

# A Landmark Passes Away

By Nina H. Thomas

The old Elks Club, formerly the storied mansion of an Isle industrialist and a Kalaheau Avenue landmark for over 60 years, is going and soon will be gone.

Termites, those tiny monsters — of destruction, have been working on it for years in a relentless pursuit of desecration. Now, with the aid of a wrecking crew, their mission is nearly accomplished. All the fittings and artifacts have been auctioned off, and soon the white mansion that once was termed "the loveliest home in Waikiki" will be gone. Gone with the splendor of yesterday's dreams and the gentle fashion in which once man lived.

But who cares?

Not the very young. A 10-year-old commented, "Oh, boy! They're going to knock down the old club and put

up a brand new one with a swimming pool!"

Who grieves?

Not the very old. They've seen so many homes and buildings which once they loved give way to the march of progress that the passing of another landmark gives only a momentary pause for a sigh of regret as they realize again that the "old order passeth making way for the new."

But perhaps some care. With a genuine sadness, some may face the fact that such transitions are necessary in the world we live in. Not that anyone would stay the hands of time, for who really wants to return to the dark ages, to the days of the horse drawn trolley car and the bucket brigade? But some may wonder why the two ways of life can't be reconciled.



Elks Club Photo

Framed in a setting of spacious grounds, the old building has been a landmark in Waikiki since the days before the turn of the century.

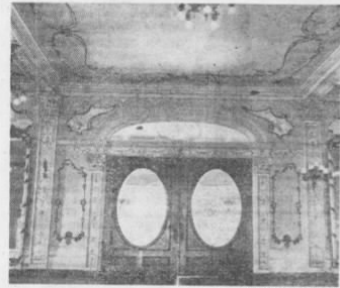


Photo by Nancy Benmark

Sliding panels of koa wood, inset with beveled plate glass, formed the doors to the main entrance which opened directly into the vast "Rose Room." Gold-framed mirrors from Germany flanked the doors on either side.



Photo by Nancy Benmark

Coming up the circular driveway toward the carriage steps, a visitor's first impressions were centered on the ornate porte-cochere with its koa-panneled roof.

Since no one has yet learned the magic of such a combination, all that is left is the chronicling of the history of the old as it used to be.

And the history of the mansion goes back to 1898 when James B. Castle, one of Hawaii's foremost industrialists, built "Kainalu." In those days, Waikiki was little more than a series of duck ponds.

After Mr. Castle died in October, 1918, the beautiful place lay idle for almost two years, and weeds grew high in the gardens. In June of 1920, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks purchased the building and site for \$155,000.

It was a fitting lodge home for the fraternal order. The members felt the same sense of pride in their handsome abode as did the original residents.

Several large bedrooms in the upper floors were partitioned off to accommodate permanent guests. The koa paneled library served as the board room. A stage and a chamber-of-horrors for initiation rites were fitted into the full sized attic.

The lower floor veranda over the ocean was converted to a dining room and lounge. But the outward appearance of the house as a private residence was retained.

A handsome, massive monkeypod tree has graced the site for many years and shadowed the lawn where families came to picnic.

The beginning of the end loomed when the property was divided by a fence after the Outrigger Canoe Club acquired the ewa end of the area. The fence gave the place a rather unfriendly "yours" and "mine" look, and the full flush of elegance was gone from "Kainalu."

The insidious work of the termites at last became im-

possible to conceal. Large slivers and mounds of dust fell constantly from walls and ceilings, revealing the deadly industry of the insects.

A major reconstruction program would have been out of the question financially and it seemed only common sense to raze the old building.

So, over the past few months, many have gone down to the Club for a last nostalgic tour through the old mansion.

And if you were among them, perhaps you winced at the empty window frames, those thoughtless eyes staring reproachfully.

Perhaps, as your footsteps echoed in the empty cham-

bers, the voices of the past seemed to whisper in your ears. And as you stood alone in the vast hall known as the Rose Room, maybe you heard the music and the happy laughter of the many parties given there.

Amid the hand-painted roses and the gold filigree work that graced the high vaulted ceilings, did you hear the whisper of the house asking, "What are they doing to me?"

Outside, if you again walked around the circular drive, perhaps you even heard the pink-blossomed monkeypod tree sigh in apprehension, for the whole area is being cleared and leveled for progress.

An era is disappearing.

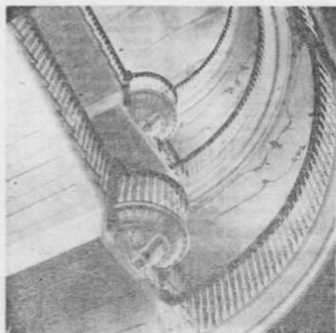


Photo by Nancy Benmark

Looking up the stairwell to the fourth floor, "Romeo and Juliet" balconies formed the landings at the second and third floor levels. The banisters were of koa wood, and stained-glass windows added spots of bright color at the head of the stairways.