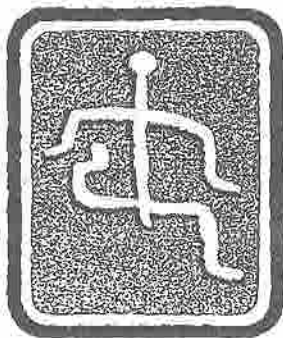


**TALES FROM THE TRAIL**

**MAUI HISTORY  
AND LORE FROM  
THE LAHAINA PALI  
TRAIL**

**a trail guide**

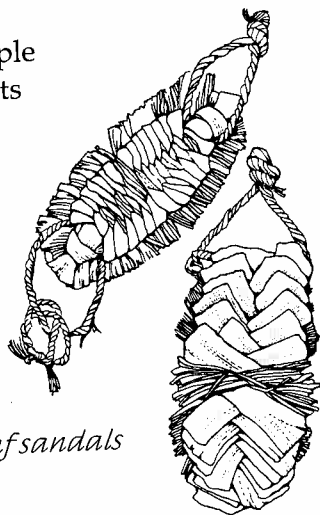


**NA ALA HELE**  
Hawai'i Trail & Access System

# ☒ ALALOA TO AUTOMOBILE

AS YOU HIKE THE LAHAINA PALI TRAIL, you'll be following an historic road that was built almost 200 years ago. But the route is probably much older, a part of the *ALALOA*, "the long road," that once circled Maui. It's not clear when the *alaloa* was first built, but Hawaiian traditions say that much of it was during the time of the *ali`i*, Kiha-a-Pi`ilani, who ruled Maui about 400 years ago. ☒

In ancient Hawaiian times, few people lived in this arid land between the districts of Lahaina and Wailuku. But travellers passed through here, mostly walking along the coast where they could or swimming wherever a sheer sea cliff blocked their way. Sometime before 1825, a zigzagging, boulder-paved track, the Lahaina Pali Trail, cut a more direct route across the ridges and gullies of the steep southern slopes of West Maui mountain.



*ti leaf sandals*

Around 1900, the Lahaina Pali Trail fell out of use when prison laborers built a one-way dirt road along the base of the *pali*. In 1911, a three-ton truck was the first vehicle to negotiate this road, having a difficult time making some of the sharp, narrow turns.

Over the years, the road was widened and straightened until 1951, when the modern Honoapiilani Highway cut out many of the 115 hairpin curves in the old *pali* road. As you drive on the highway after this hike, look for signs of these hairpin turns, reminders of the days when the *pali* road was a driver's challenge. ☒

## A FEW CAUTIONS ABOUT HIKING THE LAHAINA PALI TRAIL...

- ❖ The Lahaina Pali Trail is five miles long. It is well-marked but steep and rocky in places. Step carefully. Allow about four to five hours to hike the trail one-way.
- ❖ **For your safety!** Stay on the **marked trail**.
- ❖ It gets very hot on the trail. Carry water and sunscreen. A hat and sturdy shoes are recommended.
- ❖ There are no restrooms along the trail.
- ❖ This is an **EXTREME FIRE HAZARD AREA**. Please do not smoke or start any kind of fires.
- ❖ Cattle are grazed in this area. Please do not harass or frighten them. If they are blocking the trail, walk around them if it's safe to do so or wait for them to move away.
- ❖ This is **NOT** a loop trail. If you plan to hike the entire trail, don't forget to arrange a way back to your point of origin!

## ...AND SOME REMINDERS

- ❖ The Lahaina Pali Trail is a historic roadway and is protected by Hawaii State law. Do not deface, disturb, or alter any portion of the trail. Do not pick up artifacts.  
**PLEASE RESPECT HAWAII'S PAST.**
- ❖ Collection or removal of native plants or geologic materials along the trail is prohibited.
- ❖ **Please don't litter.** Carry out everything that you carry in.
- ❖ We recommend that you start from the Ukumehame (western) trailhead. The climb to Kealaloloa Ridge is gradual and the views are spectacular. If you can't go five miles, try at least a half-mile. It's well worth the trip.
- ❖ Remember, the views are in all directions, so look behind you, as well as keep an eye ahead...there's always something to be seen from anywhere along the trail.



*Look out that the bridle does not blow off the horse,  
or the hat and coat from his rider!*

HENRY M. WHITNEY, TRAVEL WRITER, 1875

THE LAHAINA PALI TRAIL is a monument to times before cars and buses, when travel was by foot or by horse, mule, or bullock. As you hike this trail, picture yourself as a traveller of long ago...a native Hawaiian, perhaps, clad in loose *kapa* or cotton, with only woven sandals on your feet or maybe going barefoot...or perhaps you're a missionary from Lahaina, dressed in dark woolen coat or long dress, with hard leather shoes. ❧



You may be surprised at how substantial and well-preserved some sections of the trail are. Remember, most of this trail was built long before there were road-building machines, except for human power. Every boulder in every wall and every paving stone along the trail was placed there by hand.

Over decades of use, the trail was improved. As you climb from Ukumehame to the top at Kealaloloa Ridge, keep an eye out for different trail alignments. You can see them as low stone walls verging off the trail or as long, narrow cleared areas through the grass.

The Lahaina Pali Trail was originally built as a horse and foot trail. Horses were introduced to Hawai`i in 1803 but, at first, only the *ali`i* or chiefs could use them. Even thirty years later, horses were still uncommon. So it is likely that most of the early travellers along this trail were going by foot. For those with horses, travelling the trail was not as strenuous but it was often more hazardous.



*Once in ascending a steep pitch on the side of an abrupt declivity, my horse lost his foothold... Springing instantly from his back and holding on by the bridle, I assisted him in gathering himself. Had I retained my seat, we should inevitably have rolled down a steep declivity of several hundred feet.*

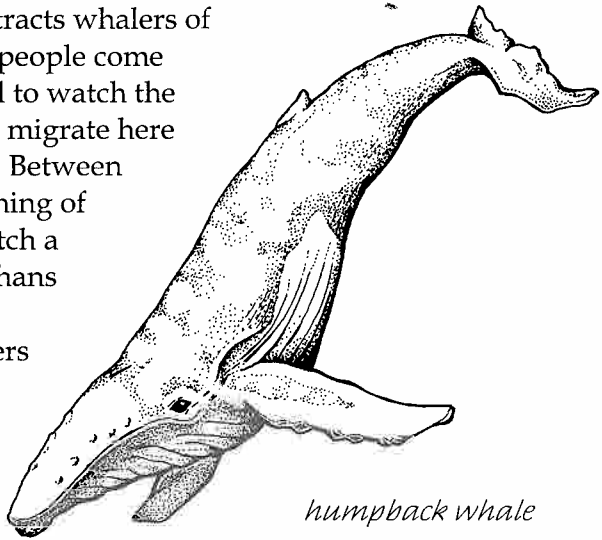
CHESTER LYMAN, 1847, TOURIST

3

Stop for a moment and look back toward Lahaina, once the capital of the Hawaiian Kingdom and center of the islands' whaling industry. The whaling ship was the symbol of Hawai`i's economy in the mid-1800s, with over 400 ships stopping at Lahaina alone in 1846.

Lahaina was a major outfitting and repair station, and home berth for whaling ships that sometimes stayed in Pacific waters up to four years on a single trip. ❖

Lahaina today attracts whalers of a different sort. Now, people come from all over the world to watch the humpback whales that migrate here from the north Pacific. Between October and the beginning of summer, you might catch a glimpse of these leviathans from this spot. Many concentrate in the waters off this coastline for calving, nursing, and breeding.



*humpback whale*

❖ In the anxious days following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, rumors of continuing enemy attacks were rampant. Investigation of a possible enemy ship off the Maui coast found that the "ship" was actually a whale!!

4

Fierce *mumuku* winds whip across these mountain ridges, blowing the soil from the trail and exposing the base rock. On certain days, you can see the *mumuku* winds churning the ocean into a sea of white caps. Look closely, though, and you can make out a break in the choppy waves near shore, where the water becomes more settled. Here, the sea cliffs act as a protective barrier. Pregnant whales sometimes come into these calmer waters to calve. ❖

On these spare slopes, dryland sandalwood trees (*Santalum ellipticum*) can be found. In the early 1800s, the native sandalwood was a highly valued item for the China trade. Chiefs ordered their people to collect the wood, an endeavor that ultimately ended in the almost total loss of the sandalwood forests on all the islands. In some places, whole areas were burned to locate the fragrant wood by its smell. Although the sandalwood that grows around here is a different species and lacks the distinctive smell, it was still cut down because it LOOKS very similar.

✠ From here, you can see the Honoapiilani Highway and the entrance to the 315-foot long Lahaina tunnel, the first public tunnel for vehicles in Hawai`i.



*October 14, 1951...opening ceremonies for the Lahaina tunnel.*

5

Water bars are lines of boulders built across the trail to prevent erosion. In heavy rains, water runs across the slope and creates gullies. Water bars help to break the runoff and divert it onto the slopes below. This section of the trail, which was badly eroded, has been rebuilt by Na Ala Hele volunteers. Just ahead is an exceptional section of the trail retaining wall. Imagine what it was like to build a wall like this by hand! ☒

Look below the trail to the concrete structure under the large tree about 50 yards away. This is a water tank for cattle that range through the area under a grazing lease on these State lands. They are managed in controlled herds, and help to prevent range fires by keeping the vegetation down.

6

Cattle were introduced to Hawai'i in 1793 by the English explorer, George Vancouver. Kamehameha placed a *kapu* on the cattle for almost a decade, preventing anyone from killing them. They ran wild in the mountains and destroyed much native vegetation. Ranching in the 1800s helped to contain these destructive animals.

7

When this trail was built over 100 years ago, robbers roamed these hills, waiting for footsore travellers to stop at this inviting wayside. Think how easy it would be to hide in the rocks above here, biding your time for the perfect moment to jump down and claim your booty from an unknowing victim.

*About 1836, when I was a young lad at Lahaina, a native employed to bring letters from Wailuku to my father, reported that he was attacked by a robber on the mountain coast route not far from Ma`alaea Bay. In the struggle, he bit off one of the robber's big toes. The robber at once relaxed his hold and fled. In proof of his story, the messenger exhibited the bloody toe.*

DR. D.D. BALDWIN,

SON OF ONE OF THE FIRST MISSIONARIES ON MAUI ☒



Across the gulch is Kealaloloa Ridge, the southern rift of the volcano that formed West Maui. Its caldera or central pit crater lies at the head of this ridge and there are several vents and dikes along this rift.

Ancient Hawaiian trails often followed natural features, such as the top of a ridge. The name Kealaloloa, which translates as "the long pathway," could refer to an old Hawaiian trail along the top of the ridge.

✠ *West Maui Mountain*

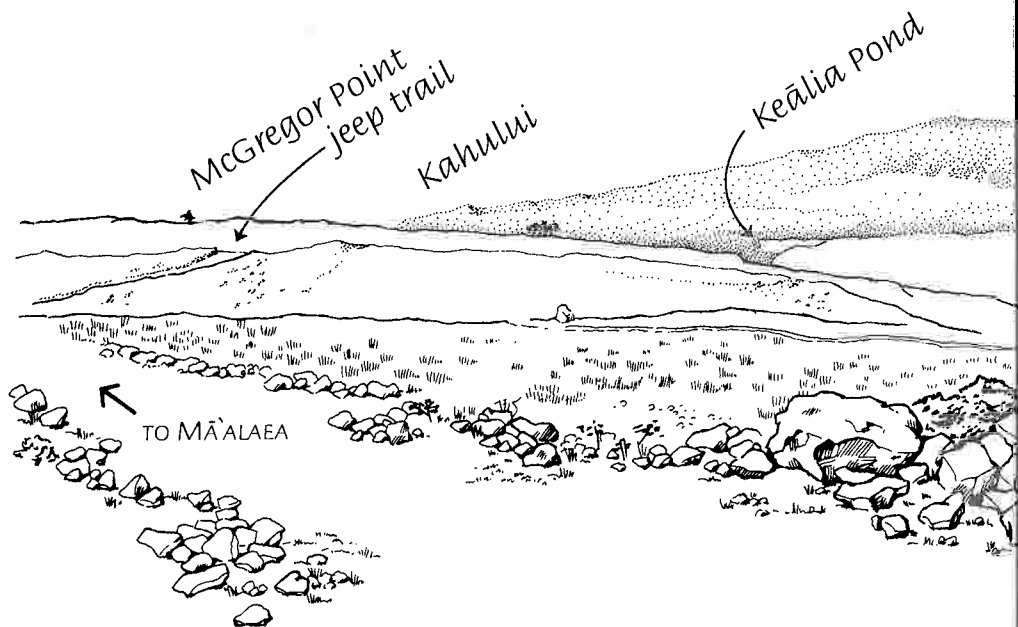


✠ Kealaloloa is famous in legend as the place where `Ele`io first met the spirit of the high chiefess Kanikani`ā`ula. `Ele`io was a swift runner who was said to be able to make the circuit of Maui three times in a day. His job was to bring fish and `awa from Hana to the chief Kāka`alaneo who was living at Lahaina. On one such mission, he came upon the lifeless body of Kanikani`ā`ula, a high chiefess from Hawai`i. He stopped to perform a ritual to restore her spirit. In reward, she gave him a feather cape, which he then passed on to Kāka`alaneo. This was the first feather cape seen on Maui.

Under this *wiliwili* tree, many a traveller stopped just as you have, to take a breath and enjoy the shade. This tree is found only in the Hawaiian Islands. Its bright red seeds were used in making *lei huna* (leis made from seeds or nuts) and its very light wood was used for surfboards, canoe outriggers, and net floats. ❖

Hawaiians gave names to all sorts of places, to describe them or to mark important events. Almost all the gulches along this trail have names. This one is called Mana-wai-nui, literally "large stream branch," probably because this is the largest stream valley in this area. The major gulch on the east side of Kealaloloa Ridge is Malalo-wai-a`ole, which can be roughly translated as "below water none," probably signifying its dry conditions.

The meaning of the names of other gulches are less clear. Maka-huna means "hidden point" or "hidden eyes." Ōpū-nahā means "broken cluster." Kama-ohi means "young child."

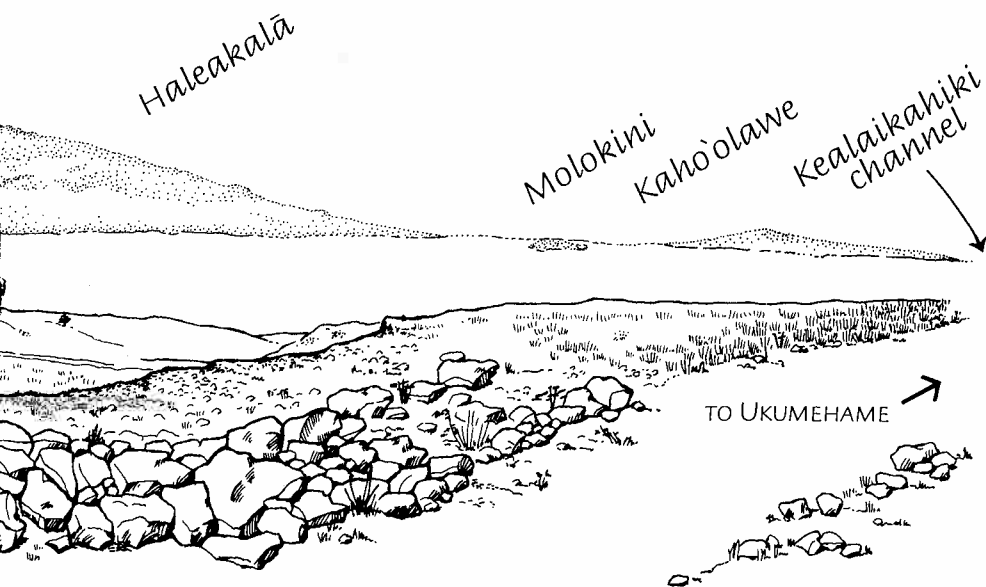


**THIS IS THE TOP OF THE TRAIL!** From here, the trail drops east to Mā`alaea and west to Ukumehame. If you're heading toward Mā`alaea, take note of the subtle changes in plant life along the trail. Plants are larger and more dense than toward Ukumehame to the west.

That's because this part of the trail leads to the windward, rainier side of West Maui.

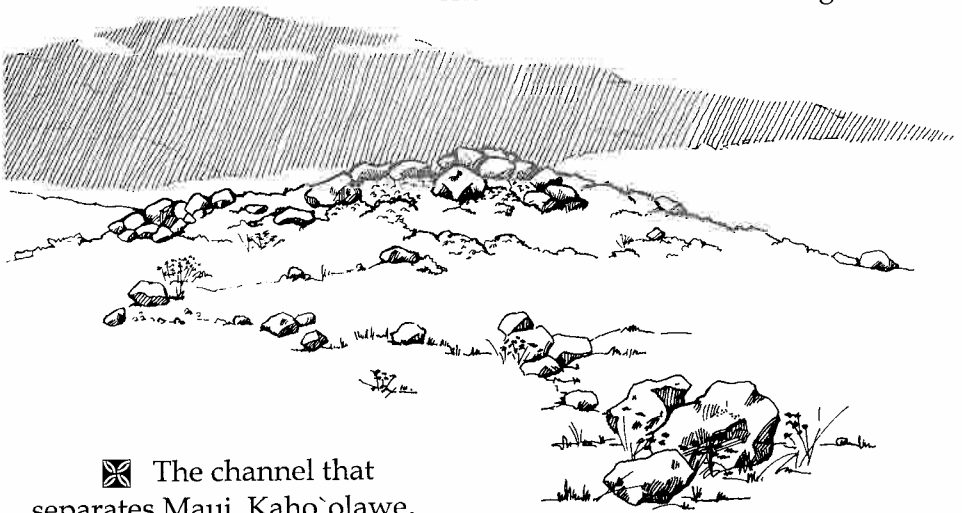
Hale-a-kalā, "the house of the sun," dominates the view from here, as it rises over 10,000 feet above sea level. Younger than the West Maui mountain, Hale-a-kalā is a dormant volcano, which means that there is a slight possibility that it could still erupt. Hawaiian legend says that the demigod Maui stood at the top of Hale-a-kalā and lassoed the sun in order to lengthen the day and allow his mother, Hina, to dry her *kapa*. ☒

## THE VIEW FROM THE TOP



If you look carefully below the trail, you'll see some low stone walls. These are probably the remains of a trailside shelter from long ago. Imagine that you're making this hike two hundred years ago. You find yourself here as the sun is going down...it's getting dark and even worse, the wind is gusting and it looks like rain. There are few likely places to take shelter but you notice all the boulders and a slightly level spot on the ridge. In short order, you've piled the boulders into a wall to block the wind and can almost get comfortable for a night's sleep.

The next time you cross the mountain, you notice that someone else has used your shelter...and made it even larger!



✠ The channel that separates Maui, Kaho`olawe, and Lāna`i is called Kealaikahiki, "the way to Kahiki." It is thought to have been a launching point for ancient voyages to central Polynesia, the Kahiki of Hawaiian tradition, a distance of almost 3,000 miles. In 1977, the *Hökūle`a*, a modern model of a traditional Hawaiian double-hulled voyaging canoe, set sail from Lāna`i, speeding across the 16-mile channel in less than three hours. This experiment showed that Kealaikahiki offers a smooth beginning for a long journey and could, indeed, be a "way to Kahiki." Since 1976, the *Hökūle`a* has made many voyages to central Polynesia, her navigators using only the ancient ways of following the stars and the sea.

Looking down to the coast, you can see the lighthouse at McGregor Point. The point is named after Daniel McGregor, an adventuring Scotsman who came to Hawai`i about 1875. Twelve years later, he was captain of a ship that was caught in a violent storm off the coast between Mā`alaea and Olowalu. Determined to make a safe landing for the night, he doggedly maneuvered through rain and raging sea to a sheltered spot where he managed to drop anchor. With daylight, he and his crew were amazed to find themselves nestled close to the base of a high sea cliff. ❖

This spot became well-known as an emergency anchorage and was named after Captain McGregor. Eventually, a wharf was built and McGregor Point became an official government landing. Today, an unmanned lighthouse provides an aid to modern navigation.

In 1776, Kalani`ōpu`u, the high chief or *ali`i* of Hawai`i, led 800 of his special *`ālapa* warriors against the high chief of Maui, Kahekili. Kalani`ōpu`u landed his army at Kihei, where they prepared to march across the plain of Kama`oma`o (the neck of Maui) to attack Kahekili at Wailuku. Mā`alaea Bay was dark with the canoes of the Hawai`i chief. The sandy plain was covered with his warriors, charged with excitement and the confidence of victory.

*Across the plains of Pu`u`ainako and Kama`oma`o shone the feather cloaks of the soldiers, woven in the ancient pattern and colored like the hues of the rainbow in red, yellow, and green, with helmets on their heads whose arcs shone like a night in summer when the crescent lies within the moon.*

S.M. KAMAKAU, HAWAIIAN HISTORIAN

But Kahekili had spread his own warriors across the sand hills of Wailuku, well-prepared to defend their Maui land from the elite soldiers of Hawai`i. After a bloody battle, nearly all of the *`ālapa* were annihilated. Only two remained to tell their chief of the disaster. ❖

14

One of the roughest and most difficult [trails] imaginable. It is all the way zigzag and winding, up steep, rocky and barren precipices...

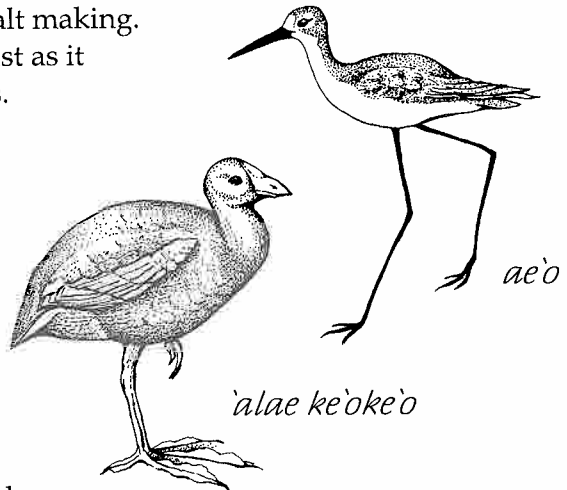
CHESTER LYMAN, 1847, TOURIST

✠ If you started from Mā`alaea, you know why this trail is famous for its zigs and zags. If you've come from Ukumehame, be prepared for a slalom slide down to the trailhead. ~

15

Look down on the coastline. The level marshy area along Mā`alaea Bay is what remains of Keālia Fishpond. Around the late 16th century, people living around the bay built ditches and sluice gates through the high coastal dune, allowing sea water and nearshore fish into the naturally marshy area on the inland side of the dune. The pond is now a wildlife refuge, home to *ae`o* (Hawaiian stilts), *`alae ke`oke`o* (Hawaiian coots), and *`auku`u* (black-crowned night herons).

The area around the fishpond was used by Hawaiians for salt making. You can still make salt just as it was done in the old days. Put sea water in a very shallow basin... Hawaiians often used flat beach rocks with a slight dip in the middle to hold the water. Then wait for the sun to evaporate the water...salt crystals are all that are left behind.

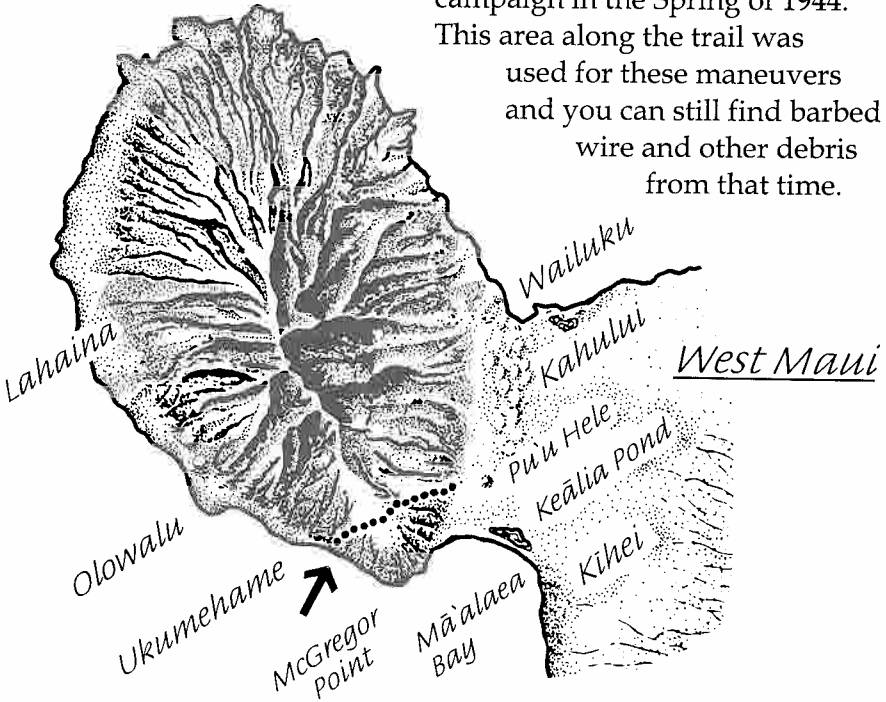


The name Mā`alaea is probably shortened from Māka`alaea, referring to *`alaea*, the edible red clay that Hawaiians used for coloring ocean salt. It was also used as a medicine and dye. ✠

Even before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor brought the United States into World War II, the U.S. military was expanding its facilities in Hawai'i, including several on Maui. An amphibious tractor camp was set up along Mā`alaea Bay, where tents, quonset huts, and other support buildings for 5,000 soldiers were constructed in just a month and a half. Using Mā`alaea Bay as a practice beachhead, the 2nd and 4th Marine Divisions rehearsed amphibious landings for the Marianas

campaign in the Spring of 1944.

This area along the trail was used for these maneuvers and you can still find barbed wire and other debris from that time.



## LAHAINA PALI TRAIL

You can't see it now but Pu`u Hele was a cinder cone of the Lahaina series of volcanic eruptions on West Maui. Ancient Hawaiians revered it as a *pu`uhonua* or a place of refuge. During World War II, the U.S. Navy used the cinders from Pu`u Hele for runways and roads when it built Naval Air Station Puunene on the sandy plain and Naval Air Station Kahului on the north shore (the present airport). All that remains of the 60 foot high hill is a hole in the ground near the intersection of the Wailuku, Lahaina, and Kihei roads. ☒

✠ Want to find out more about Maui and her cultural and natural history? Here are some suggested books:

*Inez M. Ashdown. Ke Alaloe o Maui. Authentic History and Legends of the Valley Isle told by Maui County's Historian Emeritus. Kama`aina Historians, Inc. 1971.*

*John R.K. Clark. Beaches of Maui County. University Press of Hawaii. 1980.*

*John L. Culliney. Islands in a Far Sea. Nature and Man in Hawaii. Sierra Club Books. 1988. (A natural history of the Hawaiian Islands, discussing the impact of humans on an island environment.)*

*Martha Ross Fleming. Old Trails of Maui. William & Mary Alexander Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution. 1933.*

*Samuel M. Kamakau. Ruling Chiefs of Hawaii. Kamehameha Schools Press. 1992. (Recounting the traditional history of the ruling chiefs of Hawai'i, starting with the famous chief `Umi and ending with Kamehameha III.)*

*Patrick V. Kirch. Feathered Gods and Fishhooks. An Introduction to Hawaiian Archaeology and Prehistory. University of Hawaii Press. 1985.*

*Beatrice H. Krauss. Plants in Hawaiian Culture. University of Hawaii Press. 1993.*

*Will Kyselka. An Ocean in Mind. University of Hawaii Press. 1987. (A description of the 1980 Ho kule`a voyage to Tahiti, and how a young Hawaiian man learned the ancient art of navigating by the stars and sea.)*

*G.A. Macdonald, A.T. Abbott, and F.L. Petersen. Volcanoes in the Sea. University of Hawaii Press. 1983. (A geologic survey of the Hawaiian Islands with a chapter on Maui.)*

*Mary K. Pukui, Samuel H. Elbert, Esther I. Mookini. Place Names of Hawaii. University Press of Hawaii. 1981.*



The Na Ala Hele Statewide Trail and Access Program is always looking for ways to improve your hiking experience along the Lahaina Pali Trail. If you have comments or suggestions, please telephone (808) 871-2521, or send this page and any comments you might have to:

✠ NA ALA HELE - MAUI  
Division of Forestry and Wildlife, DLNR  
54 South High Street, Room 101  
Wailuku, Maui, Hawaii 96793

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH! MAHALO FOR YOUR HELP!**

I hiked the trail on: \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

Number of people: \_\_\_\_\_

I am a resident of:

\_\_\_\_\_ Maui  
\_\_\_\_\_ State of Hawaii \_\_\_\_\_ (island)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Mainland \_\_\_\_\_ (state)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Foreign \_\_\_\_\_ (country)

I found out about the trail through: \_\_\_\_\_ (source)

I would have liked more information on the trail's:

\_\_\_\_\_ history  
\_\_\_\_\_ geology  
\_\_\_\_\_ wildlife  
\_\_\_\_\_ plants  
\_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_

Was the trail easy to follow?

Did you have enough information to prepare for the hike?

Did you have any other problems or concerns?

How could your hiking experience be improved?

Other Comments (use reverse side):

Would you be willing to join volunteers to help maintain the trail?

If so, please write in your telephone number \_\_\_\_\_ or  
call us at (808) 871-2521. ✠

Other comments on my hike:



The Lahaina Pali Trail is managed by the Na Ala Hele Statewide Trail and Access Program, Division of Forestry and Wildlife, Department of Land and Natural Resources. Under the supervision of Na Ala Hele staff, community volunteers cleared the trail for public access. Volunteers continue to help maintain the trail for your use.

This trail guide was made possible through funding from Tri-Isle RC&D Council, Inc., Wailuku, Maui, and the County of Maui Economic Development Office and was designed by International Archaeological Research Institute, Inc. All photographs are reproduced courtesy of the B.P. Bishop Museum Archives, Honolulu.

Access to the Mā`alaea trailhead is through the courtesy of Wailuku Agribusiness Company.

*From Lahainaluna we went to Wailuku...A new road had been made around the foot of the mountain, the crookedest, the rockiest ever travelled by mortals. Our party consisted of five adults and five children. We had but two horses. One of these was in a decline on starting; it gave out in a few miles, and was left to die by the roadside. The other "Old Lion" deserves to be immortalized for the services he performed that day, in carrying three and four children at a time on his broad back up and down that unsheltered, zigzag mountain road.*

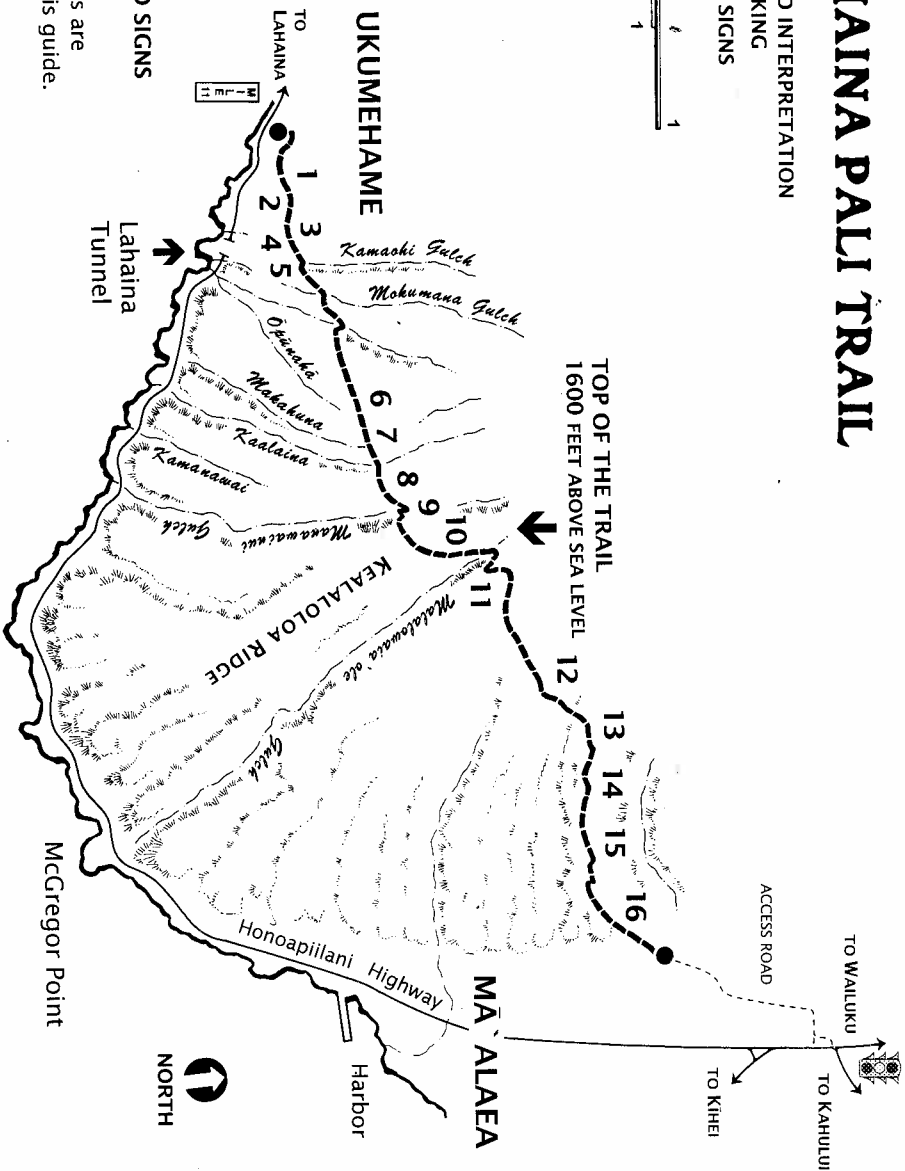
LAURA FISH JUDD, 1841, MISSIONARY




*A Fisher flour truck on the Lahaina road, 1925.*

# THE LAHAINA PALI TRAIL

- TRAILHEAD INTERPRETATION AND PARKING
- 12 TRAILSIDE SIGNS



 **WATCH FOR NUMBERED SIGNS ALONG THE TRAIL.**

The numbers on the signs are keyed to the stories in this guide.