



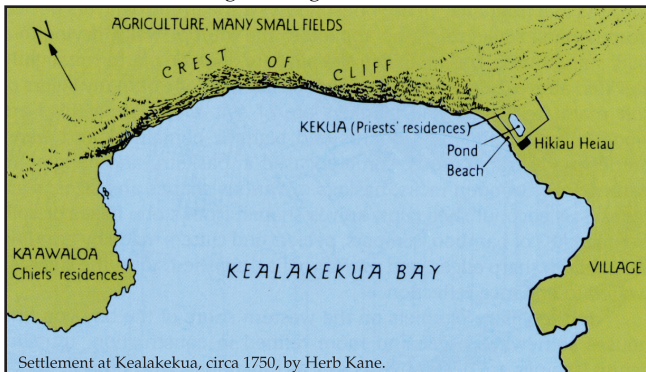
A Ruling Center of Kona

Kealakekua translates as pathway of the gods and is one of the most significant cultural and historic places in Hawai'i. Settled more than 1,000 years ago, the bay offered a safe anchorage with an abundance of marine resources. These early settlers soon began clearing the forests and constructing the extensive upland agricultural fieldsystem of Kona, in which they cultivated crops of 'uala (sweet potato) and kalo (taro).

As the complex social and political system of Hawai'i developed in the 1600s, the *ali'i* (chiefs) and *kāhuna* (priests) established Kealakekua as one of the chiefly centers of Kona. This center was supported by the *maka'āinana* (commoners) who farmed the land and fished the waters of Kealakekua. The *ali'i*, along with his family and advisors, built their houses at Ka'awaloa.

The *kāhuna* settled along the shoreline and around the pond at Kekua, the area now known as Nāpō'opo'o. It was here that a powerful *ali'i* oversaw the building of Hikiāu Heiau, the imposing rock platform and religious center of Kealakekua. Dedicated to the god Kū as a *luakini* (sacrificial) *heiau* for success in war, it was also dedicated to the god Lono during the annual Makahiki season with ceremonies conducted to insure the continued fertility of the land.

Between Kekua and Nāpō'opo'o is Pali Kapu O Keoua, a 600' *pali* (cliff). Named for the *ali'i* Keoua, who ruled in the mid-1700s, the *pali* was *kapu* (off-limits) as a sacred burial area. At Puhina O Lono Heiau, on the slope above Ka'awaloa, the *ali'i* were prepared for burial within the rock wall enclosure. Rock-lined trails over the *pali* connected the people of Kealakekua with neighboring settlements.



Meeting of Cultures

The British ships, Discovery and Resolution, under the command of Captain James Cook, sailed into Kealakekua Bay on January 17, 1779. This event was a turning point in Hawaiian history. During the month long stay in the bay, Cook and his crew documented many aspects of Hawaiian culture at the time of Western contact in journals and artwork.



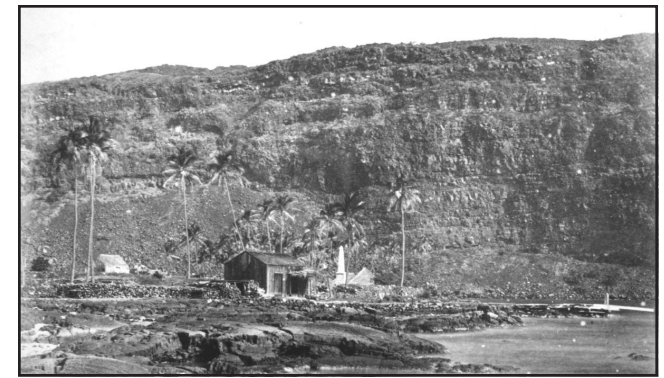
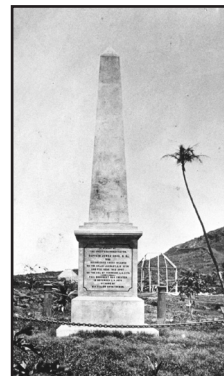
The initial encounter was described by Cook:

"The ships were surrounded by a multitude of canoes. I have nowhere in this sea seen such a number of people assembled at one place. Besides those in the canoes, all the shore of the bay was covered with people and hundreds were swimming about the ships like shoals of fish."

In their journals, Cook's crew recorded four "villages" of about 80 houses each along the 3 miles of shoreline around Kealakekua Bay. They estimated that 2,000 people were living at Kealakekua.

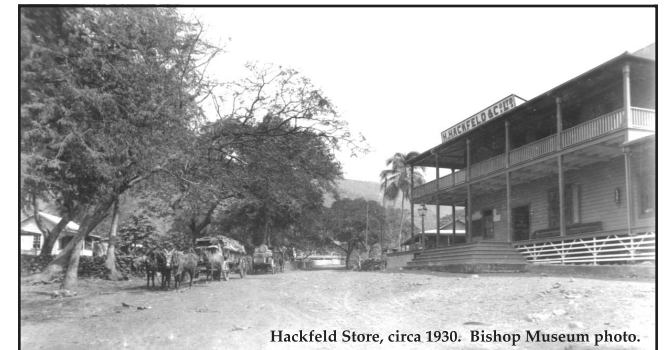
Cook arrived during the Makahiki, a time of peace when people gathered at Kealakekua for sporting and religious events. He was met by Kalaniopu'u, the *ali'i nui* who ruled the island of Hawai'i and resided part-time at Ka'awaloa. Cook also met the young *ali'i* Kamehameha who was residing at Kekua. After the death of Kalaniopu'u in 1782, Kamehameha rose to power. First gaining control over Hawai'i Island, he unified most of the islands by 1795.

After a month of cultural exchange and trading, Cook's ships left Kealakekua Bay. A broken mast forced Cook to return to Kealakekua for repairs. Misunderstandings between the Hawaiians and Europeans developed and resulted in Cook's death at Ka'awaloa on February 14, 1779. Cook's body was taken to Puhina O Lono Heiau located on the slope above Ka'awaloa. The obelisk monument at Ka'awaloa was constructed in 1874 near the spot where Cook died.



Historic Firsts

As the West learned of Hawai'i, explorers, whalers, and traders soon followed and Kealakekua became one of the first major shipping and provisioning ports. Ka'awaloa was selected as one of the earliest Protestant mission sites with a thatched house of worship and school being built in 1824. Access to Ka'awaloa and Nāpō'opo'o was improved with the development of cart roads to transport goods from the bay to the upland communities.



By the 1850s, the population declined and the traditional fishing and farming economy gave way to ranching and coffee. Cattle were herded down the roads to wharfs at both Nāpō'opo'o and Ka'awaloa where they were loaded onto ships in the bay. The Hackfeld Store was built near the Nāpō'opo'o Pier to buy and sell a wide variety of goods and products in the early 1900s. Several families remained at Ka'awaloa until World War II, but most of the activity had shifted to Nāpō'opo'o by this time. Today, Nāpō'opo'o is a small community of families with strong historical ties to the bay.

Protecting This Special Place

As you visit Kealakekua and experience its many special resources, please remember to always show respect for the culture that created this unique place. *Kapu* signs ask that you not proceed further into culturally sensitive areas. Do not move or remove any rocks - they may be an archaeological site and an important part of Hawai'i's past.

Visiting Kealakekua Bay

From Palemano Point to Cook Point, Kealakekua Bay encompasses 315 acres and measures 1.5 miles in length and one mile in width. It is the largest sheltered natural bay on the island of Hawai'i and has always been an important anchorage for both canoes and ships.



Spinner Dolphins. A pod of dolphins frequent Kealakekua Bay to rest over the shallow sandy areas. The bay is also a nursery for mothers and their calves. Disturbing their rest can be harmful to their health and well-being. Always stay at least 50 yards away and do not attempt to approach, swim with, chase, feed, touch or interact with the dolphins.

Ka'awaloa Cove. Known as one of the best snorkeling locations in Kona, this cove on the north side of the bay is home to a living coral reef abutting the *pahoehoe* shoreline.

Coral is a living organism that can be easily damaged when touched or stepped on. The reef provides food and shelter for fish and other marine life. If you swim or boat across the bay to Ka'awaloa, take precautions to protect the reef.



Pali Kapu O Keoua. This steep, 600-foot high *pali* is a volcanic fault line and vertical sea cliff created by landslides and wave action. Kealakekua Bay was the site of a submarine volcanic eruption in 1877. Earthquakes in 1950 and 1951 resulted in major landslides that deposited rock into the bay. Stay a safe distance away from the *pali* when swimming or boating in the bay.

Marine Life Conservation District (MLCD). Kealakekua Bay was designated a MLCD in 1969 because of its abundance and rich diversity of marine life, including corals and fish. Rules have been established for the MLCD to protect and preserve this marine life. Learn these rules before fishing or gathering any marine resources in Kealakekua Bay.

Welcome to Kealakekua

Kealakekua is a place of underwater beauty marked by coral reefs and colorful fish, as well as a place rich in history and Hawaiian culture. The 180 acres surrounding the bay were designated a historical park in 1967 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971.

Nāpō'opo'o Beach. Since the 1950s, storm surf has deposited rock from the bay onto the shoreline, transforming the sand beach to boulders. Before building the wharf, the beach was used for loading cattle onto boats and unloading goods, such as lumber.



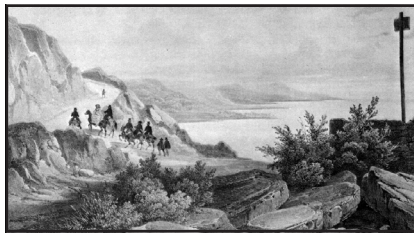
Unloading lumber on beach, circa 1900. HMCS photo.

Hīkiau Heiau

Various ceremonial structures once stood on this large stacked rock platform. Damaged by tsunami and high surf, the *heiau* has been restored several times. This site remains sacred to the Hawaiian people and you are asked not to go onto the *heiau*.

Nāpō'opo'o Wharf. The wharf was originally built in 1894 and rebuilt with concrete in 1912. In the 1920s, the steamer Humu'ula arrived twice a week with mail, news and cargo for the communities around the bay.

Ka'awaloa Road. The trail to Puhina O Lono Heiau and the chiefly compound at Ka'awaloa was widened to a cart road by the missionaries in the 1820s. You can hike this steep 2-mile trail to Ka'awaloa from a trailhead near the intersection of Māmalahoa (Hwy. 11) and Nāpō'opo'o Road.



Ka'awaloa Road, circa 1850, with Puhina O Lono Heiau to the right.



STATE OF HAWAII
Department of Land & Natural Resources
Division of State Parks
Division of Aquatic Resources
Division of Boating & Ocean Recreation
Division of Conservation & Resources Enforcement



Kealakekua Bay in 1779 by John Webber.

KEALAKEKUA BAY STATE HISTORICAL PARK & MARINE LIFE CONSERVATION DISTRICT



Kealakekua, South Kona,
Island of Hawai'i