

Addendum to:
ALA WAI CANAL
Between Ala Wai Boulevard and 'Āinakea Way
Honolulu
Honolulu County
Hawaii

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

**Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240**

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

INDEX TO PHOTOGRAPHS

HAER No. HI-143

**Addendum to:
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Honolulu County
Hawaii**

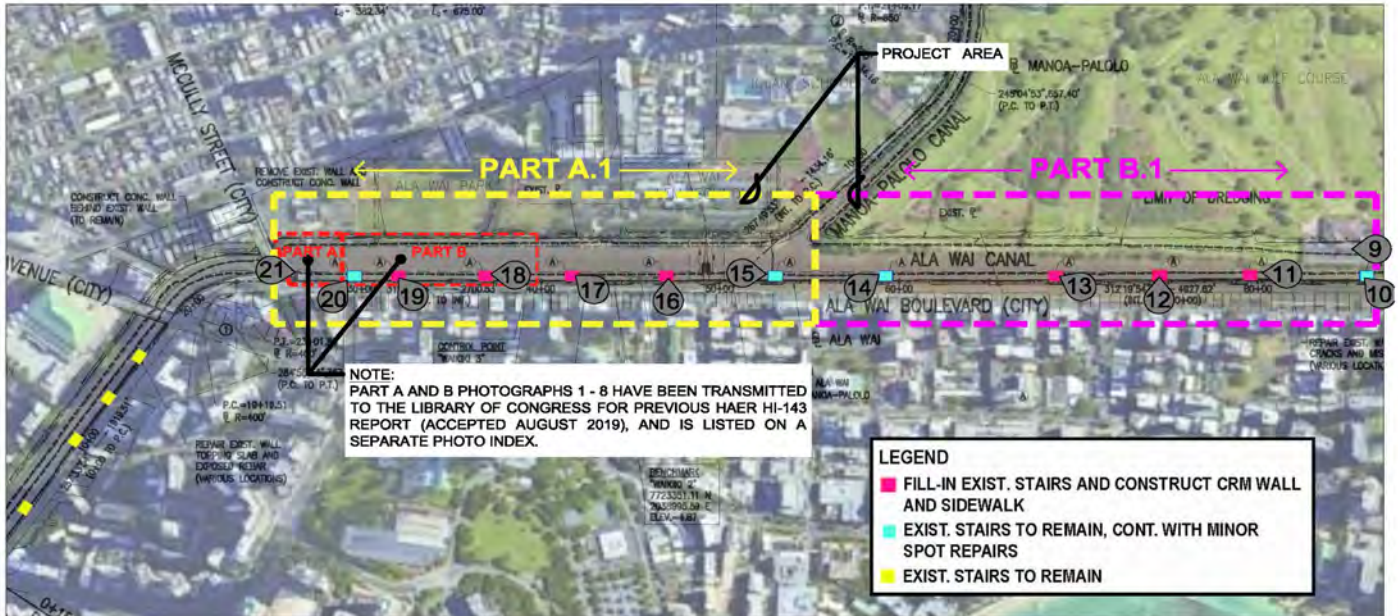
Photographs HAER HI-143-1 through HAER HI-143-8 were previously transmitted to the Library of Congress. The following photo set documents the masonry steps along the canal between McCully Street and Ohua Avenue.

David Franzen, Photographer, May 11, 2022

- HI-143-9 Context view looking up the Ala Wai Canal from the Ala Wai golf course, looking west.
- HI-143-10 Steps near the intersection of Ala Wai Boulevard and Ohua Avenue, looking north.
- HI-143-11 Steps across from 2449 Ala Wai Boulevard, looking west.
- HI-143-12 Steps near the intersection of Ala Wai Boulevard and Ka`iulani Avenue, looking north.
- HI-143-13 Steps near the intersection of Ala Wai Boulevard and Walina Street, looking north-northwest.
- HI-143-14 Steps near the intersection of Ala Wai Boulevard and Seaside Avenue, looking east-northeast.
- HI-143-15 Steps near the intersection of Ala Wai Boulevard and Lewers Street, looking south-east.
- HI-143-16 Steps near the intersection of Ala Wai Boulevard and Launiu Street, looking southwest.
- HI-143-17 Steps near the intersection of Ala Wai Boulevard and `Olohana Street, looking north.
- HI-143-18 Steps near the intersection of Ala Wai Boulevard and Kuamo`o Street, looking west-northwest.

- HI-143-19 Steps near the intersection of Ala Wai Boulevard and Pa`u Street, looking north-northwest.
- HI-143-20 Steps near the intersection of Ala Wai Boulevard and Niu Street, looking east.
- HI-143-21 Context view looking up the Ala Wai Canal from the McCully Street bridge, looking south-east.

PHOTO KEY (ADDENDUM) — OVERALL SITE PLAN - Part A.1 and B.1



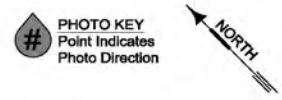
ALA WAI PHOTO KEY (ADDENDUM) - SITE PLAN - Part A.1 and B.1
 SCALE: NOT TO SCALE

LEGEND

PART A.1 --- APPROXIMATE PROJECT AREA OF PART A.1 AND PART B.1 FOR HAER HI-143 ADDENDUM PHOTOS 9 - 21.

PART B.1 ---

PART A and B (Previous HAER HI-143) --- APPROXIMATE PROJECT AREA OF PREVIOUS HAER HI-143 PHOTOS 1 - 8. PLEASE SEE NOTE FOR REFERENCE.



*Photo key information imposed on R.M. Towill Corporation - Ala Wai stair and repair locations

PHOTO KEY (ADDENDUM) — ENLARGED SITE PLAN - Part A.1



ALA WAI PHOTO KEY (ADDENDUM) - ENLARGE SITE PLAN - Part A.1
 SCALE: NOT TO SCALE

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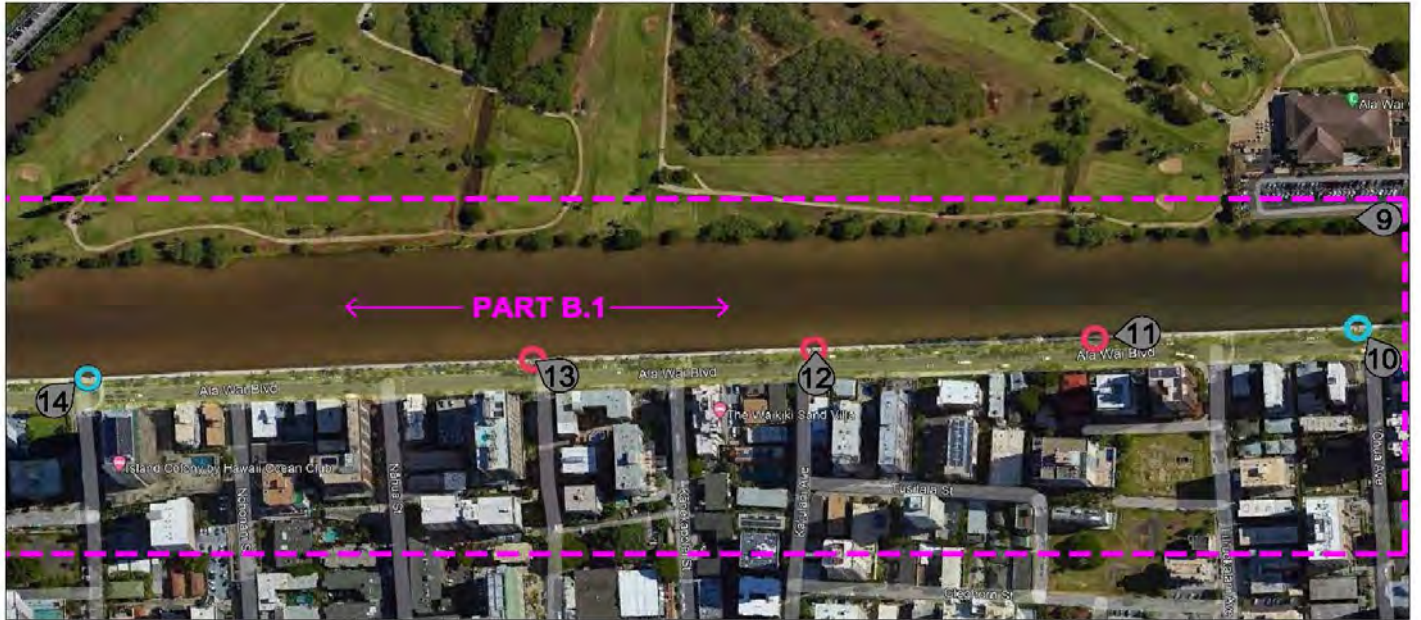
- PART A.1** --- APPROXIMATE PROJECT AREA OF PART A.1 AND PART B.1 FOR HAER HI-143 ADDENDUM PHOTOS 9 - 21.
- PART B.1** ---
- PART A and B (Previous HAER HI-143)** --- APPROXIMATE PROJECT AREA OF PREVIOUS HAER HI-143 PHOTOS 1 - 8. PLEASE SEE NOTE FOR REFERENCE.

PHOTO KEY Point Indicates Photo Direction



*Photo key information imposed on R.M. Towill Corporation - Ala Wai 2

PHOTO KEY (ADDENDUM) — ENLARGED SITE PLAN - Part B.1



ALA WAI PHOTO KEY (ADDENDUM) - ENLARGE SITE PLAN - Part B.1
 SCALE: NOT TO SCALE

LEGEND

- PART A.1 ▬▬▬ APPROXIMATE PROJECT AREA OF PART A.1 AND PART B.1 FOR HAER HI-143 ADDENDUM PHOTOS 9 - 21.
- PART B.1 ▬▬▬
- PART A and B (Previous HAER HI-143) - - - APPROXIMATE PROJECT AREA OF PREVIOUS HAER HI-143 PHOTOS 1 - 8. PLEASE SEE NOTE FOR REFERENCE.

PHOTO KEY
 Point Indicates
 Photo Direction



*Photo key information imposed on R.M. Towill Corporation - Ala Wai 3

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

ALA WAI CANAL

This is an addendum to a 14-page report previously transmitted to the Library of Congress.

Location: Between Ala Wai Boulevard and 'Āinakea Way
Honolulu
City and County of Honolulu, Hawai'i

The canal is located between latitude: 21.287532, longitude: -157.841107 (west end) and latitude: 21.275136, longitude: -157.817733 (east end). This survey focuses on portion of the canal between McCully Street and Ohua Avenue (21.287883, -157.832535 to 21.276716, -157.819775). These points were obtained on July 16, 2022, using Google Earth (WGS84). There is no restriction on their release to the public.

Significance: The Ala Wai Canal is associated with the development of Waikiki as the major visitor center of the island of Oahu. The canal diverted the waters of Palolo, Manoa, and Makiki streams from Waikiki, eliminating the wetlands in the area, which allowed a more intense development of Waikiki. It is also a good example of a drainage canal constructed in Hawaii during the 1920s and 1930s. The lava rock walls were constructed originally in 1934 and substantially repaired and rebuilt 1949-54. The lava rock walls are typical of their period of construction in their workmanship and use of materials, as is the overall design of the canal.

Description: The addendum for the Ala Wai Canal focuses on the area between the McCully Street bridge and the southeastern terminus of the Ala Wai Canal. There are eleven sets of masonry steps which descend to the Ala Wai Canal from the concrete sidewalk paralleling Ala Wai Boulevard. All of the steps have cheek walls which rise above the level of the sidewalk.

The battered lava rock wall bounding the *makai* (toward the ocean), or southwest, side of the Ala Wai Canal varies in height, following the elevation of the waterway's banks. The wall rises from a 23" high concrete base, the lower 5" of which increases approximately 4" in width. A scored concrete sidewalk immediately adjoins the top of the wall and a road verge is between the sidewalk and Ala Wai Boulevard. Coconut palms are planted in this lawn area.

Commencing at the southeast end of the wall, the first set of steps is opposite Ohua Avenue. Its lava rock cheek walls are 19" high and feature a 3.5" high concrete cap. The cap measures 26" x 94" on top. Six 10' wide concrete steps descend from the sidewalk to the canal.

The canal's lava rock walls at this point are 37" high, and on the southeast side of the steps there is a square drain that empties into the canal.

The *makai* wall of the canal, at a point approximately 120' northwest of Liliuokalani Avenue, angles out from Ala Wai Boulevard for approximately 18' before resuming its straight course. The wall at this point is 37" high and 17" wide at its top. The wall continues in a straight line for approximately 559' before angling back in for 18' toward the road at a point opposite the Ala Wai Town House Apartments at 2421 Ala Wai Boulevard. As the sidewalk maintains its straight course, this outward jog in the wall results in a grassed area between the sidewalk and canal wall which ranges from approximately 6'-3" to 6'-9" wide and is adorned with plumeria trees. *(Labeled photo #10 on photo key site plan)*

The second set of steps is located along the outward jog, approximately 249' from its southeast point and 306' from its northwest point. The concrete steps are opposite a bungalow court at 2445-2449 Ala Wai Boulevard. The lava rock cheek walls for this set of seven steps are 17" high with a 4" high cap, which measures 24" x 90". The steps are 10'-2" wide. *(Labeled photo #11 on photo key site plan)*

The third set of steps is opposite Kaiulani Avenue. The six concrete steps are 10' wide. Their lava rock cheek walls are 15" high with a 4" concrete cap. The cap is 24" x 87". The canal walls adjoining the steps are 47" high. *(Labeled photo #12 on photo key site plan)*

The fourth set of steps is opposite Walina Street. There are only three concrete steps, which are 9'-10" wide. The lava rock cheek walls are 19.5" high with a 5.5" high concrete cap. The concrete cap measures 26" x 99". The lava rock canal walls at this point are 36" and 43" high on the southeast and northwest sides of the steps, respectively. A square drain is located in the wall to the southeast side of the steps, and another is in the wall on the northwest side of the steps. *(Labeled photo #13 on photo key site plan)*

The fifth set of steps is opposite Seaside Avenue. Approximately 231' to the southeast of these steps the wall takes a slight jog in towards the street. The five concrete steps are 9'-8" wide, and their lava rock cheek walls are only 6" above the sidewalk. The cheek walls have a 3" high concrete cap, which measures 2' x 8'. The canal's lava rock walls to either side of the steps are 38" and 40". *(Labeled photo #14 on photo key site plan)*

The sixth set of steps is opposite Lewers Street. These six concrete steps are 10'-3" wide. The lava rock cheek walls are 11" high with a 3.5" concrete cap. The cap measures 22" x 91". At this point

the lava rock walls to either side of the steps are 49" and 53" high.
(Labeled photo #15 on photo key site plan)

The seventh set of steps is opposite Launiu Street. Here there are four concrete steps, which are 9'-6" wide. Its lava rock cheek walls are 15" high with a 4" high lava rock cap. The cap is 23" x 8'. The lava rock walls to either side of the steps are 42" high. A steel mooring ring is set into the canal wall's concrete base just to the northwest of these steps.
(Labeled photo #16 on photo key site plan)

The eighth set of steps is opposite Olohana Street. The five concrete steps are 9'-2" wide. The cheek walls are 13" high and have a 4" high concrete cap. The cap is 2' x 95".
(Labeled photo #17 on photo key site plan)

The ninth set of steps is opposite Kuamoo Street. Of these four steps, two are concrete, while the other two are lava rock. They are 10'-1" wide. The lava rock cheek walls are 18" high with 4" high lava rock caps, which measure 2' x 99". The lava rock walls to either side of the steps are 29" and 33" high. A steel mooring ring is to the northwest of this set of steps.
(Labeled photo #18 on photo key site plan)

The tenth set of steps is opposite Pau Street. Its three concrete steps are 10'-3" wide. Their lava rock cheek walls are 18" high with a 3.5" high concrete cap, which measures 23" x 93". The canal's lava rock walls to either side of the steps measure 32" and 35" high.
(Labeled photo #19 on photo key site plan)

The eleventh set of steps is opposite Niu Street. It has three steps, two of which are lava rock, while one is concrete. The steps are 10'-5" wide. The cheek walls are 19" high with a 3" concrete cap. The cap is 26" x 99". The lava rock walls to either side of the steps are 2'-2" high, and a steel mooring ring is in the concrete base of the wall on the northwest side of the steps.
(Labeled photo #20 on photo key site plan)

Historical Context:

The Ala Wai Canal initially was conceived as a means to rid Waikiki of mosquitoes, by converting the area's wetlands to solid ground, but upon its completion it also came to be viewed as a visual enhancement to the city and a recreational resource, being used for swimming, boating and fishing. When the stone, *makai* wall was added to the canal in 1934, steps were provided to facilitate recreational access to, as well as exit from, the canal.

Much of the canal's recreational use was informal, but a number of aspects were organized. In 1930 a boathouse was constructed at the mouth of the canal, "as a means of sponsoring small boating on the canal and along the Waikiki coast of Oahu."¹ The operators of the boat house were intent on making the Ala Wai, "the mecca of small boating in Hawaii,"² , and they optimistically foresaw, "the time when Ala Wai will become a popular rendezvous for all those who enjoy the many forms of small boating and that Ala Wai will really come into fame as the Thames river of Hawaii."³

The boathouse immediately enjoyed,

a lively trade from tourists and kamaainas. Small boats, of varied descriptions, are for rent with or without attendants and a variety of trips is offered to patrons. Included among the pleasure rides is one along the length of the canal, and another which is becoming more popular as time goes on, meeting ships off port in a comfortable and safe launch. Stairways leading from the boulevard to the water's edge are among the projects on the boathouse program for the future development of Ala Wai.⁴

This vision of stairways from Ala Wai Boulevard to the canal may, in all likelihood, have been the impetus for the inclusion of the present steps when the walls were constructed in 1934.

The boathouse offered outboard motor boats, row boats, and sail boats for rent, and intended to add outrigger canoes, as well as, "the latest types of Indian canoes for use in Ala Wai."⁵ It is uncertain whether the Indian canoes were added to the boathouse's inventory of watercraft, but over the ensuing years the paddling of outrigger canoes grew in popularity.

In 1938 the boathouse was relocated to a new building which was adjacent

1 "Varied Boating Activities Expected to Make Another Thames of Ala Wai When Present Plans are Perfected." *Honolulu Advertiser* (Honolulu), September 11, 1930, 6.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

to the McCully Street Bridge, and it became a center for the Hawaii Rowing Association with regattas held on the canal during the late 1930s with the clubhouse as a finish line. During World War II this building was leased to the Navy as an officer's club and it was not until the early 1950s that the Parks Board was able to regain possession of the building.

In addition to rowers and paddlers, owners of outboard motor boats also used the canal, often racing down its length, much to the consternation of residents along the canal. The noise of the motors could be heard for several blocks, making normal conversation impossible until the boat had passed beyond earshot. As a result Ordinance 488 was passed and signed into law in September 1929, making it,

Unlawful to operate any internal combustion engine within the District of Honolulu unless such engine is equipped with a suitable muffler or other device which shall be so designed and attached as to prevent the creation of unusual noise.⁶

Organized races for motor boats were held on the canal during the early 1930s, but by 1933 the newspapers no longer covered any such races.

Swimming was also a popular recreational activity in the Ala Wai Canal. The Star Bulletin sponsored an annual "Canal Swim" between 1925 and 1929, which included a mile long men's race, and in November 1930 a water carnival was held in the canal which included an aquatic parade as well boat and surf board paddling races.^{7, 8} In 1932 the Hawaii championships for surf board paddling also took place in the Ala Wai.⁹

The informal use of the canal for swimming continued up into at least World War II, as in February 1944, the Territorial Board of Health warned fishermen, swimmers and people catching crabs in the Ala Wai to temporarily refrain from doing so, as a break in the Lewers Street pumping station which handled all of Waikiki's liquid waste had broken resulting in an emergency diversion of the sewage into the canal. The Department stated they would inform the public once it was again safe to swim and fish in the waters.¹⁰

6 "From an Objector to Unusual Outboard Noises." *Honolulu Advertiser* (Honolulu), August 16, 1930, 20.

7 "Float Pageant on Ala Wai to Mark Festival." *Star Bulletin* (Honolulu), November 3, 1930, 4.

8 "Expect Record List of Entries in Mile Events." *Star Bulletin* (Honolulu), May 14, 1929, 8.

9 "Record List of Entries Assured for Big Regatta." *Honolulu Advertiser* (Honolulu), January 13, 1932, 8.

10 "Health Board Warns Against Use of Ala Wai." *Honolulu Advertiser* (Honolulu), February 25, 1944, 4.

The Ala Wai was also a place used by fishermen, especially mullet fishermen, who built platforms out in the water from which to fish. These distinctive structures, which numerous people found to be “picturesque,” were still in use at least up to 1953.¹¹ By the 1960s Hawaii’s health officials were advising people not to swim in the Ala Wai because of pollutants, although they found paddling as still a safe activity.¹² In 1989 the State Health Department posted, what eventually became permanent, warning signs along the canal advising swimmers to stay away.¹³ During the 1990s the canal was considered to be the State’s most polluted waterway, and various remediation projects were attempted without any positive long-term effects.¹⁴ The pollution of the canal is a problem which continues unabated to this day.

11 “Fishing Stands Under Fire, Yachtsmen File Protests.” *Honolulu Advertiser* (Honolulu), November 1, 1953, 11.

12 “The Kokua Line.” *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu), August 26, 1970, 2.

13 “State Water-Flow Study Hopes to Trace Sources of Ala Wai’s Pollution.” *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu), March 3, 1992, 3.

14 “Residents Get Ala Wai Cleanup Account.” *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu), October 27, 1997, 4.

Sources:

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Annual Reports of the Territorial Department of Public Works, 1918-1955.

Google Earth (WGS84). Latitude, Longitude, (accessed on March 24, 2016).

Hibbard, Don and Franzen, David, *The View from Diamond Head, Royal Residence to Urban Resort.* Honolulu: Editions Limited, 1986.

Wiegall, Robert L., *Waikiki Beach, Oahu, Hawaii: History of its transformation from a natural to an urban shore.* Berkeley, CA, Vol. 76, No. 2, 2008, 18.

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Honolulu Advertiser (Honolulu). "From an Objector to Unusual Outboard Noises.", August 16, 1930, 20.

Honolulu Advertiser (Honolulu). "Varied Boating Activities Expected to Make Another Thames of Ala Wai When Present Plans are Perfected.", September 11, 1930, 6.

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Honolulu Star Bulletin

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Honolulu Star Bulletin (Honolulu). "Residents Get Ala Wai Cleanup Account.", October 27, 1997, 4.

Project Information: The following documentation was prepared in response to the request for HAER II documentation of the Ala Wai Canal which will undergo rehabilitation work by the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR). The Ala Wai Canal (Waikiki Drainage Canal) is listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places and is identified as Historic Site Number 80-14-9757.

All eleven stairs leading into the canal will be affected, seven of the eleven stairs will be encased and four will have maintenance repairs. The proposed project determination and mitigation commitments have been previously concurred with by the State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD).

The previously accepted HAER documentation did not include the stairs as that portion had been value engineered out of the project. DLNR is proposing to re-activate the covering of the stairs portion of the project.

Don J. Hibbard, Ph.D., who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications in architectural history, and Cathy Zuniga prepared the written and historic portions of the report. The large-format photographs were taken by David Franzen of Franzen Photography.

Prepared By: Don Hibbard, Architectural Historian, and Cathy Zuniga
Fung Associates, Inc.
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Honolulu, HI 96814

Date of Report: June 21, 2022

Fig. 1: Map of Honolulu, Hawaii (Source: Fung Associates, Inc.)

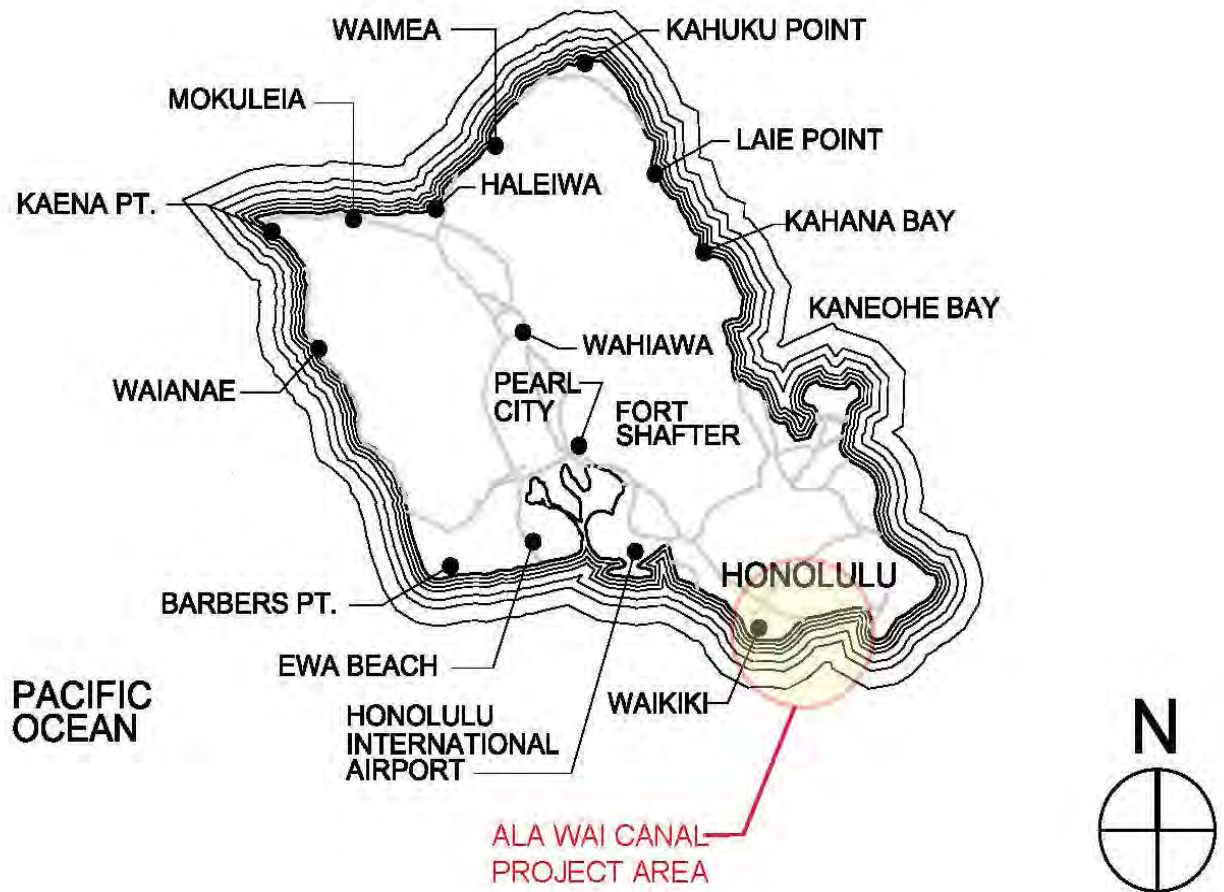
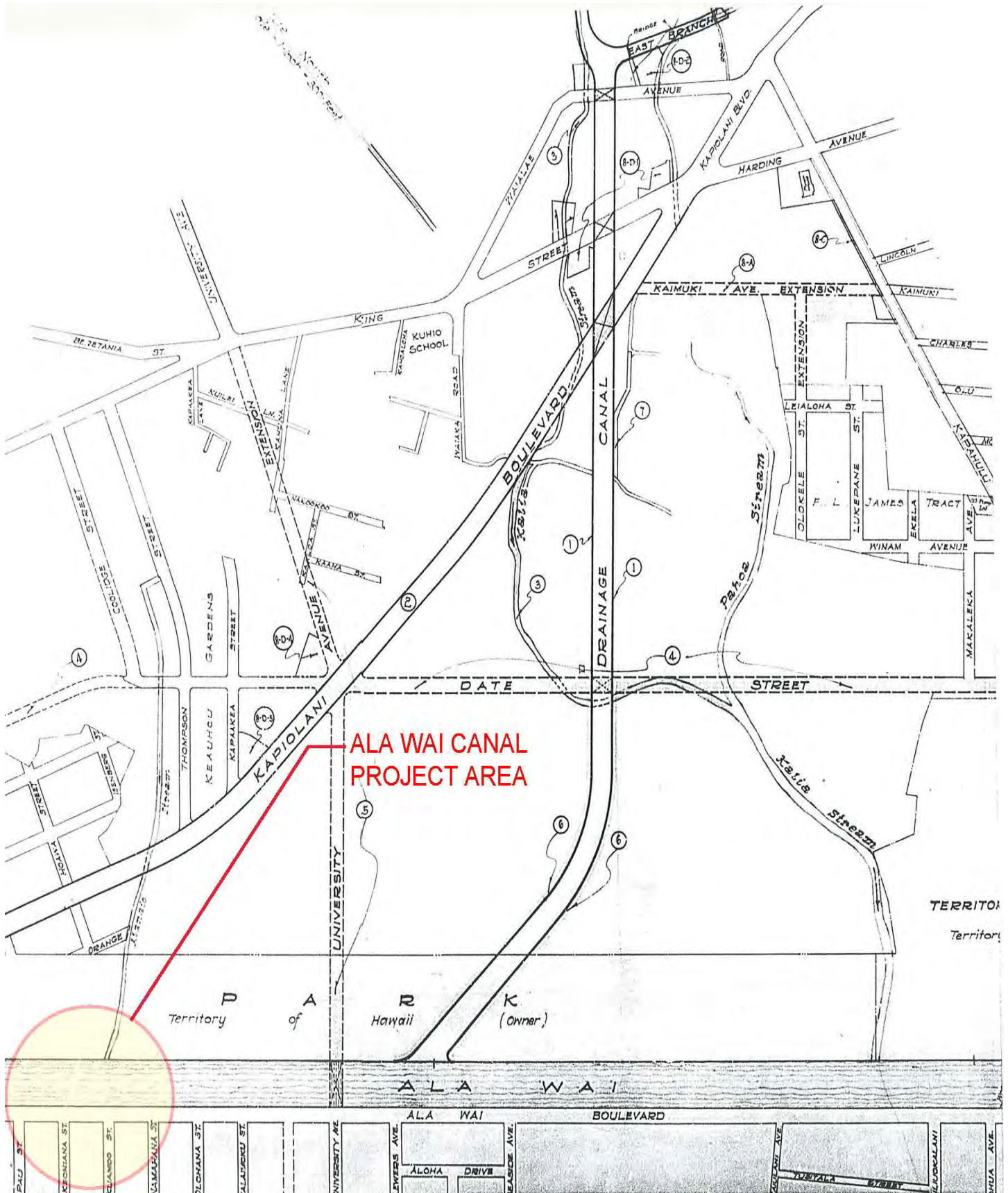


Fig. 2: U.S.G.S. Map, U.S.G.S. Honolulu Quadrangle 2017 (7.5 Minute Series) NAD83.



Fig. 4: Map of Kuekaunahi, Piinaio, and Apukehau Streams
(Source: Hawaii State Survey Division)



FIELD NOTES: HISTORIC IMAGES

Unclear copyright status -- not for reproduction.

Fig. 5: Oblique Aerial Photo of the Ala Wai Canal (November 1932)
(Source: Waikiki Beach, Oahu, Hawaii: History of its transformation from a natural to an urban shore) Not to be used for commercial purposes.



Figure 16. Oblique aerial photo of Fort DeRussy, Ala Wai Yacht Harbor, Ala Moana Beach Park, 28 July 1938, Dredged channels parallel to shore are evident. (U.S. Army Museum of Hawaii, USAMH No. 2789.)



HAER HI-143-9



HAER HI-143-10



HAER HI-143-11



HAER HI-143-12



HAER HI-143-13



HAER HI-143-14



HAER HI-143-15



HAER HI-143-16



HAER HI-143-17



HAER HI-143-18



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HAER HI-143-21



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