

SUBJECT: PETER HENRY KANUU

Gravesite: Kawaiaha‘o Church Yard (located near West Gate)



Kawaiaha‘o plot (photo: Douglas Askman, 2016)

Headstone reads:

PETER HENRY KANUU

He hoa no ka Puali Kinai
Ahi Helu 4 a no ka Puali
Kaua Lio LELEIOHOKU
GUARDS
Mare ma Honolulu
Ma ka la 6 Auk M.H. 1875

Translation by Neil B. Dukas (*revised* Sept. 2, 2016):

PETER HENRY KANUU

Comrade of Fire [Engine] Company Number 4 and LELEIOHOKU GUARDS
Cavalry
Died at Honolulu
Departed August 6, A.D. 1875.

Obituary – *The Islander*, Vol 1, 1875, Thos. G. Thrum, Publisher

Aug. 6th.—Sudden death of P.W. [sic] Kanuu, for many years agent of Keelikolani.

Aug. 8th.—Funeral also of Kanuu, with military and firemen escort.

NEWS.

Local Jottings.—Aug. 6th.—Sudden death of P. W. **Kanuu**, for many years agent of Keelikolani.

Aug. 7th.—Bark *Keik* sailed today for Hongkong, via Waimea, Kauai, leaving E. Dimond behind, minus baggage and passage money: nothing like being just too late.—Drill of military company on the city front.

Aug. 8th.—Sudden death this morning of W. A. Thomas, formerly of the police staff. His funeral took place at 4 p. m.—Funeral also of **Kanuu**, with military and firemen escort.—Large temperance meeting at the Kaumakapili Church, with addresses by His Majesty, J. E. Bush and Rev. M. Kuaea.

NOTES:

- “Keelikolani” – H.R.H. Princess Ruth Ke‘elikōlani
- “Agent” typically refers to a land or property manager.
- Leleiohoku Guards, a “Volunteer Guards” militia unit established 1874 to replace the Hawaiian Cavalry (disbanded) – mounted cavalry squadron of three troops, approximately 60 members.
- Kanuu *probably* held junior officer rank in the Leleiohoku Guards (lieutenant or coronet).
- Captain Commanding the Leleiohoku Guards: H.R.H. Prince William Pitt Leleiohoku (youngest brother of King David Kalākaua and “Heir Apparent”).

- Both Kanuu and Prince Leleiohoku were directly connected to Princess Ruth; Kanuu as her agent and Prince Leleiohoku as her adopted (hānai) son.
- Kanuu and Prince Leleiohoku served together (i.e., simultaneously) in the Leleiohoku Guards *and* Engine Company Number 4 of the Honolulu Fire Department (Prince Leleiohoku as the company “Foreman”).
- H.F.D. 1875: 225 members (all volunteers), 3 hand engines, 1 hook and ladder company, 1 hose company.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

- Rare, possibly unique, headstone recording monarchy-era volunteer service in detail (naming specific volunteer company affiliations). Especially, service in “Native” companies.
- Headstone clearly demonstrates pride taken in community service and high degree of comradery.
- Only known example of “cross-over” service (Fire Department *and* Volunteer Guards).
- Augments our historical knowledge of Princess Ruth and Prince Leleiohoku.

COMMENTS

The headstone (along with Kanuu’s record of service) is deserving of recognition and conservation for its historical significance. At some point in the past, the headstone was knocked to the ground where water could pool on the surface. In that condition, it suffered appreciable wear and tear from the elements (since my first observation in 2012). The last name, “Kanuu,” is now barely legible. Having been brought to the attention of the Honolulu Fire Department, the headstone was re-furbished and re-situated in its original vertical position in February 2016 with the support and assistance of Fire Chief Manuel P. Neves.

Additional note, 2015 marked the 140th anniversary of Kanuu’s passing.

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