

FORT HISTORY

1815-1817

THE ATTEMPTED RUSSIAN INVASION



Georg Anton Schaeffer

Early in the 19th Century, Russian fur traders established trading centers from Siberia into the North American continent. Russian cargo vessels, departing from their Alaskan headquarters in Sitka, regularly transected the northern Pacific Ocean.

In January 1815, a Russian-American Company vessel was shipwrecked at Waimea, Kauai. The ship

and cargo were confiscated by Kaumualii, king of Kauai, and the Russian-American Company sent out an agent, Georg Anton Schaeffer, to diplomatically recover the company's lost assets.

Schaeffer, a surgeon on one of the Company's vessels, was placed on an American vessel and sent to Hawaii in the guise of a botanist. Schaeffer's mission was to gain the confidence of Kamehameha I to whom, in 1810, Kaumualii had acknowledged sovereignty. Once the bond existed between Schaeffer and Kamehameha, he was to reveal the true character of his mission and request Kamehameha's assistance in securing compensation from Kaumualii for the confiscated cargo. Kamehameha, however, did not lend the anticipated assistance.

Schaeffer tried an alternate plan. Dealing directly with

Kaumualii, he was successful in securing a contract guaranteeing payment for his confiscated cargo. Schaeffer, exceeding his original orders, entered into a secret treaty with Kaumualii in which he pledged arms and ships for an invasion of the islands of Oahu, Lanai, Maui, and Molokai which Kaumualii felt were his. In return, Kaumualii promised the Russians half of the conquered island of Oahu and all the sandalwood on Oahu and Kauai. Schaeffer's company would also be permitted to establish



Czarina Elizabeth, wife of Russia's Alexander I, for whom the fort was named in 1816.

factories on all of Kaumualii's newly conquered islands.

In September of 1816, Schaeffer undertook the defense of Kauai. Measuring out Fort Elizabeth at Waimea, he put several hundred natives to work on the construction of the fort wall. Feeling his sovereignty being questioned, Kamehameha ordered Kaumualii to rid Kauai of all Russian associations.

On May 8, 1817, Schaeffer was forcibly escorted to his company ship and this officially concluded the attempted union between the Hawaiian King and the Russian trading agent.

1817-1864

THE HAWAIIAN PERIOD

After the Russian departure from the fort site, the Hawaiian government completed the half-finished structure and used it for various purposes. In 1820, the missionary Reverend Whitney and his family resided just seaward of the fort wall on lands given to them by Kaumualii. In 1822, Reverend Whitney witnessed and described the burial of Kaumualii's grandson in the interior of the fort, which by this time was called Fort Hipo by the Hawaiians. Shortly after this incident, in 1824, Kaumualii died on Oahu. As arranged in 1810, Kauai became part of the Hawaiian Kingdom to be controlled by Kamehameha's heir Liholiho.

Kaumualii's own son, Humehume, led followers of landless Kauai chiefs in an attack on the fort on August 8, 1824. These revolters opposed the annexation of Kauai to the Kamehameha empire. They armed themselves by taking powder from the fort's magazine and by breaking into two houses where arms were stored. Liholiho responded by sending government forces from Oahu and the insurrection was soon squelched. The fort was manned by government soldiers whose duties included saluting vessels in the harbor and honoring royal birthdays with cannon salutes.

1864-Present

ABANDONMENT AND RUINS

In 1864, by order of the Hawaiian government, the fort was dismantled. In 1885, Captain George Jackson visited the site and made the first descriptive survey of the area. This survey is the only existing record of the site done in the 19th century. By this point in time, the fort was in a bad state of disrepair. Since 1885, the structure has been reduced to only the fort wall. In 1966, Russian Fort Elizabeth was declared a National Historic Landmark by the U.S. Department of the Interior. In 1970, the State of Hawaii acquired the site for development as a historical park.



Rendering of Fort Elizabeth upon completion and troop occupation, circa 1820.



For further information or permits contact:

Department of Land & Natural Resources
Division of State Parks
3060 Eiwa Street, Room 306
Lihue, Kauai, Hawaii 96766
Phone: (808) 241-3444

STATE OF HAWAII

РУССКИЙ
RUSSIAN

ФОРТ
FORT

ЕЛИСАВЕТА
ELIZABETH

STATE HISTORICAL PARK



WAIMEA, KAUAI

1815-1864

HAWAII

Welcome to Russian Fort Elizabeth. We believe Hawaii's parks are among the earth's best resources. If you observe damage to the park, please inform the Chairperson, Department of Land and Natural Resources at (808) 587-0400.



Aloha and Mahalo,

Benjamin J. Cayetano

BENJAMIN J. CAYETANO
Governor of Hawaii

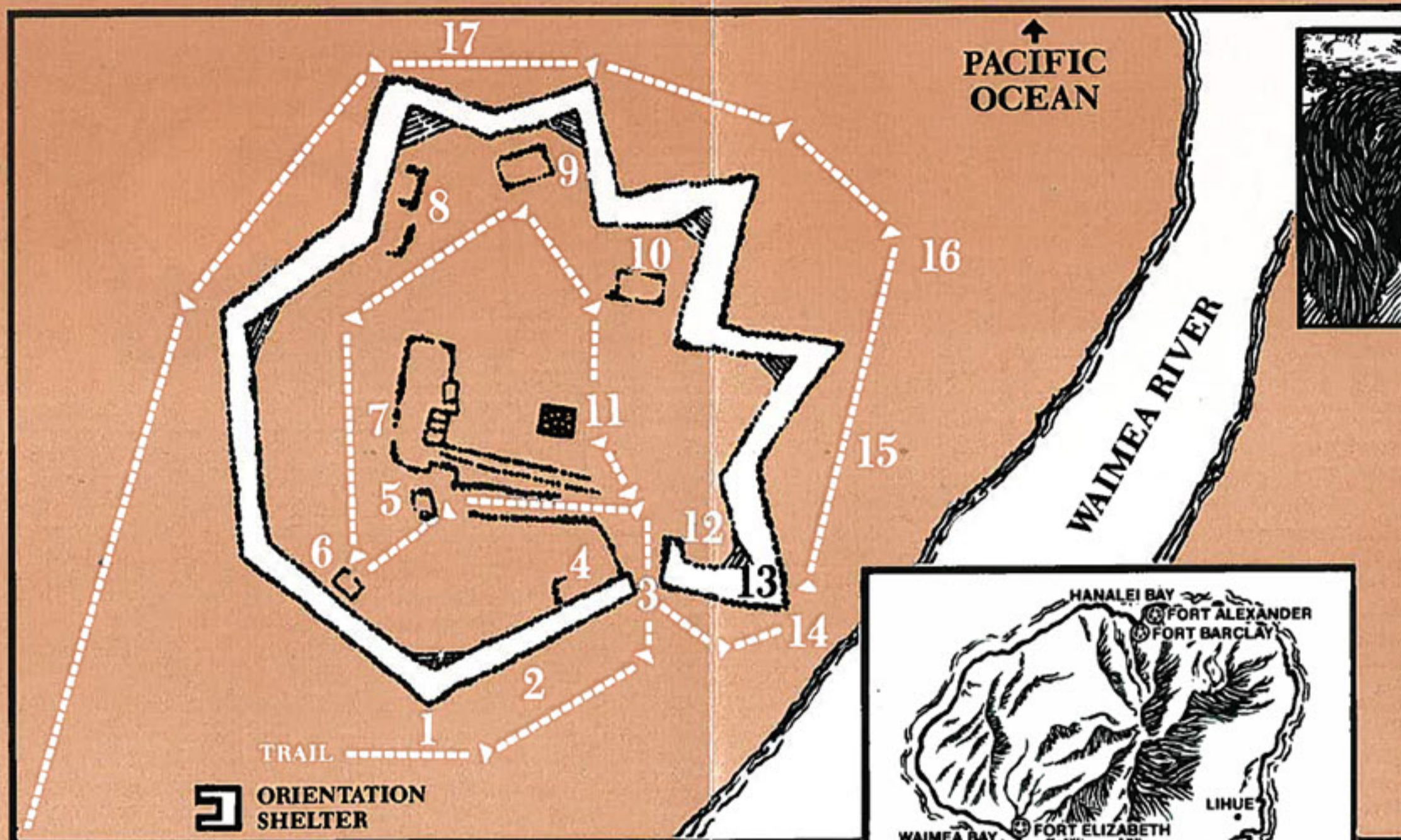
VISITING THE FORT

This fort, on the east bank at the mouth of the Waimea River, was initially constructed between 1815 and 1817 under an alliance between the Russian-American Company and Kauai King Kaumualii. The Russians, under Georg Anton Schaeffer, designed the fort and directed the large Hawaiian work force that constructed the fort wall. The construction reflects the use of Hawaiian materials and building techniques. The Hawaiians took over the fort in 1817 after the Russians were expelled from Hawaii. They finished the fort and made modifications and additions within the structure's wall during this time. The fort was occupied by Hawaiian soldiers until it was dismantled in 1864 by order of the Hawaiian government and has since fallen into the disrepair that you see today.

If you follow the foot trail, you will be able to view the exterior structure of the fort wall and the remnants of the building foundations within the fort wall. Labels for the use of the building remains are based on a map drawn by George Jackson in 1885, after the fort was dismantled. There has been no archaeological work conducted on these remains to confirm the historical labels placed on these foundations.

Because of the fragile condition of the fort wall, we request that you **DO NOT CLIMB ON OR OVER THE FORT WALL**. For your safety, we also recommend that you do not climb on the stairs within the fort.

- 1** Fort Wall. The fort wall consists of an earthen embankment with a stacked basalt boulder face and rubble fill. There was no mortar used in the construction of this wall. The wall averages 12 feet in height and the fort is 300 feet in diameter.
- 2** Site of Trading House. The trading house or factory was the first structure built at the fort. It was built to store the sandalwood used in the trade between the Russians and Hawaiians.
- 3** Fort Entry. The entrance to the fort is narrow and separates the earlier Russian designed part of the fort on the seaward side from the later Hawaiian part on the side toward the mountains.



- 4** Guardroom. This rock alignment is thought to be a remnant of the foundation for the guardroom built at the fort entrance.
- 5** Magazine and Armory. An underground pit (10 feet square) was dug and lined with adobe for the storage of munitions. The armory was a larger structure that enclosed the storage pit.
- 6** Officer's Quarters. This alignment probably represents the foundation of the officer's quarters located along the northern wall of the fort. The foundation measures 15x7 feet.
- 7** Barracks. The barracks was the largest structure in the fort, measuring 80x30 feet. The structure was built on top of this stone-lined platform.
- 8** Housesite. These enclosure structures built along the fort wall appear to post-date the dismantling of the fort (1864) and are probably a Hawaiian housesite.
- 9/10** Quarters. The foundations of these two buildings average 20x15 feet in size and both are located at the base of the stairs.

- 11** Flagstaff. The flagstaff was the first structure completed within the fort. The flagpole was set into the depression in the center of the stacked rock platform.
- 12** Stairs. Stairs were built into each star-like projection for access to the cannons set atop the fort wall.
- 13** Cannon Emplacements. Cannons were placed at each projection on top of the fort wall. There were other cannons lined on the seaward exterior of the fort. These cannons were removed when the fort was dismantled.
- 14** Russian Fort Design. These star-like projections on the seaward side of the fort reflect the European design of forts in the 17th Century. This seaward portion was probably the first area of the fort wall constructed.



Captain James Cook landing at Waimea, 1778.

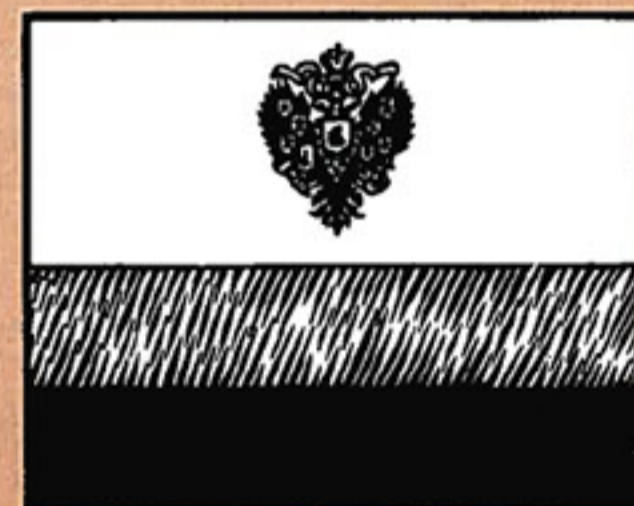
15 Mouth of the Waimea River. The first Western contact with Hawaii took place at the mouth of the Waimea River when Captain James Cook anchored there on January 20, 1778. The Hawaiians believed Cook to be their god Lono and prostrated themselves.

16 Whitney's House. This is where the house was built in 1820 for the Reverend Whitney when the missionaries arrived in Waimea. Whitney's house also served as schoolroom and place for public worship.

17 Kaumualii's Residence. Jackson recorded a number of stacked rock walls and the housesite of King Kaumualii in this area on the seaward portion of the fort. This area was cleared for sugarcane cultivation before 1900.



Location of Forts Elizabeth, Alexander and Barclay on Kauai.



Flag of the Russian-American Company raised at Fort Elizabeth 1816-1817.

RUSSIAN FORT REFERENCES:

Richard Pierce, *Russia's Hawaiian Adventure, 1815-1817* (1965)

Gavan Daws, *Shoal of Time, A History of the Hawaiian Islands* (1974)

Edward Joesting, *Kauai, The Separate Kingdom* (1984)