

Dorothy Barton

## 1996 Pacific Preservation Field School

**T**he Pacific Preservation Field School in many ways was an experiment in cultural diversity. This year's program concentrated on the documentation of urban vernacular architecture, gathering 18 students from Hawai'i, the U.S. mainland, Micronesia, Cambodia, Thailand, and other countries. The background of the participants varied, with professionals and students in archeology, architecture, urban and regional planning, and historic preservation studying preservation theory and gaining hands-on experience in architectural recording.

The course was developed and taught by Professor William Chapman, director of the University of Hawai'i Historic Preservation Program, and Spencer Leineweber, FAIA and professor of architecture at the university. Through their direction, guest lecturers, community forums, and considerable field work, the students tackled training in research, documentation and recording techniques, basic terminology of architectural descriptions, drafting and techniques of measured drawings, training in 35mm photography, and preservation theory.

The field school was an opportunity for the students to work with a community dealing with immediate preservation problems and issues. The venue in 1996 was Kaimukī, an early-20th-century section of Honolulu. During the late-1960s, a highway was extended through the area, cutting off most of the business and dividing parts of the neighborhood. While this was detrimental to economic activity at the time, it also served to preserve many aspects of the neighborhood.

Today the Kaimukī neighborhood consists of many 1930s and 1940s Art Moderne commercial buildings surrounded by Craftsman and plantation style homes. The main street through Kaimukī has maintained much of its original character but has also obtained something of a feeling of neglect. The community is beginning to recognize the need to revitalize the area, hoping to not only increase economic

activity, but also plan for growth that maintains the character of the pedestrian-friendly neighborhood.



Field school students at work in the studio. Photo by the author.

The students began by building a block-by-block inventory of the neighborhood. Over 20 blocks were surveyed, creating a record and encouraging preservation of the remaining older buildings in Kaimukī. HABS-standard measured drawings were done of some of the most influential examples of Kaimukī architecture. All of these drawings, ranging from a complex of five 58-year old cottages, the 1948 Art Moderne Venus Beauty Salon, to the lava rock Epiphany Episcopal School and Church, will be placed in the State Historic Preservation Office.

In the final exercise of the field school, students drew renderings of various commercial buildings along the main street and then proposed either a preservation, restoration, or rehabilitation plan that could improve the appearance, structure, and usefulness of the building without losing the atmosphere and integrity of the community. The field school concluded with the students presenting their proposals before a mock charette.

Finally, the existing plans and the student artistic proposals were put on display for the community at one of the many new coffee houses along the Kaimukī main thoroughfare. The future field schools of the University of Hawai'i's Historic Preservation Program hope to build on this success and lead to further hands-on learning involving community interaction next year on the island of Moloka'i.

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