residents held strong, made new friendships, and created their own families to cherish.

Over 8,000 people came to Kalaupapa throughout the 103 years that the isolation and exile were mandated, from 1866 to 1969. Many passed away there, but some made a recovery. It was in the post WWII era that new drug therapies were discovered and significantly improved the symptoms and contagion of Hansen's Disease. These medical advances led to the 1969 repeal of the "Act to Prevent the Spread of Leprosy" mandate.

People were no longer sent to or forced to stay at Kalaupapa. However, those that did leave often found it difficult to integrate back into society. Sadly, some families rejected those that returned, either fearing contagion and/or the false stigma that still heavily prevailed that people with leprosy were "unclean". Additionally, many survivors of leprosy had been disfigured by the disease and were socially rejected for that reason, making it hard to obtain a job. Because of the continued stigma on the outside, many individuals chose to stay at Kalaupapa. Even today, there are still a few remaining residents living at Kalaupapa.

Today, Ka 'Ohana O Kalaupapa, the organization responsible for establishing this month of remembrance, has envisioned a memorial that will be built hopefully in the near future. The memorial will contain the names of those who came to Kalaupapa in one circle, and names of descendants in another interlocking circle, to represent the reunification of Kalaupapa friends and families.

*"E ho'ohanohano a e ho'omau ... To honor and perpetuate"* is the motto of Ka 'Ohana O Kalaupapa, and with their efforts, the individuals who were nearly made into forgotten outcasts in history will instead be remembered with loving honor for generations to come.



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### Chilly Weather!

Hope everyone has been staying warm in this chilly spell we're having!

Did you know 75 years ago this month, it snowed in Ventura County? From January 9-11 in 1949, 2 to 4 ½ inches of snow covered various parts of the county. Prior to that, the last reported snow in the county was 1916, when Simi Valley experienced an unusual snowfall.

Many enjoyed the snow because of the novelty in this area but for some, it was also nostalgia for previous residences that experienced regular snowfall. Of course, children were thrilled that classes were canceled because of the weather.

Although the snow was a fun diversion, it was also a disruptive diversion. One of the power lines in Oxnard snapped, and an Oxnard neighborhood lost power for five hours. Other neighborhoods in Ventura also lost power. Apparently, there was also \$1 million lost in crop damage that winter as well.

Other snowfalls have hit the area in 1987, 1989, and a light dusting in 2019 as well. It's not likely we'll get any snow this year, but hopefully all can stay warm!



### VC Star Features One of Our Own!



What a pleasant surprise to see Bill Pendergrass featured in the online edition of the Ventura County Star!

Post Office Bill was recognized for his more than 55 years (and counting!) in the postal service and his iconic presence at the Ventura Post Office on Santa Clara St.

Thank you, Bill, for serving our community!



The online link to the article was sent via email, but here it is again:

<https://www.vcstar.com/story/news/local/2024/01/19/55-years-later-venturas-post-office-bill-is-still-going-strong/72188506007/>

***Hope to see you at the February Club Meeting, Saturday, 2/10 11a-1p!***

**Comments, Corrections, Questions, Suggestions?** Feel free to reach out and let me know if you have suggestions for future newsletters, or corrections / comments on previous ones. Leah Kammeyer, [LKammeyer@gmail.com](mailto:LKammeyer@gmail.com), (805) 469-9230