

20
years
of sharing
Maui stories

SPECIAL ISLAND LIVING SECTION

Maui

NŌ KA 'ŌI

MAUI'S SMALL TOWNS

Finding their hidden gems

5 GREAT EATERIES

off the beaten track

LĀNA'I'S BIG LEAP

An app puts the island in the palm of your hand

MAR-APR '16 US/CANS \$4.95

03



0 62825 905

MauiMag

06718
PULAMA LANA'I
PO BOX 630310
LANAI CITY HI 96763-0310
KEPA MALY
*****AUTO**3-DIGIT 967
P002
0037
0701
PMSRT STD
PAID
PERMIT #306
WASECA, MN

CURIOUS CREATURES
Evolution has a field day

UNSTRUCTURED STYLE
Fashions that work for island life

TIME TRAVELER

using high tech to explore
lānaʻi's distant past

Story by KYLE ELLISON | Photography by KYLE & HEATHER ELLISON



This view of Hulopoe Bay shows the volcanic sea stack Pu'upehe, sometimes called Sweetheart Rock. In ancient lore, Pu'upehe is the resting place of a Maui princess brought there by her grieving lover, Makakehau. You can see the rock wall purported to be her grave by taking the .3-mile hike to this panoramic overlook. *Opening photo by Conn Brattain*

“I found it!” I yell to my wife, Heather, as we explore abandoned Keomoku village. “I found the Lahaina passenger boat—you’ve got to come check this out!”

Covered in yellow *kiawe* leaves, and protruding from the mud-crusted earth, the boat has sat here, forgotten and splintered, since the middle of the 1920s. Back then, Keomoku village was the hub of life on Lānaʻi, and this boat helped move passengers, packages, and poi across the channel to Maui. Standing in this grove of *kiawe* today, what amazes me more than the boat itself and its rusty block of an engine, is the fact that it’s sat here for ninety-plus years and is nowhere close to the shore.

It didn’t move; the land did. When the boat was hauled onto the beach in the twenties, its hull lay on the sand. But a century of grazing by introduced deer, sheep and cattle denuded the mountain, and rains brought runoff and sediment, literally creating new land. Three hundred feet of red mud and dirt now separate the boat from the waves.

In the two dozen times I’ve driven this road through Lānaʻi’s rugged “backside,” I’ve never before seen this boat—or even known it existed. Usually when I’m here, driving dirt roads, it’s either to surf or to camp, but today I’m off on a scavenger hunt in search of cultural treasures, using the Lānaʻi Guide, a new app from the Lānaʻi Culture & Heritage Center.

The man behind the recently released app—and the island’s cultural resurgence—is Kepā Maly, executive director of the Lānaʻi Culture & Heritage Center, and the senior vice president of culture and historic preservation for management company Pūlama Lānaʻi. Raised on Lānaʻi in a Hawaiian-speaking household, Kepā has spent the past thirty years unearthing Hawaiʻi’s stories, translating tens of thousands of pages of Hawaiian archives and oral histories passed down from the *kūpuna*, or elders, who lived them.

To understand the enormity of this project—and the trove of information on the app—you must first understand the vast amount of printed Hawaiian text. The University of Hawaiʻi estimates that, between 1834 and 1948, more than 1.5 million pages were printed in Hawaiian newspapers—not counting journals, personal letters, and firsthand accounts. During this time, more published material came out of Hawaiʻi than from the rest of the Pacific combined, and since only 2 percent has been translated into English, UH researchers suggest it’s potentially “the largest cache of untranslated historical material in the Western world.”

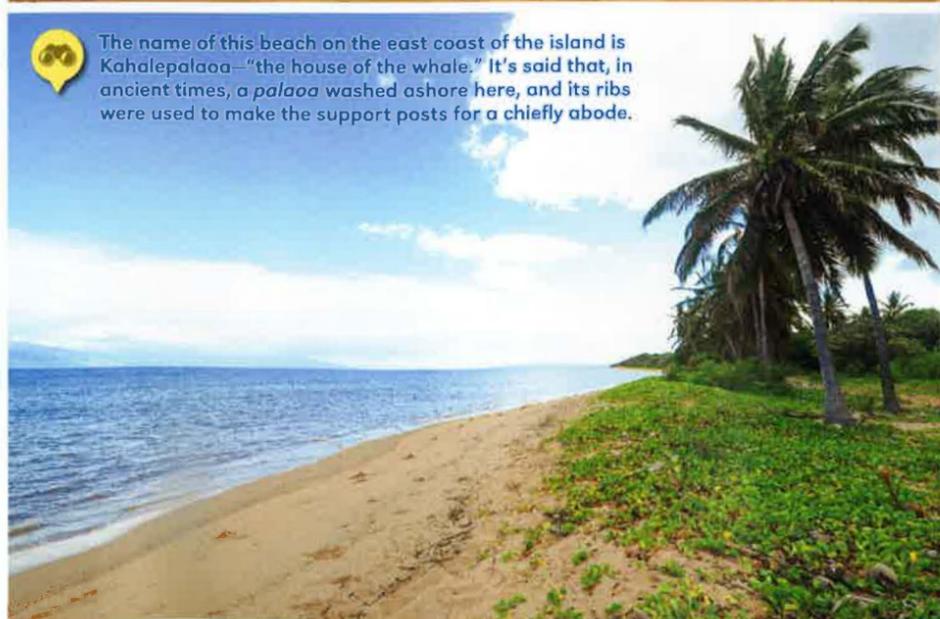
From the Smithsonian to Harvard and back to Lānaʻi, Maly has served as a kind of literary and cultural archaeologist, though instead of



Rocks replace road signs on much of Lānaʻi, like this one outside of Kōʻele.



The bumpy dirt road to Polihua Beach on Lānaʻi’s north shore shows why exploring the island is best done by Jeep. Polihua translates as a place where *honu* (sea turtles) climb ashore to lay their eggs.



The name of this beach on the east coast of the island is Kahalepalaaa—“the house of the whale.” It’s said that, in ancient times, a *palaaa* washed ashore here, and its ribs were used to make the support posts for a chiefly abode.



Keomoku Highway is the lone paved road that leads to Lānaʻi’s east side—but it comes with a sweeping view of Maui and Molokaʻi.



Surrounded by *kiawe* trees and half-sunk in Lānaʻi’s red mud are the remains of the boat that once ferried passengers to Maui and back twice a week. That was when Keomoku was a thriving village; the vessel has sat in this spot for nearly a century.



Executive Director Kepā Maly checks a map at Lānaʻi’s Culture & Heritage Center. Located in Lānaʻi City, the center offers a wealth of historical information and cultural relics that will give you a solid background for exploring the island. Make it the first stop on your adventure. Bottom right photo by Bob Bangarter

searching for artifacts buried in Lānaʻi's deep red mud, he's unearthing tales of the island's past covered up by the sands of time.

"Much of the material in the app," says Maly, "is sourced out of native-language accounts we've translated over the years. We have thousands of native-language and foreign-visitor accounts of Lānaʻi that haven't seen the light of day since they were written."

That is, until now.

Standing in front of the passenger boat, I scroll down the screen, reading the app on my smartphone, and relay to Heather the story of *kupuna* Venus Leinaala Gay Holt, who was born in Keōmoku in 1905, and regularly rode the boat across the channel to Maui.

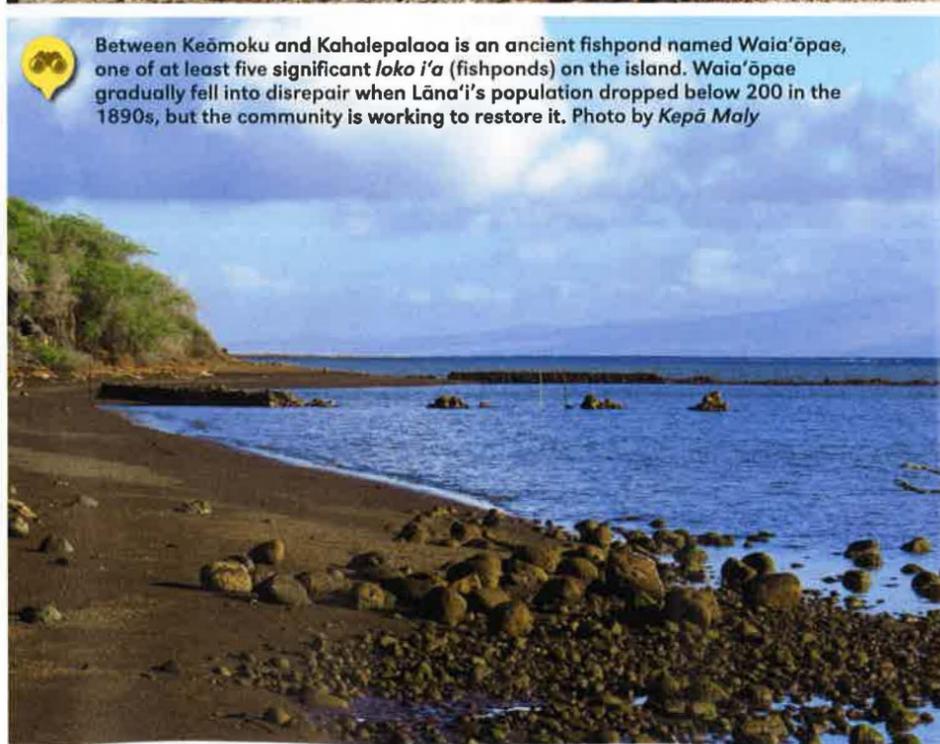
"No matter how rough [the water]," she recalled, "Noa Kaopuiki knew how to wait. He would keep the engine running . . . he knew how to count the waves. . . . And all of a sudden, he'd go!"

Recalling Holt's words as I peer out at the waves, I'm struck by how the long-forgotten village comes to life for me. Having just this morning crossed from Maui on the ferry that docks at Mānele Bay, I can picture the splash of the boat's bow cutting quickly and violently through the waves, and feel the sway of the 'Au'au current whipped up by the easterly trade winds. I continue scouring Keōmoku village, reading one tale after the next. With each successive place the app leads me to, the personal accounts and human touch instill a sense of familiarity with this far-from-empty ghost town.

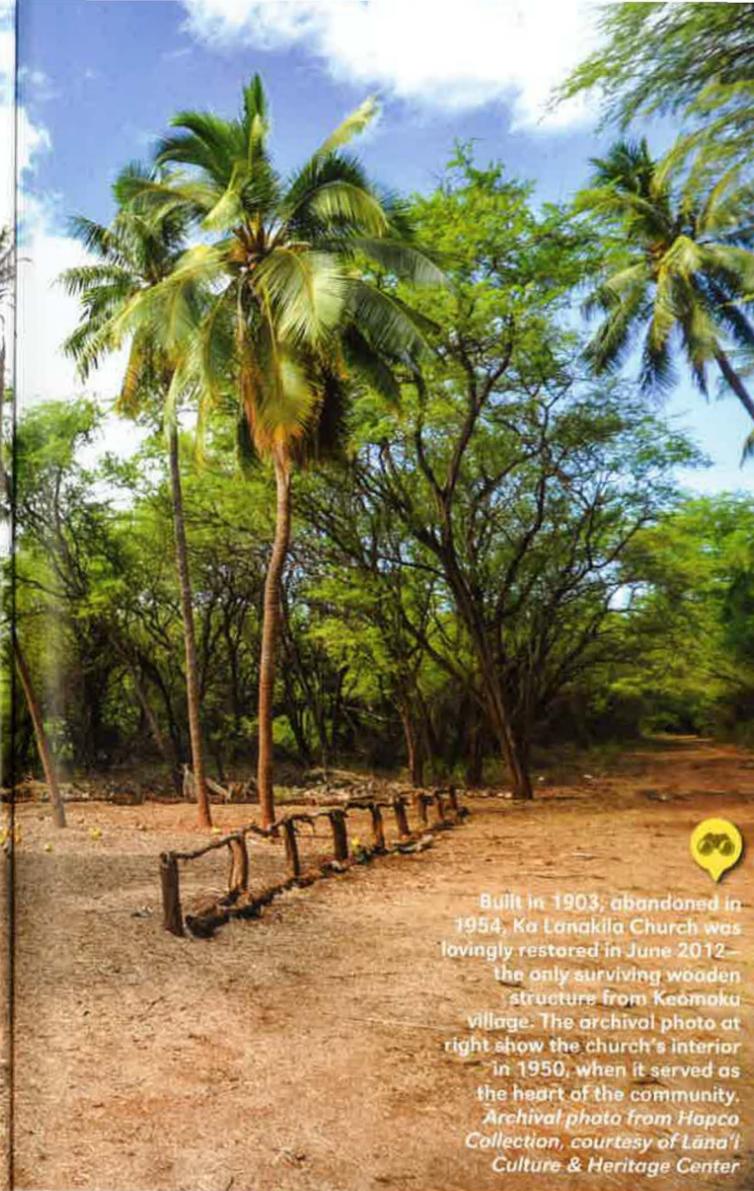
Standing inside hauntingly beautiful but empty Ka Lanakila Church, I imagine the congregation at worship when it was built in 1903, and thanks to the app's historical photos I can see the church lined with pews. Since the Lānaʻi Guide is GPS enabled and synced with digital maps, I'm told I'm only a quarter of a mile from the Maunalei Sugar Company Mill site. Following a narrow, *kiawe*-lined trail departing from the back of the church, I emerge at a crumbling, concrete foundation where dreams for the mill once flourished. Reading my screen, I learn it was here where plantation manager W. Stodert proclaimed in 1899, "The land is proving all that's promised, and I have no doubt of the substantial returns to the stockholders."

Two years later, in 1901, the operation went bankrupt.

After a ten-minute hike, I find myself giddily glued to my phone and running down the road, wanting to find the next site—and the next—of history hidden in the trees. With the moving blue ball on the screen of my phone instructing me right where to go, I find the abandoned church and schoolhouse by the road in Kahalepalaoa,



Between Keōmoku and Kahalepalaoa is an ancient fishpond named Waia'ōpae, one of at least five significant *loko i'a* (fishponds) on the island. Waia'ōpae gradually fell into disrepair when Lānaʻi's population dropped below 200 in the 1890s, but the community is working to restore it. Photo by Kepā Maly



Built in 1903; abandoned in 1954, Ka Lanakila Church was lovingly restored in June 2012—the only surviving wooden structure from Keōmoku village. The archival photo at right shows the church's interior in 1950, when it served as the heart of the community. Archival photo from Hapco Collection, courtesy of Lānaʻi Culture & Heritage Center



Plantation families in Keōmoku village baked their bread in this outdoor oven. The Japanese stone masons who built it in 1899 cut dense basalt lava rock by hand, using chisels, and set it in place with mortar made from baked coral that also coated the oven's inner and outer surfaces.



Hidden among *kiawe* trees are the remnants of Maunalei Sugar Mill, a short-lived plantation near Keōmoku village that went bankrupt in 1901. The plantation may have failed, but the *kiawe*, imported to fuel the mill's furnace, has thrived. The invasive trees are now a dominant species on the island.



and the memorial to Japanese laborers, who endured the ocean journey from Japan to toil here in the fields for the reward of seventy-five cents per day. According to the info in my hand, seventy of these workers would die in the span of three years as a result of “various affliction.”

Although Keōmoku village, Kahalepalaoa, and Maunalei Mill are gone, Maly hopes that these stories of place will ignite an interest in culture, and Lānaʻi can grow as a *puʻuhonua*, or sanctuary of cultural resurgence.

“We have a responsibility,” says Maly, “to ensure this history is passed on. And this isn’t just a visitor thing; our kids haven’t been to many of these places. Our people need to be the foremost stewards, because we can’t expect anyone to respect [our culture], if we don’t respect it ourselves.”

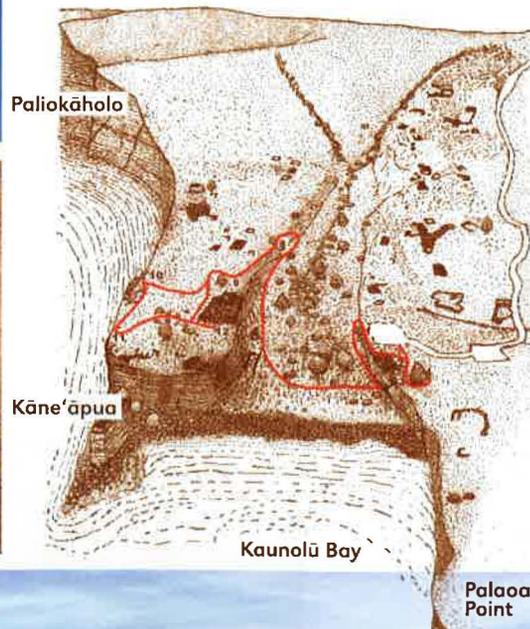
With the reopening of the renovated Four Seasons Resort Lānaʻi, and the expected revival of tourism, the app is a timely way to explore the roots that have shaped the island’s culture.

“Today’s visitors have evolved,” Maly claims. “For well over a century, tourism in Hawaiʻi was sand, sun, surf, sex, mai tais, and the game of golf. There was minimal authenticity. The app’s goal is to provide a meaningful opportunity for people to experience a place unlike anywhere else on Earth. What we have here on Lānaʻi is something nowhere else can offer.”

The next day, Maly’s words echo in my head as I park at the Kaunolū shoreline, preparing to explore the Keālia Kapu–Kaunolū Heritage Trail. This heritage complex is also a National Historic Landmark. It was King Kamehameha I’s favorite peacetime fishing ground; his *kahua hale*, or homesite, is still visible on the bluff, where Halulu *heiau* towers above the rocky coast. It’s believed Halulu may have been a *luakini*, or sacrificial *heiau*. A translated 1868 account from King Kamehameha V says, “Halulu, it is a temple, and



Top: The rock walls of Halulu *heiau* (temple) stand sentinel beside the Kaunolū shoreline as they did in ancient days, when ruling *aliʻi*—including King Kamehameha I—came here to fish and unwind. Left: A heritage marker points the way to Kaunolū village, where this petroglyph, etched into rock, stands frozen in time. Below: The rugged cliffs of the Pali Kaholo rise above Kaunolū Bay. Top and bottom photos by John Giordani



place where the bodies of men were placed on the altar, just like a bunch of bananas.”

Beneath Pali Kaholo, the massive cliffs that rise vertically a thousand feet above the sea, an epic silence pervades, broken only by the indefatigable waves. It's humbling enough just to walk here on ground that was home to ancient kings. To read about this exact place, in words first spoken in Hawaiian in 1868 by one of those kings, borders on the surreal. To stand in a place of such cultural import, a setting so untouched, is to feel that Maly might be right—this is unlike anywhere else on Earth.

Late that afternoon, at Mānele Harbor, as we wait to cross back to Maui, I whip out the app for a dose of knowledge before the ferry ride home. Apparently, just 100 yards away is an ancient fishing shrine, where submerged springs provided Mānele village with fresh water. The remains of a 1920s *pipi* chute, where cattle were loaded onto boats for transport to O'ahu, is only a short walk away, as are the Kapiha'a Fisherman's Trail and the view of Pu'upehe islet. Enchanted by the wealth of knowledge in my pocket, available at the tap of a finger, I'm tempted to skip the ferry ride home—stay a little bit longer—and further connect with the island itself, feeling its past brought to life. 📱



The Lana'i Guide app literally places centuries of history in the palm of your hand—among them, tales of Kahekili's Leap, seen here along the Kaunolū coast.



Expeditions Ferry

IF YOU GO

GETTING THERE Expeditions ferries passengers between Lahaina Harbor on Maui and Lana'i's Mānele Bay five times a day. Schedule, fees, reservations and other info are at **808-667-3756, Go-Lanai.com**. • Your other option is **Island Air**; the flight between Kahului Airport and Lana'i City takes half an hour, and costs \$85 round trip. **IslandAir.com**

GETTING AROUND Jeeps are available through **Dollar Lana'i**, 808-565-7227, **DollarLanai.com**; and **Lana'i Cheap Jeeps**, 800-311-6860, **LanaiCheapJeeps.com**. • **Aloha Adventure Rentals** offers a Hummer H2; 808-286-9308, **AlohaAdventureRentals.com**

WHERE TO STAY Newly reopened, **Four Seasons Resort Lanai** sits above Hulopo'e Bay, twenty minutes from Lana'i City; rates start at \$960. **808-565-2000, FourSeasons.com/Lanai**. • Located in Lana'i City, **Hotel Lana'i** is a short walk from the town's restaurants and shops. Rates start at \$174, but with only eleven guestrooms, reservations are strongly recommended. **808-565-7211, HotelLanai.com**. • The island's only campground is at Hulopo'e Beach Park, a five-minute walk from the ferry terminal. Permits are required, and fees apply. **Info@LanaiBeachPark.com**

WHAT YOU'LL NEED Basics like food, drink and gas are available for purchase in Lana'i City. You'll need to bring other items with you from Maui; snorkeling equipment, surfboards, camping gear, etc.



Dollar Lana'i



Four Seasons Lanai at Hulopo'e Bay



Four Seasons Lanai