

Did You Know?

In 1823, missionaries began visiting Kīlauea Caldera. William Ellis was one of the first, followed by Elisha Loomis in 1824. In 1846, Benjamin Pitman Sr., the husband of High Chiefess Kino'ole, built Volcano House, an inn overlooking Kīlauea, which became a favorite haunt of Mark Twain. Two rugged dirt trails led to the Volcano area; one was part of a circum-island route, the other originated in Hilo and led to Kīlauea Iki.

As early as 1880, the Volcano area had full-time residents. Volcano House manager Oliver T. Shipman was one of the first residents of Volcano Village, as the area three miles north of Kīlauea would come to be known.

Between 1888 and 1894, a new road running from Akatsuka's to Volcano House was established. The greatly improved access opened up the Volcano area to increased settlement.

On Oct. 17, 1910, a 200-acre tract in Volcano Village was granted to Hilo Trading Company owner Martin Porter. In 1911, the land immediately bordering the east and south of Porter's property was subdivided. Several wealthy missionary families quickly applied for and were awarded land grants in the new 'Ola'a Summer Lots subdivision.

However, it was not just the wealthy who were interested in living in the nascent Volcano Village. A 1911 plat map reveals land grants to several Japanese families.

By 1914, approximately 35 Japanese families were living in 'Ola'a Summer Lots. Many were farmers; others worked at Volcano House or as groundskeepers for wealthy landowners. Some worked for Tsunesako Honma making 'ōhi'a wood railroad ties for a new narrow-gauge railway that was to run between Hilo and Glenwood.

In 1927, Porter subdivided part of his 200-acre tract into 59 parcels—Anuheha Volcano Houselots. Japanese families purchased 33 of the lots; Honma purchased five.

Realizing the necessity for a Japanese language school, the Volcano Japanese School House Association (Kazan Nihon Gi Chiho Kumiai) was formed. Honma donated his newly purchased Lot 32 in Anuheha Volcano Houselots to the Kumiai for the purpose of building a school, and local Japanese contractor Miyano constructed a 576-square-foot, one-room schoolhouse that opened in 1928. The school taught Japanese reading, writing, mathematics and customs.

The building also served as a Japanese community center, where Japanese holiday events took place, such as weddings, dances and Japanese films.

In 1931, Motoi Shiotani became the school's first principle. Shiotani had a four-room teacher's quarters constructed behind the school and replaced the outhouses with flush toilet bathrooms. The school operated under Shiotani until Dec. 8, 1941, when General Order No. 6 mandated the closure of all schools in the Territory of Hawai'i, both



The Old Japanese Schoolhouse on Kalani Honua Rd. is one of only 2 remaining one-room schoolhouses on the Big Island.

public and private.

On Dec. 4, 1941, three days before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, a letter was sent from Honolulu FBI Special Agent in Charge R.L. Shivers to the FBI director in Washington. The subject of the letter was detention of Japanese, Italian and German aliens. The letter discusses the infeasibility of seizing all those of Japanese ancestry in Hawai'i; at the time, Japanese made up approximately one-third of Hawai'i's population.

The letter stated "...that there are now a total of 338 Japanese aliens to be seized... [including] nine American citizens of Japanese ancestry."

The letter went on to describe who was on the detention list. On the Big Island, the list contained the names of 82 Japanese men and women, including school principle Motoi Shiotani and his wife, and Y. Matsunaga, one of the Kumiai's eight founders.

After the Dec. 7, 1941, bombing of Pearl Harbor, Kīlauea Military

Volcano Community Association (VCA) Mission Statement

To improve and protect the quality of life in Volcano, County and State of Hawaii, on behalf of all residents of the area. To promote the social and educational advancement, increase recreational opportunities, ensure health, protect natural environment, and develop community spirit. Also, it will undertake any consonant project the community may be moved to assign to it.

However, it will remain nonpartisan and nonsectarian.

Camp (KMC), an Army recreation facility inside Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, turned into a Japanese interment camp literally overnight.

All Big Island detainees were brought first to KMC and were later sent to either the Sand Island internment camp on O'ahu or to Mainland camps. Shiotani, his wife and Matsunaga were held in detention for the remainder of World War II. In all, nearly 1,500 Japanese from Hawai'i were detained.

In October 1942, all Japanese language schools were ordered to liquidate their assets. The Kumiai donated their funds to Cub Scout Troop 8 and allowed them use of the property; the schoolhouse also continued to be used for community functions. The following year, title to the property was trans-

ferred from the Kumiai to the Volcano Vegetable Growers Association.

In 1947, the property was transferred to the Volcano Community Association (VCA). [Wow VCA was around back then???] The Volcano Japanese School reopened in the 1950s, and was again used for Japanese education and cultural functions.

As the years passed, attendance at the school dwindled. In the 1970s, the property was leased to the Volcano Art Center (VAC), which purchased it on April 14, 1989. The teacher's quarters were minimally renovated as an office, and the schoolhouse was used for art classes and dance performances.

VAC held title until Feb. 3, 2009, when Satoshi Yabuki purchased the school property and buildings. Yabuki, owner of the neighboring

Holoholo Inn hostel, still owns the Old Japanese School. Yabuki, who is originally from Japan, said that he intends to keep as much of the building as original as possible. All the windows (with the exception of three), the doors, floor, ceiling and blackboard are all original, and the building is eligible for inclusion on the National Historic Register and the Hawai'i State Register of Historic Places.

Visiting classes, student groups, and the Volcano community still use the schoolhouse for various functions. Though the times and ownership have changed for The Old Japanese School, it is still alive, still Japanese-owned, and still very much a part of the Volcano community.

By J.M. Buck
January 4, 2018,
BigIslandNow.com

Time to join or renew your membership? Please note new rates since 2017**

Membership Form -- Volcano Community Association

Name(s) _____

Mailing address _____

City _____ State _____ Zipcode _____

Email (important) _____

Phone(s) _____ (day) _____ (eve) _____ (cell)

Your information will be kept private and will only be used for VCA official business.

VCA is a Group of Volunteers serving the wider Community. We welcome your help! Please check your interests:

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 th of July | <input type="checkbox"/> VCA table at Farmers Market | <input type="checkbox"/> Volcano Long Range Plan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising | <input type="checkbox"/> Misc. Grunt Work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter/Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Membership | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

** Annual dues (as of 2017) \$15 individual \$25 family (2 household members) \$ _____

Additional donation for printing and mailing of brochures and guidebooks, etc..... \$ _____

Membership Card Expires: _____ (office use only) Total amount received: \$ _____

Please make your check out to the Volcano Community Association, and send with this form to:
Volcano Community Association, P.O. Box 600, Volcano, HI 96785
You can also join or renew at www.volcanocommunity.org

Mahalo!

The Voice of the Volcano Community Association is published by the VCA Board of Directors: Vicki Arthur, Jim Buck, Anne Farahi, Jane Field, Paul Field, Sher Glass, Mary Narito & Evelyn Wight

PO Box 600, Volcano, HI 96785 www.volcanocommunity.org vcainfo@yahoo.com