

Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha - Hawaii Dazaifu Tenmangu

SEPTEMBER 2020



The Shrine in 1935

Gratitude for a Hundred Years

A 100th Anniversary is a major milestone and an opportunity to celebrate our faith, history and community.

The 100th Anniversary Autumn Thanksgiving Festival this year is especially joyous as we remember our directors, officers and supporters throughout the ages whose vision and commitment created this shrine.

We are deeply grateful for all who have worked to fulfill the dreams of our Issei founders to perpetuate a strong legacy to all of us who now attempt to perpetuate their vision in our community.

The original shrine supporters were from the Kapalama area.



Today, our friends come from all 50 states and foreign countries to participate in our annual events such as Chinowa, Shichigosan, Hatsumode, Back-to-School Blessing and to seek the multitude of blessings through our Omamori and Ofuda.

The 100th Anniversary Thanksgiving Festival commenced at 1:00 pm on September 27,

officialiated by Rev. Takizawa.

Although it is an incredibly important event for the shrine, the difficult decision was made to observe the annual festival without the presence of guests. Our top priority remains the health, safety and well-being of our community while ensuring the continuity of our spiritual mission.



Each shrine has its own unique founding history and has undergone its respective vicissitudes. However, the common characteristic linking all of these shrines is their embodiment of the common desire for local, national and universal peace.

Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha, endearingly known as Konpira-san was established in Hawaii in 1920 to perpetuate Shinto traditions.

Kapalama was developed as one of the first residential areas of Honolulu and in the 1920s, consisted of mixed ethnic neighborhoods bound by pasture lands. The area around Kapalama Post Office was predominantly Japanese.

Many Japanese farmers, flower

growers and poultry and hog farmers worked and lived near Kam IV Road while those in business and industrial ventures worked and lived along North King Street.

In 1920, a *Gobun-rei* (spirit of the deity of the main shrine) from Kotohira-gu was brought to Hawaii by Rev. Hitoshi Hirota, Yasubei Motoyasu, Bunkichi Tanaka (a carpenter who lived on Kama Lane), Hisajiro Taguchi (owner of Japanese American Groceries on Akepo Lane) and Gennosuke Okamoto (Manager of the Asahi Theatre).

A residence at 1256-A North King Street in Palama was converted into a shrine where Rev. Hirota performed the traditional rites and rituals embraced by the first generation Isseis.



N. King Street around Palama Market, looking Ewa. This area was called Palama Japan Town in the early 1900s. The grove of trees in the back is where Honolulu Ford is now located.

Kotohira-gu long known as the guardian deity of fishing and commerce quickly grew in popularity and membership.

On November 3, 1920, the shrine was recognized by Kotohira-gu, Japan as a legitimate branch of the famous shrine in Kagawa-ken.

On February 20, 1924, the shrine

was acknowledged by the Territorial government as a nonprofit church and officially began its religious activities as the first Kotohira-gu on American soil.

Photos from the grandson of the first Chief Priest Hitoshi Hirota reveals that a shrine was built at the N. King Street location sometime between 1921 and 1925.

In 1930, a Gobunrei was received



Photo of the shrine at N. King Street, taken sometime between 1921 - 1925.

from Shirasaki Hachimangu of Yamaguchi-ken and the Shirasaki Hachiman-gu Hosan Kai was established by Miyozuchi Komeya, owner of the Komeya Hotel with a membership of over 600 Issei families from Iwakuni Village, Yamaguchi-ken.

In October 1930, a Gobunrei from Otaki Jinja in Hiroshima was authorized for worship in Hawaii and the Otaki Jinja Hosan Kai was established by Teiichi Sugimoto, of Sugimoto General Contractors with a membership of over 120 Issei families from Otake City, Hiroshima.

In 1931, the shrine purchased a 57,320 sq. ft. parcel of land at 1045 Kama Lane with individual donations from members and the community.



The shrine in 1931, immediately after the move from North King and Wolter Lane to its new location on Kama Lane

Through fundraisers like "movie viewings" and Kabuki performances, the shrine was able to raise funds to build a shrine office and cultural facilities.

A new torii gate was erected in 1934 and in March of the same year, a *temizusha* water basin was donated by the shrine's Fujin-kai Womens organization.



Photo taken in July 1936 from a tournament held at the shrine, sponsored by the Hawaii Branch of the Dai Nippon Butokukai.

In 1935, a pair of *koma-inu* lions which were the largest in the U.S. at the time and *toro* lanterns specially designed and crafted in Yamaguchi-ken, were donated by the congregation.

In 1936, a community center, martial arts *dojo*, *kyudo* archery range, outdoor theater, *kendo*

renbujo and sumo ring were built.

By 1940, the shrine was home to sumo, *kyudo* archery, numerous martial arts tournaments and cultural activities for the Japanese community.

However, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 threw the whole nation into turmoil.

Issei leaders of the community



The shrine in 1937

were immediately rounded up and sent to internment camps, including the shrine's Chief Priest, Misao Isobe.



Photo of Rev. Misao Isobe taken in 1938. Members of the Hawaii Imazu Chojin Kai initiated the hiring of Rev. Isobe who served at Shirasaki Hachimangu shrine of Imazu village, Yamaguchi-ken.

In 1943, the interned Rev. Misao Isobe and his family were deported to Japan. Shrine officers officially announced the temporary closure of the shrine and its activities on April 6, 1946.

After the war, members enthusiastically restored shrine activities on December 31, 1946, despite the absence of a priest.

However, the shrine faced another crisis on June 1, 1948 when federal officers raided the shrine under the Trading with the Enemy Act, making arrests and seizing the shrine property.

On June 8, 1948, an emergency meeting was called and a special committee formed to initiate measures for the return of the shrine and its property.

On March 4, 1949, an announcement for the sale of the Kotohira Jinsha property appeared on local newspapers.

The shrine immediately solicited the services of the law firm, Robertson, Castle & Anthony and

filed a suit on March 31, 1949 against the United States Attorney General Tom C. Clark, of the State of Hawaii and the Federal Alien Land Office for misusing Section 9 of the Trading with the Enemy Act against a civilian organization not under the influence of the Japanese government and also damages for wrongful seizure and

detention.

The Robertson, Castle & Anthony assigned Frank Padgett, a young Caucasian attorney who had recently moved to Honolulu upon graduation from Harvard Law School. Kotohira's lawsuit was his first case, a move indicative that the firm had no hope of winning the trial.

President Harry Truman appointed Senator J. Howard McGrath, Attorney General of the United State on August 24, 1949. Kotohira Jinsha's lawsuit came to be known as Kotohira Jinsha vs McGrath.

The trial began and ended on May 17, 1950. On May 18, 1950, Judge McLaughlin ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, Kotohira Jinsha.

Kotohira Jinsha was once again



able to continue all activities on their property in Kapalama.

Members jubilantly celebrated the Autumn Thanksgiving Festival on Sunday, October 29, 1950, nine long years since the last festival in 1941.



A young Frank Padgett with officer and directors of Kotohira Jinsha

The lawsuit led by Kotohira Jinsha was the first ever initiated by a Japanese-American (JA) in the history of the United States, paving the way for similar lawsuits by JA

places of worship and civic organizations.

On July 31, 1965, a stone memorial was erected in honor of shrine members who persisted against overwhelming odds in a lawsuit against discrimination by the Federal Government. It was also meant to serve as a constant reminder of the hardships and indignities suffered at the hands of a nation misguided by wartime hysteria, racial prejudice and fear.



To mark the start of a new beginning, Kotohira Jinsha officially changed its name to Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha and the supporting organization to Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha Kyodan on May 11, 1951. All activities were re-established with the return of Rev. Misao Isobe in 1952.

At the urging of the Honolulu Fukuoka Kenjinkai and its members, a Gobunrei authorized for worship by Dazaifu Tenmangu Fukuoka was brought to Hawaii on July 24, 1952.

The Gobunrei was hand-carried from Dazaifu to Yokohama by Chief Priest Nobusada Nishitakatsuji and transported by boat to Honolulu by then shrine president and Fukuoka Kenjin kai officer, Yotaro Fujino.

The shrine, in its efforts to



Spring Thanksgiving Festival held in 1956 with officers of the Honolulu Fukuoka Kenjin Kai

promote Japanese culture, sponsored a Japan-Hawaii Goodwill Sumo Tournament in 1956 between the All Japan High School Champions and the Hawaii Sumo Champions.

In 1957, the State of Hawaii made clear its plans for the Lunalilo Highway and two-thirds of the

shrine property was once again to be taken by the government.

Tragedy struck members in April 1958, as they mourned the death of Rev. Misao Isobe. Rev. Kunisuke Sakai became the 4th Guji on August 15, 1959.

In the 1960's, several Gobunrei from shrines that were not able to resurrect activities after the war were brought to the shrine.

On June 9, 1961, a Gobunrei of Inari Jinja was brought to the shrine by Yoshimasa Yonemoto followed by a Gobunrei of Suitengu in Honolulu and Watatsumi Jinja in Kakaako.

In the Spring of 1962, the State submitted a proposal to relocate the shrine to the Leeward area, however, upon much deliberation, the majority of members voted in

favor of remaining at Kama Lane.

Preparations began on July 30, 1962 for the relocation of the shrine to its present site on the lot.

On May 24, 1962, the building that housed the shrine office and priest's quarters was torn down to make way for a new building.



On June 26, 1962, President Kenichi Nakaya finalized the sale of 30,837 sq ft of shrine land to the State for \$122,250, heralding a new chapter in the history of the shrine.

On September 13, construction of the community hall, shrine office and parsonage was completed.

The roof of the Temizusha basin was restored and September 25, the repositioning of the *Torii* gate.

A ceremony commemorating the completion of the new shrine building was held on September 26, 1963.

On June 4, 1964, Kyukichi Wada completed construction of four kamidanas which were consecrated in a ceremony on July 9, 1964.

In July 1976, plans for construction of a Dazaifu Tenmangu shrine at Kama Lane was brought to the table.

Construction permits were issued

on May 9, 1981 and a ground breaking ceremony was performed in May 17, 1981.



Rev. Kunisuke Sakai performing the Ground breaking ceremony

On April 15, 1982, Rev. and Mrs. Nobusada Nishitakatsuji, 15 priests and a tour group from Dazaifu Tenmangu, Fukuoka arrived in Hawaii to participate in the completion of the first Dazaifu Tenmangu shrine on foreign soil

Our Dazaifu Tenmangu shrine was

devotedly built by members volunteering their time and expertise daily, for a period of 12 months.

The completion ceremony was performed on April 16 followed by a re-creation of the *Kyokusui no En* gala at Ala Moana Park.

Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha - Hawaii Dazaifu Tenmangu was established by devoted members to transmit the spiritual and cultural needs of the community and continues to exist due to the vision and leadership of its Directors and Officers and support by Kotohira-gu and Dazaifu Tenmangu, Japan and our local community.

Read about our history on our website: www.jinja.us

Visit our website: www.jinja.us