

Rearview Mirror: Castle, Waimanalo junctions offer interesting stories

- By Bob Sigall, Special to the Star-Advertiser
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Castle Memorial Hospital, above, opened in 1963 to serve the growing Windward Oahu population.



Harold Castle:

His grandfather Samuel Castle co-founded Castle & Cooke



The Castle Junction name came from Harold Castle's Kaneohe Ranch office, at the intersection of Pali, Kamehameha and Kalaniana'ole highways and Aulua Road.

COURTESY JOEL BRADSHAW



Children play in the Pohakupu Park fountain.

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In the past few weeks, I've been driving by Pohakupu Mini Park across the street from Castle Hospital in Kailua, and wondered what its story was.

This led to my looking into why the intersection we call Castle Junction is not where Castle Hospital is located. It's confused me for a long time, but I think I

have sorted it out. We'll explore Castle Junction and Waimanalo Junction in today's column.

Pohakupu Mini Park

This park opened in 1961. Like many schools, parks and churches in the area, the land was donated by the Kaneohe Ranch Co., owned for nearly a century by the Castle family. Pohakupu means "growing rock."

Inside the park, I can see a three-tier concrete fountain that contains no water. Searching the newspaper archives, I found that Harold K.L. Castle donated the \$25,000 fountain in memory of his mother, Julia White Castle (1850-1943). He felt the fountain and park would help maintain the value of the nearby homes.

Julia White Castle was the wife of James Bicknell Castle, the son of Samuel Castle, co-founder of Castle & Cooke.

The park is adjacent to the Pohakupu housing subdivision, which broke ground in 1957. The homes sold for \$14,000 to \$19,000. Today they're worth \$1.25 million to \$2.5 million.

Castle Junction

Across the street from Pohakupu Mini Park is Castle Hospital, which opened in 1963.

I have often mentally confused Castle Junction with Waimanalo Junction, 2 miles away on the Windward side.

My mind thinks Castle Junction should be where Castle Hospital is. Why is Castle Junction nearly 2 miles away?

Castle Junction is the stoplighted intersection at the foot of Pali Highway. Kamehameha Highway begins there, going off toward Kahuku and around the island.

Kalanianaʻole Highway begins there as well. Two miles down the road, at Waimanalo Junction, it veers off and heads toward Makapuu. It continues until it becomes Lunalilo Freeway (H-1) in Kahala.

Tiny Auloa Road also begins at Castle Junction. Before the building of the modern Pali Highway and tunnels in the late 1950s, Auloa Road was the only way to access Kailua, Paul Brennan says. That road took one through the farming community and early stores and rice mills in Maunawili.

There appears to be a house on the corner of Auloa Road and Kalanianaʻole Highway. That building is the Kaneohe Ranch offices, owned by Harold Castle when it was constructed sometime before 1940.

So, why is the meeting of Pali, Kalanianaʻole and Kamehameha highways and Auloa Road called Castle Junction?

I returned to the newspaper archives. The first time “Castle Junction” appeared in The Honolulu Advertiser was 1932 in an article about roads and highways. The article called it “Castle’s junction.”

In the 1940s the intersection was referred to as the “Castle office junction” or the “Castle Ranch office junction.” Neither of these was the formal name of the company, former Kaneohe Ranch President Mitch D’Olier says.

Kailua historian Paul Brennan thinks World War II may have played a role in establishing the term “Castle Junction.”

The army erected a “Pali Camp in the Pali Golf Course/Hawaii Loa campus area, during World War II, right where the junction going to either Kailua or Kaneohe takes place,” Brennan says.

“The 6,000-plus military personnel needed a designation for that strategic location. So, the handy, unambiguous reference — ‘Castle Junction’ — came into popular usage.”

I asked D’Olier whether he knew why Harold Castle picked that spot for the Kaneohe Ranch offices. He didn’t know, but said Harold and Alice Castle’s home — Paliku — was a half-mile above it (where St. Stephen Diocesan Center is today), so the office site was conveniently close to his home.

In conclusion, it looks like Castle Junction was named two to three decades before Castle Hospital was built, and was named for Harold Castle's Kaneohe Ranch Co. offices.

Waimanalo Junction

Two miles makai of Castle Junction is Waimanalo Junction, a term that first appeared in local newspapers in 1914, when there were few cars on Oahu.

At Waimanalo Junction (sometimes referred to as the Kailua-Waimanalo Junction), Kalaniana'ole Highway curves off toward Makapuu. Kailua Road officially begins there.

Castle Hospital and Pohakupu Park are on opposite corners of Waimanalo Junction. The hospital honors the Castle family, which donated the 10 acres of land it sits on. The Castle Foundation has been a major donor to the hospital since it opened in 1963.

Before it was built, ambulances often had to drive over Old Pali Road to St. Francis Hospital in Nuuanu. Some injured residents didn't survive the trip.

The Windward population grew after World War II, and the community began planning for what was called "Windward Oahu Hospital" in the late 1950s.

The Hawaii Mission of Seventh-Day Adventists manages the hospital. In 1983 the hospital changed its name to Castle Medical Center to reflect the growth of outpatient services and programs. Today its official name is Adventist Health Castle, but it seems everyone still calls it Castle Hospital.

Adventist Health runs it and 21 other hospitals and 250 clinics in California, Oregon and Washington.

Pali Golf Course

Let's return to Castle Junction to touch on the Pali Golf Course and HPU's Hawaii Loa campus.

Before the Pali Golf Course opened in 1956, it had been a Hygienic Dairy pasture. Prior to that it was a Libby McNeill pineapple field.

“Why,” a reporter asked Harold Castle in 1956, “did you sell that golf course land at the bottom of the Pali for \$225,000 when it’s worth more than a million dollars now?”

There was the smallest pause, and then the 70-year-old president of the Kaneohe Ranch Co. smiled and said, “I just wanted to.”

“For many years,” Castle continued, “I had envisioned a golf course at the foot of the Pali.

“When you come over the Pali and see the grandeur and beauty of this section of the island — well, I couldn’t visualize the area used for, say, a low-cost housing project. It would have ruined it forever.”

Windward state Capitol?

On the makai side of Kamehameha Hawaii at Castle Junction is the Hawaii Loa campus of Hawaii Pacific University. In 1961, Harold Castle offered it to the state for free when it was looking for a Capitol site. Imagine how Windward Oahu would be different if the state had said yes!

Recently, the property was purchased by Adventist Health, which is leasing it back to HPU. It might use the site for some of its medical facilities.

War Memorial

Thousands pass by Castle Junction each day, and most probably have no idea that a war memorial is on the mauka side of Auloa Road.

Earl Finch and several Windward residents erected that memorial in 1946. It’s dedicated to the men and women from the Windward side who died during World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq or Afghanistan.

A sign says it was “presented to the Windward Oahu Community by Earl M. Finch, Hattiesburg, Miss., March 28, 1946.”

I wrote about Finch a few years ago. He was a “one-man USO” who befriended thousands of Americans of Japanese ancestry when they were sent to Camp Shelby in Mississippi in 1943 for World War II basic training.

Finch welcomed the AJAs when others scorned them. It became his personal mission to change the lot of the nisei soldiers. It was a mission that engulfed his whole life.

Recent developments

In 2013, Kaneohe Ranch sold nearly all of its Windward properties to Alexander & Baldwin Inc., but it retained several mainland properties. Its office is still in that small building on the Auloa Road side of Castle Junction, where it has been since 1940.

The office of the Harold Castle Foundation was built on the same property in 2010 on the Ewa side of the Ranch building.

The foundation has donated over \$200 million for public education programs, nearshore marine resource conservation and strengthening the communities of Windward Oahu.

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