

= Lahaina Banyan Court Park =

Lahaina Banyan Court Park is a public park located at the corner of Front Street and Canal Street in the town of Lahaina , Hawaii , which was the capital of the Kingdom of Hawaii from 1820 to 1845 . The 1 @. @ 94 acres (0 @. @ 79 ha) park , also known as Lahaina Courthouse Square and commonly called Banyan Tree Park , contains multiple heritage sites on the Lahaina Historic Trail , and a self @-@ guided walking tour through the Lahaina Historic Districts .

The park occupies the site of the Old Lahaina Fort , originally built in 1831 . Hoapili , the Royal Governor of Maui , built the fort to protect the town from riotous sailors when Lahaina was used as an anchorage for the North Pacific whaling fleet . After the fort was demolished in 1854 , a courthouse was built on the site . A portion of the old Lahaina Fort was reconstructed in 1964 . The old Lahaina Courthouse was recognized as a contributing property of the Lahaina Historic District in 1965 , and is currently used by the Lahaina Arts Council and the Lahaina Historic Society .

Sheriff William Owen Smith planted an Indian banyan tree in the courtyard square in 1873 to memorialize the 50th anniversary of the first American Protestant mission in Lahaina . The banyan tree has become the largest banyan tree in Hawaii , and one of the largest banyan trees in the United States . Its extensive trunk and aerial root system now covers 0 @. @ 66 acres (0 @. @ 27 ha) . The park is managed by the County of Maui and the Lahaina Restoration Foundation .

= = Geography = =

Lahaina Banyan Court Park is located in the port of Lahaina town on the west side of the Hawaiian island of Maui . The park square comprises 1 @. @ 94 acres (0 @. @ 79 ha) on the site of the old Lahaina Fort , directly across the street from the Lahaina small boat harbor . It is bounded by Hotel Street to the north , Canal Street to the south , Wharf Street to the west , and Front Street to the east . Historic sites in the area include the former site of Lahaina 's Beach ? dredged during the construction of Lahaina 's Harbor in 1955 , the Pioneer Inn and the Keawaiki lighthouse to the north , and the campus of King Kamehameha III Elementary School ? an archaeological site associated with the ali?i ? to the south .

= = Background = =

New England whaling ships hunting sperm whales in the Pacific began to arrive in Hawai?i in 1819 , and many ships anchored in Honolulu and Lahaina . The impact of the whaling fleets on the Hawaiian Islands during the reign of Kamehameha III (1825 ? 1854) shaped the entire Hawaiian economy and was the primary source of income for the islands until the discovery of oil in Titusville , Pennsylvania , in 1859 and the onset of the American Civil War (1861 ? 1865) .

Ships would generally seek repairs in Honolulu , but captains preferred anchoring off Lahaina because of its easy access from the Lahaina Roads and for the fresh provisions available in town . According to Henry L. Sheldon , " the business of the entire population was the furnishing of supplies to whalers and entertaining the crews " . Sailors who had been hunting whales for months at a time went to Lahaina to drink grog and meet women . Historian Noelani M. Arista notes that by 1825 ;

a kapu prohibiting women from going out to ships for the purpose of prostitution was proclaimed by the ali 'i (Hawaiian chiefs) , altering that familiar traffic of the burgeoning Pacific seaport towns . Enraged that they could not cajole , coax , or coerce Hawaiian women into violating the kapu , the sailors turned their frustrations on the American missionaries , whom they blamed for the emergence of this new unreasonably strict moral law .

Whalers opposed any rules governing alcohol and prostitution , and blamed missionaries for influencing the Kingdom of Hawaii to enforce such rules . Riots broke out at least four times ? in 1825 , 1826 , 1827 , and 1843 . In the 1827 riots , sailors on the John Palmer fired their cannons at the home of missionary William Richards and threatened the safety of the community .

== Lahaina Fort ==

Queen Kaʻahumanu (1768 ? 1832) visited Maui in February 1832 , just months before she died , to support the construction of a new fort to protect the town from whalers . With her help , Hoapili (1775 ? 1840) , Royal Governor of Maui , built the fort on the Lahaina waterfront and it was completed within a month . The fort was constructed from coral blocks with walls approximately 15 ? 20 feet high topped with 47 cannons . An 1848 inventory lists 6 large cannons , 21 small cannons , 6 breech @-@ loaders , and 8 which did not work . The fort stored quantities of gunpowder , guns , rifles , and swords , and was used as a prison . Sailors who docked at Lahaina were subject to a sunset curfew ; if they did not return to their ship when the drums sounded they would be imprisoned in the fort .

In 1841 , American naval officer Charles Wilkes (1798 ? 1877) visited Lahaina Fort as commanding officer of the United States Exploring Expedition . Wilkes observed , " After the king 's palace , the fort is the most conspicuous object : it is of little account , however , as a defence , serving chiefly to confine unruly subjects and sailors in . The area within is about one acre , and the walls are twenty feet high . "

As the whaling industry declined and the California Gold Rush gained prominence in the late 1840s , Hawaii 's population dropped , and infectious disease epidemics contributed to the loss of local populations . The fort was restored in 1847 but was now used more as a prison than for defending the Kingdom . The cannons were rusting and the fort was mostly empty of personnel except for a few soldiers and the Governor of Maui who lived there . When Henry Augustus Wise visited in 1848 , he met James Young (1797 ? 1851) , then Governor of Maui , who was living in the fort . Wise wrote that it was :

an oddly assorted battery of some thirty pieces of artillery , of all sorts of carriages and calibre ? long , short , and mediums ; they command the usual anchorage , and no doubt do very well to prevent any acts of violence from merchant ships ; but it is a question , if , at the second discharge of shot , they do not tumble to pieces .

In the 1850s , whaling began its steep decline . The forts in the Hawaiian Islands were in poor condition due to damage and neglect , and were either abandoned or removed . Lahaina Fort was demolished in 1854 . Its coral blocks were reused to build Hale Paʻahao , a new prison at Wainee Street and Prison Road . In 1964 , the State Parks Department placed a reconstruction of the old fort wall in the southwest corner of the park .

== Lahaina Courthouse ==

On February 20 , 1858 , Lahaina experienced a violent hurricane that destroyed approximately twenty buildings , including the original courthouse at Hale Piula , initially intended as a palace for Kamehameha III . The courthouse was rebuilt on the site of Lahaina Fort in 1859 using stones from Hale Piula . The new courthouse housed offices for customs , the postal service , the tax collector , the governor of Maui , a magistrates ' court , a courtroom , and a jury room . When the Kingdom was overthrown , the flag of Hawaii at the Lahaina Courthouse was lowered by the assistant postmaster on August 12 , 1898 , and the flag of the United States was raised in its place . The Hawaiian flag was placed on display in a permanent exhibit at the courthouse in September 2002 . The post office at the courthouse replaced the Hawaiian stamp with the US stamp on June 14 , 1900 .

The courthouse was restored by architect William D 'Esmond in 1925 . D 'Esmond added a new roof and redesigned the entryway and balcony . The building 's tenants included the US Post Office and a tax office . The courtroom was upstairs and the Lahaina jail was housed in the basement . The building was listed as a National Historic Landmark and a contributing property of the Lahaina Historic District in 1965 , and was restored again in 1990 . The courthouse now houses a museum , art galleries , a visitor center , a community meeting room , and public restrooms . The Lahaina Heritage Museum opened upstairs in 2004 with interactive exhibits including videos , photographs , and historical objects . The Lahaina Arts Council and the Lahaina Historic Society have offices in the courthouse .

= = Banyan tree = =

To memorialize the 50th anniversary of the first American Protestant mission in Lahaina , a banyan tree (*Ficus benghalensis* , Hawaiian : paniana) seedling was planted on April 24 , 1873 in the courthouse square by sheriff William Owen Smith , who had received it as a gift from missionaries in India . The banyan , native to India , is one of 60 types of fig tree in the Hawaiian islands . The seedling was approximately 8 feet (2 @. @ 4 m) high when it was planted ; by 2005 it had grown to a height of 49 @. @ 2 feet (15 @. @ 0 m) , had 16 trunks , and covered a circumference of 0 @. @ 25 miles (0 @. @ 40 km) within 0 @. @ 66 acres (0 @. @ 27 ha) of the park .

It is currently the largest banyan tree in Hawaii , and one of the largest banyan trees in the United States . The tree faces several threats , including soil compaction from foot and vehicle traffic due to tourism and special events in the park , drought , and the interruption of irrigation due to courthouse renovation . New restrictions were imposed in 2000 after the health of the tree began to decline. common myna birds (*Acridotheres tristis*) roost in the branches of the tree at sunset , causing a cacophony of bird cries as the evening approaches .

= = Administration , facilities , and events = =

The park is administered by the Maui Parks and Recreation department and maintained by the nonprofit Lahaina Restoration Foundation . Limited public parking is available on Front , Hotel , and Canal Streets , with very limited parking on Wharf Street as it is generally reserved for tour buses . At weekends , the park hosts artists , musicians , dancers , and festivals throughout the year , including the Festival of Canoes , Festivals of Aloha , and the Lahaina Arts Society art fair . Halloween events in the park area , known as the " Mardi Gras of the Pacific " , have long been a divisive issue between Maui County and the Cultural Resources Commission .