



Beneath The Eaves

For Sam and Mary Cooke, preserving the heiau and home on their Mānoa property is a legacy worth leaving.

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There's something about Mānoa that gets me every time I drive through it. When I was a kid, the neighborhood was the destination for school field trips to Mānoa Falls and family parties at Treetops Restaurant. It always seemed to be rainy and wet, with a slight mist in the air that made my skin feel cool and damp. I remember eyeing the valley's homes, thinking that many of them must be haunted, shuddering at what might live beneath the creaky wooden shingles of those high, pointed roofs or within the mysterious chimneys (who needs chimneys in Hawai'i anyway?!).

Twenty years later, I find myself standing in front of one such home that gave me the chills. As an adult, though, I find the shingles charming, and am grateful that the stone and wooden walls housing decades of history have been preserved by patrons who devote themselves to its upkeep. The residence is known as Kūali'i, named after a prominent O'ahu chief, and belongs to Sam and Mary Cooke. Together, the couple established nonprofit Mānoa Heritage Center in 1996 to manage the preservation of the 3.5-acre estate, which includes a Native Hawaiian garden and ancient heiau. The house itself dates back more than a hundred years, holding stories of a family history steeped in the stewardship of culture, arts, and the environment. Its grounds are home to flourishing indigenous and endemic plants that date back even further than that, telling the story of voyages across the Pacific by Polynesians, sojourners who brought a bounty of flora and fauna in their canoes as they settled in the islands.

The story of how Kūali'i became tied to the Cooke family history starts with the missionaries who arrived in 1837. Traveling with them was Amos Starr Cooke and his wife, Juliette Montague. They

came as educators, teaching Hawaiian royalty at the Chiefs' Children's School, today called Royal School; Amos would later become a cornerstone in Hawai'i's sugar industry with the founding of Castle and Cooke, which started as a general store. They had seven children, among them, Charles Montague Cooke, who grew up to found Bank of Hawai'i and marry Anna Charlotte Rice. She, in turn, shared her love for art that reflected the islands' multicultural makeup with the people of Hawai'i by founding what is now referred to as the Honolulu Museum of Art. (Like her great-grandson Sam would do decades later, Anna donated their Beretania Street residence to serve as the site of the museum.)

In 1902, Charles and Anna gifted their son Charles "Monty" Cooke, Jr. and his wife, Lila Lefferts Cooke (born to a Dutch family whose home in New York was also turned into a historic house museum), with the tract of land in Mānoa. What made this property so special was that it was also the location of an ancient Hawaiian heiau, Kūka'ō'ō, estimated to be almost 1,000 years old. In 1911, when architects Walter Emory and Marshall Webb were selecting the location for the Cooke's Tudor-style home and began eyeing the site of the heiau for its expansive views of Honolulu, Monty—who was especially sensitive to Hawaiian culture after being nursed back to health as a child by Hawaiian healer Ka'aha'aina Naihe—intervened, directing them to build the home behind it instead. In 1970, Monty's grandson Sam picked up where he left off, this time saving the property from being subdivided by buying back a portion of the land, including the heiau, from a developer who had purchased it from a relative. Ensuring the property would remain intact in perpetuity, Sam and Mary listed the home and heiau on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1993, Sam and Mary began working with



a



b



c

cultural preservationist Nathan Napoka to restore Kūka'ō'ō, which was thought to be used by ancient Hawaiians to appease the gods and encourage food productivity in Mānoa, much of which would have been covered with lo'i (taro patches) at the time. Today, Kūka'ō'ō remains the last intact Hawaiian temple in the ahupua'a (traditional land division from mountain to ocean) of Waikīkī, and the Mānoa Heritage Center continues to maintain the site as a place of cultural and environmental learning.

Sam and Mary Cooke's commitments to preservation pervade the narrative of their lives. Sam established the Hawai'i chapter of The Nature Conservancy, while Mary spent nine years on the board of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Having lived in the historic home for the last 40 years, the couple have dedicated it to a new life after they are gone. Though tours through the home are not currently available, they continue its daily upkeep so that one day, future generations can walk its storied halls, browse Sam's prized collections of art featuring representations of Hawai'i rendered between 1840 and 1900, and peruse his numerous books documenting voyages in the Pacific starting with Captain Cook in 1778. In the meantime, Sam and Mary have already opened the rest of the property for tours so that the public can learn about its ancient heritage and botany.

So, the next time you find yourself driving through Mānoa, remember that there's always more than meets the eye. ▲

TIPS

Find Yourself in Mānoa?

1. Mānoa Heritage Center offers tours of the garden and heiau Monday through Friday with advanced reservation (tours of the Kūali'i historic home are not currently available). For more information, call 808-988-1287 or visit manoaheritagecenter.org.

2. Before or after, stop in for the island's best cappuccino at Morning Class Coffee, a charming café featuring Hawai'i-grown pour-over coffee alongside Stumptown Coffee Roasters and Sightglass Coffee selections. Grab a baked good or its signature egg-a-muffin sandwich (like an Egg McMuffin only better) for the road. Find them at 2955 East Mānoa Rd., or online at morningglasscoffee.com.

a. Sam and Mary Cooke in front of Kūali'i. Courtesy of Mānoa Heritage Center.

b. Taro is one of the indigenous plants in the Native Hawaiian garden.

c. The heiau at Mānoa Heritage Center is estimated to be almost 1,000 years old.

緑濃いマノアの谷に抱かれた「マノア・ヘリテージ・センター」は、1ヘクタールの敷地に築100年以上の邸宅、1000年以上の歴史を持つヘイアウ「クカオオ」跡、そしてハワイ原生植物園を有する。その昔、このマノア地域は一面のタロ畑で、ヘイアウでは豊穡が祈願されたと考えられている。この土地と邸宅を受け継ぎ、守っているのは、1837年に東部から教師として移住し、後に砂糖事業で成功したエイモス・スター・クックの子孫、サム&メリー・クック夫妻。夫妻は邸宅とヘイアウを歴史登録財に登録し、ヘイアウの復元と保存にも努めている。見学は月曜から土曜まで、大人1名7ドル、要予約(808-988-1287)。邸宅内部は現在のところ非公開。詳細はmanoaheritagecenter.orgへ。

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