



Kailua

HAWAIIAN CIVIC CLUB
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SUBJECT- Testimony in STRONG SUPPORT of BLNR Agenda Item E1 (BLNR Meeting, 5-27-2022) – Change the name of Russian Fort Elizabeth State Historical Park to Pā‘ula‘ula State Historic Site

Aloha Chair Case and Members of the Board of Land & Natural Resources,

My name is Kīhei de Silva and I am writing on behalf of the board of directors of the Kailua Hawaiian Civic Club in our unanimous and unequivocal support of Agenda Item E1 requesting the name change of Russian Fort Elizabeth State Historical Park to Pā‘ula‘ula State Historic Site.

The name “Russian Fort Elizabeth” and its various iterations have given unfortunate precedence to a single, brief, marginally Russian event in the centuries-long history of our people’s presence in Waimea, Kaua‘i. Construction of the fort began in 1816 at the instigation of Georg Shaffer, an opportunistic surgeon and agent of the Russian American Company who hoped to secure a trading foothold for his company and nation. The fort, however, was built by Hawaiians under the direction of Kaumuali‘i, the ruling chief of Kaua‘i, who saw it as a bulwark in his defense of the island from invasion by Kamehameha I. By mid-1817, Kaumuali‘i had driven the surgeon and the RAC from the islands, completed the fort, and garrisoned it with his own warriors. For the next four decades, Kaumuali‘i and his descendants used the site as a command post, administrative center, burial ground, and prison (Peter Mills, *Hawai‘i’s Russian Adventure: A New Look at Old History*, University of Hawai‘i Press, 2002).

We know that the fort was built at the mouth of Waimea Stream in an area known as Pā‘ula‘ula. A heiau and royal compound existed here long before the fort was built, and the heiau may have been the vantage point from which the prophetic chant “Ulei Pahu i ka Moku” was composed by a Waimea priest who foresaw the coming of the haole, the destruction of our temples, and the erasure of our traditions and people to the point where “You Hawaiians will be as nothing.”

...
U hoohiolo ta aha.
O te tu wale na tii,

Our sacred councils will be no more
The images will be useless

A tau mai ta Hailo.
E manao holo i ta motu
Ulili a ta haole.
E tu i ta hoe uli,
I tohi i ta pale tai.
E poai i te toa
A he utu toai wai.
A he mea
A he mea oe!

When the "Hailo" [foreigner] comes.
Many will yearn to travel
On the tall ships of the haole
I stop the boat with the hoe uli
And press it against the side
I make fast the rope to the coral
And circle my rope round and round
You are as nothing
You Hawaiians will be as nothing

(Mary Kawena Pukui, *Ancient Hulas of Kauai*, Kaua'i Historical Society, 1936. "According to Keahi Luahine Sylvester Gomes, my teacher and informant, this mele and prophecy was uttered in a heiau at Waimea, Kauai, just prior to the coming of Captain Cook. In the heiau were priests who were in charge of the images of various gods. While in council one night, a priest became possessed by the spirit of his god and he told of the coming of the foreigner in these words.")

To give the name Pā'ula'ula to what, for too long, has been the misnomer "Russian Fort" is to take an important step in our people's efforts to reclaim place and identity, and to resist the you-are-nothing prophecy of "Ulei Pahu." The Russians, in this case, were barely there. Why continue to elevate a presence that can be counted in days at the expense of a presence that can be counted in centuries?

'O au nō me ka ha'aha'a,



Kīhei de Silva
Director, Kailua Hawaiian Civic Club