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January 14, 2025

To: The Honorable Chair and Members of the Council of Maui County

Re.: Bill 2 (2025). "A BILL FOR AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT WITH THE UNITED STATES ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS AND THE HAWAII STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER REGARDING THE DEMOLITION OF THE HISTORIC SPRING HOUSE AND THE LAHAINA PUBLIC LIBRARY IN RESPONSE TO THE 2023 LAHAINA WILDFIRES"

Aloha 'Oukou e nā Mea Hanohano:

We humbly ask you to not approve the section of Bill 2 (2025) that allows the demolition of the "Spring House" from the already fragmented biocultural landscape of Lāhainā (Lahaina).



**Mission Station Watering Yard – Spring House at Paunau, Lāhainā (Lahaina)
Formerly a portion Land Commission Award No. 387
(Photo KIP_7849, June 22, 2024).**

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Please Protect the Historic “Spring House”

On August 8, 2023, we witnessed a horror that most people could not have imagined. The resulting losses make what remains of the bio-cultural and historical landscape in Lāhainā even more precious and worthy of preservation. Under Bill 2 (2025), allowing demolition of the Mission Station “Watering Yard,” later known as the “Spring House,” sets a dangerous precedence for the cultural-historical landscape of Lāhainā. The Bill asks you to permit the destruction of a rare fragment of Lāhainā’s history.

Having conducted several ethnohistorical studies in Lāhainā most recently, partnering in a 2024 compilation thousands of historical documents (including translations of Hawaiian language records), and interviewing approximately 90 kama’āina of Lāhainā, we have access to materials as those cited below which provide us with facets of the history of the Mission Station “Watering Yard - Spring House.”

Historical Background

The “Spring House” was originally constructed over a pūnāwai (spring) near the shore of Paunau, in the heart of Lāhainā’s wahi pana (storied and sacred landscape). The pūnāwai served the native families of the area for generations. After establishment of the mission station in 1823, it was modified and eventually enclosed to provide water for the missionaries and still accessed by the native residents. As the number of ships lying at anchor increased the missionaries also provided ships with fresh drinking water in exchanged for goods other necessities.

Below are excerpts of native testimonies describing the “Watering Yard” (“Spring House”), recorded as a part of the Māhele ‘Āina-Kuleana Awards, and later excerpts from the National Register of Historic Places Nomination for of the “Lahaina Historic District.”

Helu 387, A.B.C.F.M.

Foreign Testimony 15:20-24

Lahaina, 16th Nov. 1852

Part 5, Sec 4., Sandwich Island Mission

Kaolulo, Sworn, says he knows the yard in dispute. Mr. Richards lived at first near where Hale Piula now stands. After that Kaahumanu gave him the present Mission premises to live on. The place in dispute came into the possession of Mr. Richards in exchange for the present Watering yard, which is really a lihi on the land given to him by Kaahumanu. This exchange was made in the time of Kaahumanu, and Mr. Richards then fenced in the land in question. Mr. Richards held this place without dispute till his death. I never heard of any counter claim to it until a few days ago. I was one of his men and lived near this place. I once asked Mr. Richards to give me this place but he said he would not do so on account of its being in possession of Mr. Baldwin for the Mission.

Kale, Sworn, says he knows the place in dispute. The figs, bananas &c were planted by Mr. Richards. I lived with him, on the place in question from 1833. The fence between the watering yard and this lot was built at Mr. Richards’ expense. He gave books to the people for their labor upon it. I never heard his title to this place disputed during his life time, nor the title of Dr. Baldwin since.

In the later 1800s reference to this site was almost nonexistent. In the late 1950s a growing interest in the history of Lāhainā was rising locally and nationally. The “Spring House” is one of the important contributing features described in the National Register of Historic Places—

National Historical Landmark

The National Register of Historic Places – Lahaina (Historic District), Section 8, Significance (1962, ver.1974, page 3 of 7) provides the following comments on the “Spring House:”

“2. Old Spring House. Located 200 feet south of the Baldwin House and set well back from Front Street at the rear of a later frame structure. This small stone [and coral mortar] building is privately owned.

It is said to have been built by the Rev. William Richards in 1823 to enclose a spring to supply water not only for his own dwelling nearby but for the entire community and for ships anchored off the town. According to local tradition, a hand pump here was visited by crews of sailors who 'constantly rolled huge casks for water.' The Spring House apparently is thus one of the few remaining physical links with the whaling era.”

Regarding the comment, “...one of the few remaining physical links with the whaling era” we humbly suggest that the “Spring House is much more than a remnant of the “whaling era.”

As exposed by the Lāhainā wildfires, it is seen that while the “Spring House” was modified over the last 100 years, including its use as a catch-all storage facility. The “Spring House” made of coral mortar, cut stones and cobbles with early iron bracing retains integrity. The building can be stabilized, the cement slab covering the ancient spring can be removed, and the historic corrugated roof can be replaced. The “Spring House” would serve as a unique focal point of any other uses of the adjoining property.



Interior of the “Spring House” (Photo KIP_7854, June 22, 2024).

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Between May to December 2024, we spoke with many Lāhainā 'ohana with generational attachments to land. Concerns about the future of the "Spring House," along with the larger biocultural landscape were raised by all. An example from one interview shares the following mana'o:

...That's the "Spring House" and I remember when I came through on that walkthrough right after [the fire], and I was, I'd come around here taking photos of all of this. And I came around and I saw that and I was like, "What is that?" I had never seen that building before and I had to go through the nomination and find it because that was completely just... I mean, just hidden from view. And that was wild to just be like, "Oh, my God, there's things here that you never ever knew about. What is that?" But like can you imagine? You just kind of almost feel it. And if you had the capability to just take all the contemporary stuff down and the debris like the Spring House, the Baldwin House, the Reading Room, the Courthouse, the Lighthouse. And then just imagine this being lo'i [referencing Apukaiaio, the ancient lo'i kalo that once existed under the Pā Pelekāne-Pioneer Inn vicinity]! It gives you chicken skin! Oh, my God! You can literally walk back in time...

Please do not allow another fragment of Lāhainā's history to be erased.

Māua nō me ke aloha kau palena 'ole

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kepā and Onaona Maly" followed by a hash symbol "#". The signature is written in a cursive, fluid style.

Kepā and Onaona Maly