



The Kapa'a stone lantern, as it originally appeared.



KAPA'A STONE LANTERN

KAPAA, KAUAI

WHAT IS IT?

This 15-foot cast concrete lantern was built in 1915 by Kauai's Japanese community to commemorate the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 and to honor the 1912 ascension to the throne of Emperor Taisho. By World War II, however, these pro-imperial sentiments were a problem for a later generation of Japanese-Americans who, in 1943, literally buried the lantern, both to protect it from vandalism during a time of anti-Japanese sentiment and as a display of pro-American loyalty.

Once buried, it was forgotten until 1972, when the parents of children playing soccer at Kapa'a Beach Park complained about a dangerous piece of steel rebar sticking out of the ground. Work crews discovered that the rebar was attached to a buried monument—but one that no one wanted to claim. The lantern was reburied 24 hours later.

In 1987, Mayor Tony Kunimura led an effort to unearth the lantern, with the help of the Kauai Historical Society. The lantern was moved to the corner of the beach park and braced.

WHAT THREATENS IT?

Exposure to the elements threatens the monument. Being buried and dug up, twice, damaged the lantern. Now even the metal braces on the lantern are rusting and damaging the concrete. "There are several serious cracks and breaks in the concrete structure ... and in many places the concrete is broken or crumbling away," reports Mary Requilman, executive director of the Kauai Historical Society.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

The historical society and the Kapa'a Business Association would like to restore the lantern, as part of an overall plan to revitalize Kapa'a. "In 1991, we raised enough money to have the lantern appraised by a professional sculpture conservator," says Requilman. "At that time, it was estimated it would cost \$50,000 to restore the lantern." But there were no funds to proceed and, by now, restoration would likely cost more. If you'd like to help, call the Kauai Historical Society, at (808) 245-3373.