On November 1, 2005, I received a call from Sea Engineering, Inc., a coastal and ocean engineering firm based at Makai Research Pier in Waimānalo. They asked me if I would be willing to do an ocean recreation assessment for them in Waikīkī. Sea Engineering explained that the owners of the Sheraton Waikīkī Hotel were considering a beach restoration project in front of their property, and they had asked Sea Engineering to do an environmental impact statement. My contribution to the EIS would be to identify the ocean recreation users in that area of Waikīkī, conduct interviews with them, and determine if the project would have any impacts on their activities. I was two months away from retiring from the Honolulu Fire Department after a thirty-three-year career as a firefighter, and Sea Engineering’s project was the type of consulting work I had planned to do in my retirement. I accepted their offer.

My first step in shoreline assessments is to review the existing literature for information on the area, which helps to determine what activities occurred historically at the project site. I went first to Bishop Museum Press’s *Sites of Oahu*, by Elspeth Sterling and Catherine Summers, which, although it was published in 1962, is still one of the best historical reference books for the island of O‘ahu. I was surprised to find there was no information at all on Waikīkī. In their foreword the authors offered this brief explanation: “No information is given for Waikīkī or makai of Beretania Street because this area should be the subject of a separate study.” Sterling and Summers unfortunately never got around to the separate study.

From years of personal research on Hawai‘i’s beaches, including Waikīkī, I knew that the Hawaiian name for Gray’s Beach, the small pocket of sand in the study area, was Kawehewehe, so I decided to try another avenue for information, a website called Ho‘olaupa‘i. In 2001, Dwayne Steele, Oswald Stender, and Puakea Nogelmeier started a project to scan more than a hundred
years of historic Hawaiian-language newspapers. Named Hoʻolaupaʻi, or “to multiply or increase,” as in knowledge of Hawaiian culture, the pilot project was funded by Richard Dwayne "Nākila" Steele, a noted philanthropist who, after his retirement from Grace Pacific Corporation in 1989, dedicated the rest of his life to the perpetuation of Hawaiian culture. He sponsored Hawaiian-language books, commissioned the production and recording of Hawaiian musicians, assisted with the founding of two public charter schools in Kekaha, Kauaʻi, for native-speaking Hawaiian children of the Niihau community, and spearheaded the funding to digitize the Hawaiian-language newspapers. Hoʻolaupaʻi is now a joint project of Awaiaulu Inc. and Bishop Museum in collaboration with Alu Like Inc., Hale Kuamoʻo, and Kamehameha Press. Its website is http://nupepa.org/, or it can be found online using the keyword “nupepa,” which is “newspaper” (nūpepa) in Hawaiian. Hoʻolaupaʻi has a “search” feature, so anyone can search this invaluable online archive of Hawaiian history and language. To date, approximately 10 percent of the Hawaiian-language newspapers from 1834 to 1948 are searchable.

I went to the Hoʻolaupaʻi site, typed “Kawehewehe” into the search feature, and was amazed at the number of entries that came up. As I read through them, I discovered that Kawehewehe was not only the name of a beach, but also the name of a coconut grove, a surf site, a spring, and a small community. I did more searches on other Waikīkī place names, including surf sites, and quickly realized that the Hawaiian-language newspapers are a wealth of invaluable historical information. I decided to collect as much information as I could about traditional Hawaiian surfing and especially its connection to Waikīkī, and that was the beginning of Hawaiian Surfing: Traditions from the Past.

The vast collection of literature on surfing began with the journals of Captain James Cook on his voyage to Hawaiʻi, which spanned his arrival in 1778 and his return to the islands in 1779. Cook’s journals were followed by the writings of other explorers, missionaries, travelers, magazine writers, newspaper writers, authors, and historians. During the twentieth century, surf historians scoured every source of information they could find to describe the earliest days of the sport, the days prior to 1900 when Hawaiians still surfed exactly as they had for hundreds of years before the impact of Western culture. My intent in writing Hawaiian Surfing: Traditions from the Past was not to repackage this wealth of information, but to add to it primarily from sources written by Hawaiians in the Hawaiian language of the 1800s. These sources included the Hawaiian-language newspapers, the first of which were published in 1834, and other writings of native Hawaiians.

I decided to look at traditional surfing language and terminology through descriptions of the sport in the Hawaiian language. Hawaiians, like surfers today, had their own surf culture, and I thought perhaps as a lifelong surfer, born and raised in Hawaiʻi, I could bring a surfer’s point of view to the material. I caught my first wave when I was eight years old at Canoes in Waikīkī. That was in 1954, and I hoped that with the experience of my fifty-five-plus years of riding waves in Hawaiʻi, I would be able to show the depth of knowledge and skill that Hawaiian surfers had before surfing was influenced by non-Hawaiians.
Information on traditional surfing in the Hawaiian language has come primarily from native Hawaiians such as John Papa 'Īi, Samuel Kamakau, Zephrin Kepelino, and David Malo, who wrote extensively in the 1800s to document precontact Hawaiian culture. Many of their writings were serialized in the historic Hawaiian-language newspapers, and eminent Hawaiian scholars in the 1900s, such as Mary Kawena Pukui of the Bishop Museum, spent years reading the old newspapers, searching out articles, translating them, and assembling them into books. Thanks to their efforts and translations, we have *Fragments of Hawaiian History*, by John Papa 'Īi; *I Ka Wā O Kamehameha: In the Time of Kamehameha, Ka Po'e Kahiko: The People of Old, Ruling Chiefs of Hawai'i, Tales and Traditions of the People of Old: Nā Mo'olelo a Ka Po'e Kahiko, and The Works of the People of Old: Nā Hana a Ka Po'e Kahiko*, all by Samuel Kamakau; *Kepelino's Traditions of Hawai'i*, by Martha Beckwith; and *Hawaiian Antiquities*, by David Malo, all invaluable references.

Information on traditional surfing has also come from Abraham Fornander's lengthy work, the *Fornander Collection of Folklore*, a major collection of Hawaiian legends in English and Hawaiian, which include many descriptions of surfing throughout Hawai'i. Fornander published his collection in 1930. Another literary work with valuable surfing information is Martha Beckwith's *Hawaiian Romance of Lā'ieikawai*, which includes descriptions of surfing and bodysurfing. Beckwith, who published her book in 1917, enlisted the assistance of some of the best Hawaiian-language authorities of the day to translate this epic tale, which was written by a Hawaiian historian named Hale'ole and published in Hawaiian in 1863.

A new contribution to traditional Hawaiian surf history surfaced in 2006 when Awaiaulu Press published Puakea Nogelmeier's translation of *Ka Mo'olelo o Hi'iakaikapōliopele*, or *The Epic Tale of Hi'iakaikapōliopele*. This legendary story about Hi'iaka, the beautiful sister of Pele, goddess of the volcano, was written by a native Hawaiian, Ho'oulumāhiehie, and was featured as a daily series in the Hawaiian-language newspaper *Ka Nai Aupuni* in 1905 and 1906. Nogelmeier's 490-page translation of this series is an exceptional treasury of cultural knowledge, which includes many descriptive stories about surfing.

Among the most intriguing of the *Hi'iakaikapōliopele* surfing stories are those about Hi'iaka and Hōpoe, Hi'iaka's close friend in Kea'au; Hi'iaka and Punahoa, a skilled surfer who was a chieftess in Hilo; Hi'iaka and her brother Kānemilohae (also known as Kānemiloha'i), another skilled surfer; and Hi'iaka and Pele'ula, a chieftess of Waikīkī. *Hi'iakaikapōliopele* reads like a modern adventure novel, and the author, Ho'oulumāhiehie, tells story after story through lengthy conversations between the characters. It is in these conversations that we see the everyday surf culture of the Hawaiians and learn the language of the surfers, their surf-speak, and their traditions before the arrival of Western civilization. Words that otherwise are simply entries in Hawaiian-language dictionaries come alive in the interplay between Hi'iaka, her companions, and the people, monsters, ghosts, and gods she meets as she travels and surfs across the island chain. Ho'oulumāhiehie's text also includes many briefer references to surfers and surfing, all of which enrich the existing fabric of traditional surfing history.
Another important source of historic surfing information are the *kanikau*, or mourning chants, in the Hawaiian-language newspapers. The publication of the first Hawaiian-language newspaper in 1834, followed by the translation of the Baibala Hemolele, the Holy Bible, from English to Hawaiian, which was completed in 1839 by Christian missionaries and Hawaiian scholars, established Hawaiian as a written language. The missionaries also established schools, and within one generation Hawaiians were almost universally literate, more so than any native group in the world. There was an explosion of writing throughout the 1800s, especially in the newspapers, which are now an invaluable archive of historic, linguistic, and cultural information. *Kanikau* are usually defined as dirges, or poetic chants that express grief and sadness for someone who has passed away. Prior to the introduction of the printed word, composing mourning chants to honor the memory of a loved one was a common practice among Hawaiians, so composing *kanikau* for publication in the 1800s offered a new way to express this important tradition. Today, *kanikau* are treasuries of poetry, language, cultural knowledge, place names, genealogies, and resource descriptions.

A prominent characteristic of Hawaiian poetry is the enumeration of names of places, associated with persons, whose memory is perpetuated in chants or songs. In the Hawaiian chant (*mele*) and dirge (*kanikau*), the aim seems to be chiefly to enumerate every place associated with the subject, and to give that place some special epithet, either attached to it by common place repetition, or specially devised for the occasion, as being particularly characteristic.


A eia iho ua mau uē *kanikau* nei a Hi‘iaka no ke kāne.
Here are the *chants of lamentation* that Hi‘iaka chanted for her husband.

*I ka noho ana o Kamehameha a me na‘li‘i a pau, a make iho la o Kalola, kaakumakena iho la na‘li‘i me ke *kanikau*.*
When Kamehameha and all his chiefs sat together at the time Kalola died, the chiefs wailed and *chanted dirges*.

In the Hawaiian-language newspapers, *kanikau* often take the form of a *huaka‘i*, or journey, through the community where the deceased lived, around the deceased’s home island, or throughout the island chain. The *huaka‘i* takes the writer and the deceased past important places in their lives, including *wahi pana*, or famous places in Hawai‘i. In many *kanikau* the names of the *wahi pana* are poetic references to the personality of the person who died and convey the loving relationship between the deceased and the writer. And if the person who died was a surfer, the *kanikau* often contain references to surfing, such as the names of beaches, surf spots, and springs where surfers rinsed off after surfing.
Kanikau are filled with kaona, hidden meanings in Hawaiian poetry. They often contain veiled references by using words and expressions with multiple meanings. One of the most popular poetic devices is to use a place name that itself has special meaning to the writer and the deceased and then play off the place name with identical words or other words with a similar meaning or sound in the same line or the one that follows. This poetic interplay of words often makes translation into other languages difficult or perhaps impossible at times. Even Hawaiian speakers today can sometimes only guess at the intended meanings of poetic expressions in the lyrics based on their knowledge of the language, the culture, the places, and the people. As a result, more than one interpretation may result from an analysis of the lyrics, which may have been the intent of the composer, either to conceal the true nature of the relationship between the composer and the person honored in the lyrics or perhaps to express how complicated the relationship was.
Kuu kaihuna hoi,
Mai ke kai o Kapuni,
Mai ka i-a hali ala o Kahaloa,
Hooluana ka Lani i Ulukou,
Me na kamalei a kakou,
Hali aku nana i ka ua Puaanaea,
Ke halii mai la la i Palehala e.
My dear brother,
From the sea of Kapuni,
From the fish that carry the scent of Kahaloa,
The king relaxes at Ulukou,
With all of our children,
He turns and watches the Puanaiea rain,
Spreading this way over Palehala.
["Ka i-a hali ala" (ka i’a hali ‘ala) is an epithet for līpoa seaweed, which is fragrant and a favorite edible seaweed.]

*Hawaiian Surfing: Traditions from the Past* is another look at the early history of surfing. While it includes observations by non-Hawaiians, most of the information is from native Hawaiians who were surfers writing about their sport or from Hawaiian writers who were familiar with the sport. From their writings, which include technical descriptions, legends, and eulogies for men and women who surfed, we see that traditional Hawaiian surfers were as at home in the ocean and as skilled in riding waves as any surfer today. While they rode solid wood boards without fins, boards that limited the extent of their maneuvers, they still did all the basics that surfers do now. Riding short boards, they took off on steep waves, they bottom turned and cut back, they rode down the line, and they got barreled in hollow waves. Riding long boards, they surfed big waves, especially those in Waikīkī at the famous surf breaks like Kapua, Kalehuawehe, ʻAiwohi, Maïhiwa, and Kapuni. Through the voices of native Hawaiian surfers, *Hawaiian Surfing: Traditions from the Past* takes another look at surfing before it evolved with the innovations of modern times, and in the process shows that in their day, traditional Hawaiian surfers were among the greatest watermen and waterwomen in the world.

The next day I spoke to Mr. Forbes [at the Kaʻawaloa Mission] concerning the extraordinary dexterity in swimming [surfing] which I had observed on the preceding day among the natives. “You can have no adequate idea of it,” he replied, “they are more at their ease in the water than on the land.”

[In 1836, Theodore-Adolphe Barrot watched Hawaiians surfing at Kealakekua.]

They are quite fearless on the water; all swim, and have little fear of loss of life by drowning. They appear quite as much at home in the water as on land, and many of them more so.

—Wilkes. *Narrative.* p. 44.

The inhabitants of these islands, both male and female, are distinguished by their fondness for the water, their powers of diving and swimming, and the dexterity and ease with which they manage themselves, their surf-boards and canoes, in that element.


The three chapters that follow contain many passages in Hawaiian, each of which is followed by an English translation. If the translation was from a book, such as one by Hawaiian scholars ʻĪʻī, Kamakau, Kepelino, or Malo, the author and his or her book are acknowledged after the translation. Otherwise, all English translations of the Hawaiian passages not followed
by an acknowledgment were provided by Keao NeSmith, an instructor in Hawaiian language at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa.

The Hawaiian passages in the three chapters are primarily from Hawaiian-language newspapers of the 1800s and early 1900s, and writers then did not use the orthography that is used today. The passages were copied as they appear in their original sources and therefore do not have the diacritical marks that are common now, the ‘okina, or glottal stop, and the kahakō, or macron. Some of the early writers occasionally used an apostrophe, dash, or single open quote mark to represent the ‘okina, and these marks were copied if they appeared in the original work, but none of the early writers ever used the kahakō. Some Hawaiian source texts, such as Ka Mo`olelo o Hi‘iakaikapōlipo‘ele by Puakea Nogelmeier, contain the ‘okina and kahakō, so these passages have diacritical marks in the original Hawaiian. Hawaiian words, names, and place names that appear in the English translations by Keao NeSmith are written with ‘okina and kahakō and follow the spellings found in Pukui and Elbert’s Hawaiian Dictionary and Pukui, Elbert, and Mookini’s Place Names of Hawaii.