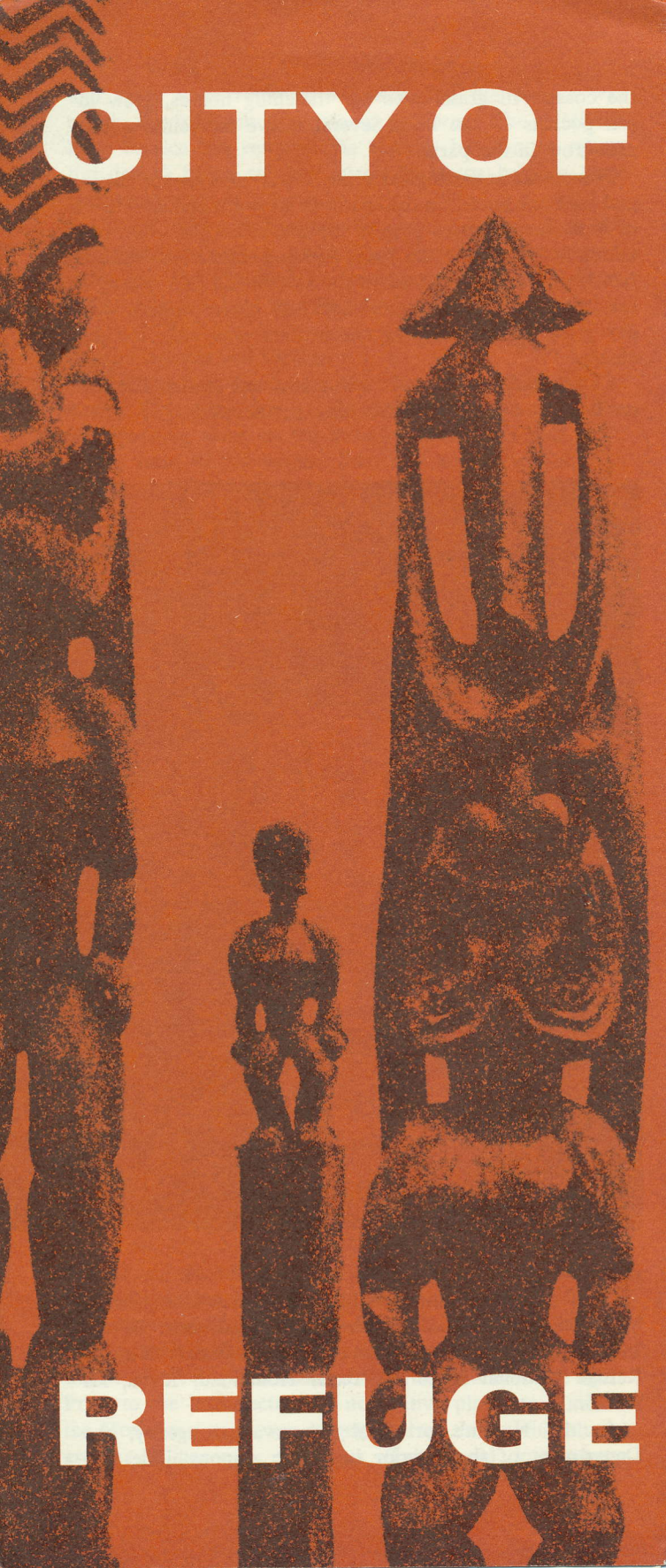
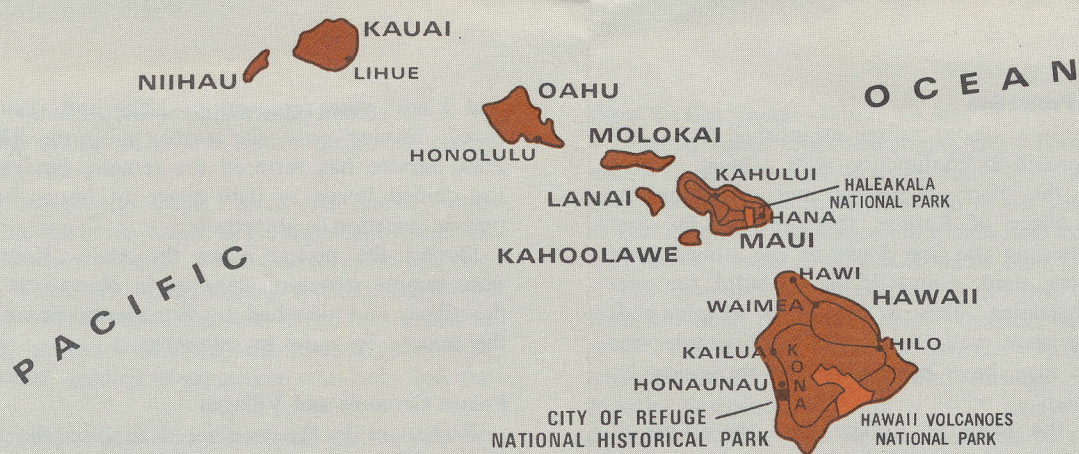


CITY OF

REFUGE





Defeated warriors, noncombatants, and kapu breakers escaped death if they reached the sacred land at Honaunau ahead of their pursuers.

This was no game of prisoner's base. The object of war in old Hawaii was extermination of the enemy, including any women, children, and old folks of the opposing side found during the heat of battle. Wars were part of the politics and human ecology of Hawaii before 1819. Non-combatants of both sides and vanquished warriors sought sanctuary in Hawaii's places of refuge.

A man or woman who broke a kapu, a system of do's and don'ts, could escape the death penalty and all punishment by entering the sacred ground of a place of refuge.

All who sought refuge were admitted—those from any part of the island or from another island. There was no trial to establish their guilt or innocence. War refugees stayed until the conflict was over, kapu breakers until they were purified by the priests—usually after a few hours or overnight. When they left, the protection went with them, and they were free to return home in peace.

The Refuge at Honaunau

The City of Refuge is more properly called the Place of Refuge at Honaunau, or in Hawaiian, Pu'uhonua-o-Honaunau. Located on a 6-acre shelf of ancient lava that dips into the Pacific, the refuge forms a rough square. The ocean bounds it on the north, west, and south; the Great Wall, on the south and east. There is not even a trace of tradition about when the refuge at Honaunau was first established.

While there were at least five other refuges on the Island of Hawaii, and one in every major district of the other inhabited islands of the Hawaiian chain, the one at Honaunau is historically the most important. It is also the only one which has lasted almost intact.

The place of refuge itself, adjacent palace grounds, royal fishponds, nearby stone platforms on which stood the houses of important chiefs, and temple structures are all within the National Historical Park.

The Great Wall

Although religious sanctions were the prime force in keeping a pu'uhonua going and enforcing its protection of refugees, evidently some degree of physical protection was needed. The great wall which forms the inland boundaries of the Place of Refuge at Honaunau was built about A.D. 1550. Tradition indicates that the wall was built by Keawe-ku-i-ke-ka'ai, a ruling chief of Kona, who lived about that time. The heiau (temple) 'A-lea-lea, whose large stone platform still stands inside the pu'uhonua, is also attributed to this chief.

The great wall averages 10 feet in height and is about 17 feet in width. One leg of the wall starts at Honaunau Bay and extends more than 600 feet to the corner; the other leg runs from the corner toward the open sea and is about 400 feet long. Its seaward end has been battered by tidal waves and once probably extended almost to the sea.

Hawaiian masons laid their stones without mortar. In the great wall, the best or flat face of each stone was set outward. Lacking metal tools or wheeled vehicles, the workmen apparently used wooden pry bars, carrying sticks, rollers, and skids to move the stones. The largest stone in the face of the wall is 6½ feet high, more than 5 feet wide, and 2 feet thick. It weighs between 4 and 6 tons.

Legends tell of secret passageways in the great wall. Examinations of the wall have revealed that sections do have honeycombed interiors—evidently to save time and material in building—but the hollows are small, disconnected, and separated from the outer surface by at least 3 feet of solid masonry.

Temples Gave Protection

A pu'uhonua is a sacred refuge established by a ruling king. It operated in conjunction with a heiau, whose gods protected the place of refuge and whose priests ran it. At the Place of Refuge, the ruins of the first temple stand close to the sea. Most of the stones from its platform were used, about 1550, to build the second temple, 'A-lea-lea. This is the large temple platform inside the great wall. When the third temple was built, 'A-lea-lea may have been used for recreation by the king and chiefs.

The gods of the Place of Refuge were the spirits of dead chiefs—spirits who could lead the souls of men to safety or destruction. Upon death, certain chiefs underwent a process of deification. After 1650, Chief Keawe became the major deity.

The Hale-o-Keawe

The third temple was built about 1650 and was in use until 1819, when the kapu system of do's and don'ts was abandoned and the practice of the old religion forbidden. The pu'uhonua which the temple protected ceased to function in that year.

The third temple was called Ka Iki 'A-lea-lea (the small 'A-lea-lea), but was better known as the Hale-o-Keawe, or the House of Keawe. It was built in honor of King Keawe-i-Kekahi-alii-o-ka-moku, who reigned in Kona about 1650.

Upon Keawe's death, his bones were placed in the temple and he was declared a god, becoming the major deity of the pu'uhonua. From time to time the bones of other important chiefs who were declared gods were added to the temple. Their combined supernatural power kept the place of refuge sanctified and inviolate.

The last deification of a chief took place in 1818 for a son of Kamehameha the Great. By that year, the bones of at least 23 deified kings and chiefs of old Hawaii were inside the thatched temple. Each was in an individual container. In addition to the bones of chiefs-made-gods, the bones of certain other selected male members of the ruling family were honored by burial there. These lesser chiefs were not considered gods, and their bones were heaped "like firewood" in a corner.

No bones of women were permitted to rest in the Hale-o-Keawe, since women were considered inferior.

Royal Mausoleum

King Kamehameha the Great united the Hawaiian Islands into one kingdom about 1800. Because the bones of his ancestors and relatives were deposited there, the Hale-o-Keawe was not destroyed in 1819 along with the other temples. However, the bones of the deified chiefs

and kings were removed in 1829 and the temple was razed, leaving only the stone platform. The National Park Service has restored the temple, but cannot return the deified bones to their place of honor because their present location is uncertain.

During the period when the Hale-o-Keawe was the only temple structure standing in Hawaii, it was visited, described, and sketched by Europeans. Some items from the temple are now in museums.

Palace Grounds and Villages

Honaunau is the traditional seat of the kingdom of Kona. There the kings and their courts occupied the best dwelling areas on the inland side of the Great Wall, at the head of Honaunau Bay, and along the shore to the south. Homes of the common people—those who did the work and served the court and priests—were on the opposite shore of Honaunau Bay and inland from the chief's homes.

All houses were one-room structures of wooden framework covered with thatch. Commoners had small, crudely built huts, usually one to a family, which were used for storage and for shelter during the infrequent storms. A chief's establishment consisted of several houses, each used for a specific purpose. A king might have 10 or more houses.

Men wore loin cloths and women, skirts. Women made the cloth from bark. Feather cloaks and helmets were made by men only and were worn by chiefs on state occasions and into battle.

Taro, from which poi was made, sweet potatoes, breadfruit, bananas, and yams were cultivated; birds were hunted; and pigs, dogs, and fowl were raised for food. Fish provided the main protein in the diet. Fish and meat were cooked by steam-roasting in earth pits. All food, for both men and women, was prepared separately by the men, and the sexes ate apart.

Land transport was by foot, but the chief means of travel was by outrigger canoes.

The Park

City of Refuge National Historical Park is 111 miles from Hilo and 20 miles south of the resort center of Kailua-Kona on the Island of Hawaii. The park was established on July 1, 1961. It is open all year. Points of interest are visited on foot.

Much of the park's 180 acres is covered with thorny vegetation introduced in the last century. The National Park Service is removing some of these exotic and undesirable plants and is restoring native vegetation to the area. Prior to the introduction of non-native plants to Hawaii, the Honaunau area was largely barren lava, with shady groves of coconut, pandanus (hala), and kou along

the coast. Pili grass, used for thatching houses, grew in soil pockets on the lava. Several native medicinal plants still grow in the park.

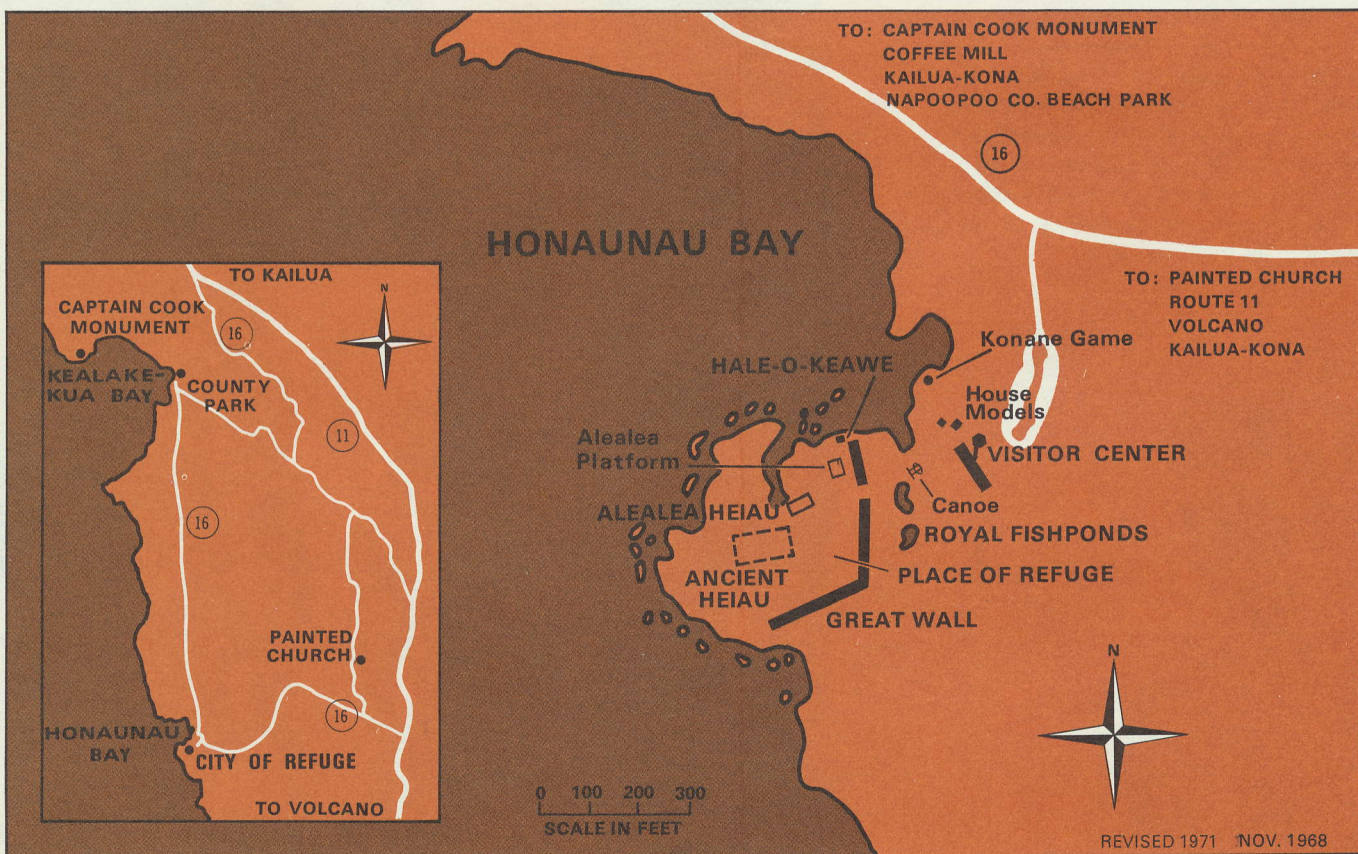
Numerous archeological ruins, burial and shelter caves, and trails are hidden in the brush, as are walls and structures of more recent times. Also in the uncleared brush are two kahua holuas. These are royal sledding tracks hundreds of feet long, built of rock down the side of the hill. When in use, they were layered with earth and made slippery with dry grass. Holua sledding competition was only for the chiefs.

Coves, cliffs, tide pools, and associated marine life are easily visited along the shoreline in the park.

How To Get There—Where To Stay

Airlines make scheduled flights from Honolulu to Hilo and Kailua-Kona several times daily. Unscheduled steamship transportation from Honolulu to the island of Hawaii is also available. Taxis meet all planes and ships. "U-drive" cars may be rented in Kailua-Kona or Hilo.

The Hawaii Visitors Bureau, a nonprofit organization with offices in Honolulu, Hilo, Wailuku, and Lihue, and at 209 Post Street, San Francisco, CA 94108, will supply information about trips to and through the Hawaiian Islands. Overnight camping is NOT available within the park. But information on camping can be obtained from the Hawaii Visitors Bureau.



Administration

City of Refuge National Historical Park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. Address inquiries to the Superintendent, City of Refuge National Historical Park, Honaunau, Kona, HI 96726.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for

water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.

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The snarling faces of the Ki'i, images of the old gods of Hawaii, struck fear and awe into the minds of the people. Set on poles above the palisades of temple compounds, they warned against intrusion onto sacred ground—even chieftains passed between them in fear and respect. The Ki'i are wood-sculptured representations of the gods, or sometimes of the same god in his different roles.

