

## V. Kalaupapa Peninsula

### A. Land and Political Divisions

The largest division of land under the early Hawaiian land system was the island, each of which was further divided into several geographical districts or mokus. These were divided for landholding purposes into ahupua'as, each of which was ruled by either a chief or a konohiki (headman). These units varied in size from a hundred acres to several thousand.<sup>1</sup> At the time of Cook's discovery of Hawai'i, the main islands comprised several independent kingdoms. Each king owned all the lands in his jurisdiction. Below him were his warrior chiefs and at the bottom of the social and economic strata were the tenant-commoners.

Prior to 1859 Moloka'i was divided into at least two districts--Kona (to the east) and Ko'olau. The ahupua'as in the western portion of the Kona district--from Kamalo on the southern coast westward--were fairly large parcels. From Kamalo east, where the population was much denser, the ahupua'as became smaller and narrower and, therefore, more numerous. The Ko'olau district contained seven ahupua'as, four of which covered large valleys and surrounding mountains (Halawa, Wailau, Pelekunu, and Waikolu) and three of which were found on Kalaupapa peninsula (Illustration 1).<sup>2</sup> These latter three sections were referred to as Kalaupapa ("Leafy Plain" or "Flat Plain", "Much level land"), site of the present settlement on the west side of the peninsula; Makanalua ("Given Grave" or "Pit", referring to use of the lake in Kauhako Crater as a burial place), a strip in the center of the peninsula stretching from the pali through the crater to the ocean; and Kalawao ("Leafy Wilderness", "Mountain Area") on the eastern side of the peninsula.<sup>3</sup>

---

1. Jon J. Chinen, The Great Mahele: Hawaii's Land Division of 1848 (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1958), p. 3.

2. Summers, Molokai: A Site Survey, p. 213.

3. According to an 1885 article, Kalawao and Kalaupapa were ancient Hawai'ian names--Kalawao being a district name and Kalaupapa a local one. Kalawao was an old ahupua'a belonging to the ancient chiefs of Moloka'i.

In 1859 the Kona and Ko'olau district designations were dropped and the entire island became the Moloka'i district. The first village established for leprosy victims in 1866 was at the site of Kalawao on the east side of the peninsula, and this name referred to the settlement in general. With the start of development on the west side of the promontory at Kalaupapa and its eventual eclipse of Kalawao as the center of settlement in the early 1900s, the settlement and peninsula as a whole were referred to as Kalaupapa. In 1909 a division was made into Moloka'i and Kalawao districts. The area including Kalaupapa, Kalawao, and Waikolu comprises Kalawao district, which is also Kalawao County, while the rest of Moloka'i (Moloka'i district) is part of Maui County.

#### B. Settlements

Moloka'i was not widely mentioned in accounts by early travelers. From the various sketchy descriptions of the distribution of early settlement on the Kalaupapa peninsula, it would appear that there was one main village of Kalaupapa, where the leprosy settlement is located today, and at least two smaller hamlets or villages, near the mouth of Waikolu Valley and at Kalawao, where the original leprosy settlement was located. Arthur Mouritz mentioned in 1886 that three-quarters of a mile seaward of Kalaupapa lay the small village of Iliopi'i. He also mentions the village of Makanalua placed close in to the mountains midway between Kalaupapa and Kalawao. Immediately seaward of that village rose the Kauhakō crater.<sup>4</sup>

---

3. (cont'd) Its name, meaning "hog" and "dress", probably meant that it was held subject to a yearly tribute to the superior chief of a lard hog and a robe. "Molokai--Description of the Leper Colony on This Island," Pacific Commercial Advertiser IV, no. 364 (Nov. 6, 1885).

4. Mouritz, "Path of the Destroyer," p. 359. Father Albert Montiton, in charge of the Catholic Mission at Kalaupapa from 1882 to 1885, took care of the needs and welfare of the leprosy victims at Kalaupapa and Iliopi'i, both of which at that time were sparsely settled. Ibid., p. 251.

### C. Agriculture

Kalaupapa was famous as a sweet potato locality, as well as for supporting a variety of other crops, at least as early as 1857:

These are sweet potatoes from ancient times . . . . There are nineteen varieties. . . . Of the dark varieties previously mentioned, only three are good. . . . These three . . . are much sold at Kalaupapa with the addition of some white and dark sweet potatoes. The likolehua and halonaipu [dark varieties] when ready to be sold are heaped at the seaport like bruised mountain apples on the beach. . . . Kalaupapa is a good land because the crops planted are successful and the gain is large. . . . Many sweet potatoes are being planted now, four or five patches to each man. Most of the crops are watermelons, and some small and big beans and onions. Be on the watch, you traders, for Kalaupapa is the best in all the islands for good prices and fast work. All the California ships come to Kalaupapa.<sup>5</sup>

The quotation implies an active trade with the western seacoast of the United States. It is known that at Kualapu'u on "topside," central Moloka'i, Father C.B. Andrews of the Sandwich Islands Mission raised wheat and Irish potatoes to supply California miners during the Gold Rush.<sup>6</sup>

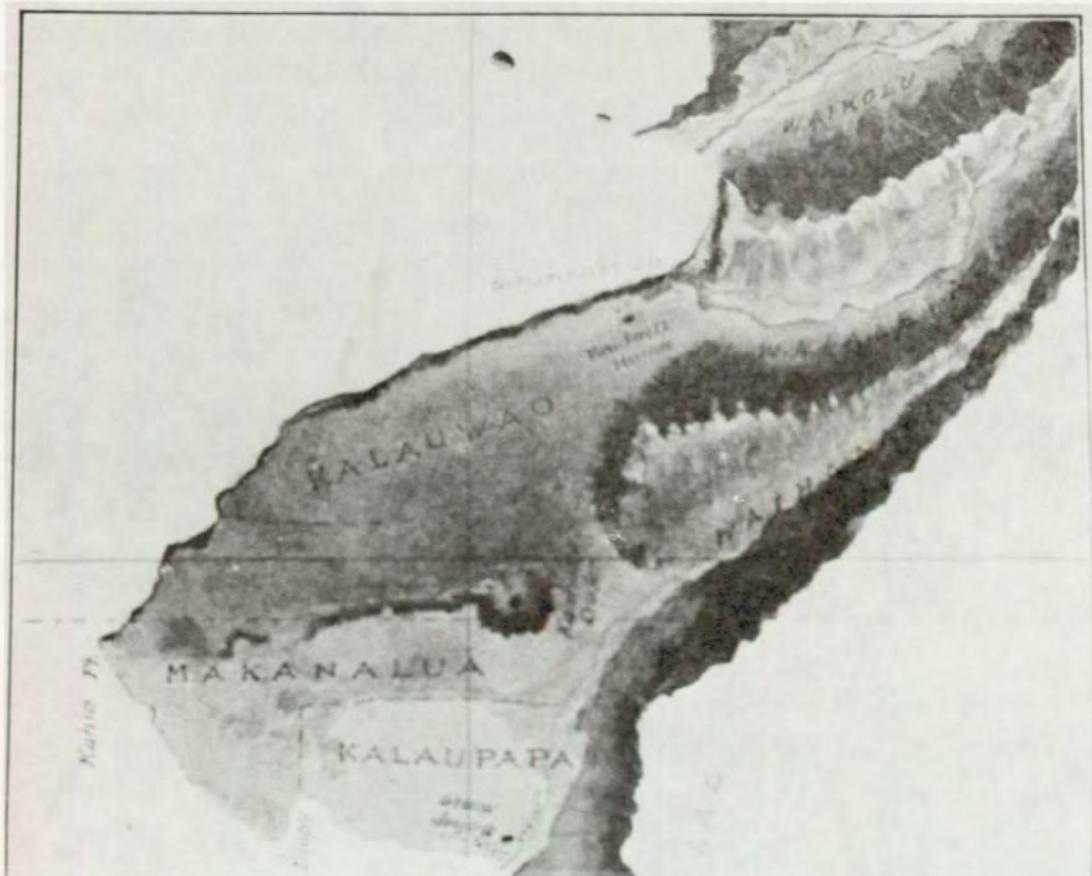
The sweet potato flourished in less favored localities than other crops and was quick to mature. It thrived in relatively dry soil. Potatoes were usually steamed in the jacket and eaten but were sometimes peeled, mashed, and mixed with water to make sweet potato poi. 'Uala 'awa'awa (sour or fermented potato) is a beer made of the sweet potato--a recipe possibly introduced from New England. Sweet potato vines and foliage made excellent hog feed. Hogs were also fattened on the potatoes

---

5. E.S. Craighill Handy, The Hawaiian Planter, Volume I: His Plants, Methods and Areas of Cultivation, Bernice P. Bishop Museum Bulletin 161 (Honolulu: Published by the Museum, 1940; New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1971), p. 158.

6. Cooke, Moolelo O Molokai, p. 37.

Illustration 2. Kalaupapa peninsula, showing the three ahupua'as or sections of land--Kalaupapa, Makanalua, and Kalawao. Note village of Iliopi'i on western shore. From Mouritz, "Path of the Destroyer," p. 67, courtesy Anwei V. Skinsnes.



themselves. Sweet potatoes were used medicinally and also ceremonially by the natives.<sup>7</sup>

The deep valleys on the north coast of Moloka'i, with their flat floors and sloping sides, were ideal in ancient times for the construction of terraces on which wet-taro was cultivated. Wet, or water, taro is planted along streams or ditches or in artificially leveled terraces in which the plants are kept submerged under water. Historically taro was probably first planted near springs, along streambeds, or in marshes fed by springs. The planting areas were gradually widened on the more level ground around springs and along lower stream courses, and water was diverted to them in ditches. Gradually the beds and irrigation systems grew larger, and more elaborate terraces were constructed. Wet taro areas were found by archeologists in several valleys on the south coast and in Halawa, Wailau, and Pelekunu valleys on the northern coast. There were some small wet-taro sections in Waikolu Valley, while other terraces were found on the slopes watered by Wai'ale'ia stream. These latter were cultivated for a while as part of a project to make the leprosy settlement self-sustaining. It is thought there probably were wet patches below Waihanau Valley also.<sup>8</sup>

Poi, a starchy derivative of the taro plant, was the staple diet item of the Hawai'ian people in older times. It was prepared for use by thorough cooking and then pounding it to a pulp. The hard mass produced by pounding is called 'ai pa'a. Dried and wrapped in ti-leaf packets to resemble small bricks, it is referred to as pa'i 'ai. For transport, the stiff paste was wrapped in larger cylindrical packets covered with ti-leaf wrappings and sometimes additionally covered by a pandanus leaf. Adding water to the pa'i 'ai forms a thick paste known as

---

7. E.S. Craighill Handy and Elizabeth Green Handy, Native Planters in Old Hawaii: Their Life, Lore, and Environment, Bernice P. Bishop Museum Bulletin 233 (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1972), p. 75; Handy, Hawaiian Planter, Volume I, pp. 150-51.

8. Handy, Hawaiian Planter, Volume I, pp. 9-10, 102.

poi. Thus prepared, it is eaten with one or two fingers, depending on the consistency. It was a simple and nutritious food and especially preferred after the fermentative process had begun. Hawai'ians considered taro superior to sweet potatoes because the hard dry cakes of pa'i 'ai would keep for long periods of time and because poi from taro soured slowly while sweet potato poi would ferment after only a few days. Taro also served more purposes--as food, medicine, and in ritual--than did the sweet potato.<sup>9</sup>

Small amounts of other native crops were also grown in the small cultivated fields on the peninsula and in the valleys. After the leprosy settlement was established, the lands were poorly farmed or neglected due either to the inexperience of the people in growing crops, their lack of interest in farming, or to physical disabilities. Changing eating habits meant that eventually the taro lands were abandoned and they were quickly overgrown by aggressive exotic brush plants.

The peninsula looked very different in the early days, for it was barren of trees, had heavily wooded cliffs, and the plain was covered with Bermuda grass. All this has changed due to overgrazing, the planting of trees, firewood gathering, and overgrowth by exotic species that have crowded out the native grasses. The Board of Hospitals and Settlement, after July 1, 1931, considered planting a major factor in beautifying the settlement and providing windbreaks. Ironwood, coconut palm, papaya, bougainvillea, hibiscus, and a wide variety of native flora were introduced during that time.

---

9. Handy and Handy, Native Planters in Old Hawaii, pp. 75, 112. According to the Handys, p. 112,

The expressions "one-finger poi," "two-finger poi," and "three-finger poi" are modernisms. To eat poi with three fingers was piggish. For a woman it was proper to eat with two fingers. Men ate with one or two as they pleased.

#### D. Wild Animals and Livestock

In addition to their principal food item, poi, early Hawaiians ate roast pig, cooked over hot stones, as well as many kinds of fish and fruit. There were no cattle on Moloka'i in 1832, but a year later there were 200 head, probably belonging to the chiefs, wandering unrestrained. Mention was found of more than 100 animals in the area from Kalaupapa to Waikolu--cattle, horses, donkeys, and mules--thriving on the Bermuda grass. It is well known that hogs were raised.<sup>10</sup>

Ancestors of the Axis deer, a spotted deer from India, which roam wild on the peninsula today, were a present from the Hawaiian Consul in Hong Kong to the King of Hawaii in 1867. Kamehameha V loosed the animals on Moloka'i, where, due to a prohibition on hunting them, they increased rapidly. (Moloka'i was reportedly Kamehameha V's favorite island to which he could slip away from the affairs of state.)

Changes in diet at the leprosy settlement and new patients who wanted more variety than poi and fish afforded forced the Board of Health to consider new foods. Dairy cattle were impacted in and for a time milk was given to the residents. This practice was ultimately abandoned and the cattle roamed at will. Beef cattle were imported in hopes of providing food with little care. Horses not used for farming any more were allowed to wander freely also. There were no fences for animal control and the land was soon overgrazed. Because it became difficult to get animals fat enough to slaughter, there was little meat production, and beef usually had to be shipped in.

#### E. Archeological Remains of Early Inhabitants

Kalaupapa peninsula today is covered with prehistoric and historical archeological sites. Limited archeological work has been done

---

10. Cooke, Moolelo O Molokai, p. 45; Handy, Hawaiian Planter, Volume I, p. 158; Dedication of the Kapiolani Home for Girls, the Offspring of Leper Parents, at Kakaako, Oahu, by their Majesties King Kalakaua and Queen Kapiolani, and Description of the Leper Settlement on the Island of Molokai (Honolulu: Advertiser Steam Print, 1885), p. 35.

on the peninsula proper, but major archeological opportunities still exist. Available sources on the subject were compiled and used by Catherine C. Summers in her 1971 site survey of the island. Twenty pre-contact period sites were listed as having been found on the peninsula. Sixteen were religious sites, including eleven heiau, two were cave sites, one a hōlua slide, and one a village complex. A Bishop Museum survey team in 1974, working on the Statewide Inventory of Historic Places, found and identified only four of these sites.

National Park Service archeologists Ed Ladd and Gary Somers after close study of aerial photographs and brief field inspections of parts of the peninsula, concluded

that although little of the previously recorded resource base remains, a large number of archeological features that have never been recorded exist in all parts of KALA. Resources ranging from agricultural wind breaks to substantial walls to house platforms have been noted throughout the peninsula and in all three valleys (Waihanau, Waialeia and Waikolu).

Because identification and recordation of the park's resources is essential to ensure compliance with Executive Order 11593, "Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment," and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1980, archeological surveys will be funded whenever possible. Title IV of PL 94-518 (1976) authorizes National Park Service participation in the preservation of cultural resources on the peninsula, although the land is still under a variety of ownerships. An archeological study was initiated in 1983 in association with development of a water well in Waihanau Valley and laying of a distribution line from there to water tanks and the settlement. Goals of the study were to survey and map resources in those areas to be impacted by development of the water line, to establish a permanent N-S/E-W grid system for a base map that could

---

11. Gary Somers and Edmund J. Ladd, "Project Design; Archeological Inventory Resources for Kalaupapa Well and Distribution System, Kalaupapa National Historical Park," 1983, Pacific Area Office, National Park Service, Honolulu, p. 1.

eventually be used for the entire peninsula, and to obtain a better idea of the extent and type of archeological resources in the park and present findings in a professional report.<sup>12</sup>

As of January 1, 1984, a variety of archeological features had been identified within the survey area: house sites, walled enclosures or exclosures, agricultural terraces, retaining walls, cemeteries and burial places, a heiau, a possible hōlua, as well as a large, multi-room, walled structure.<sup>13</sup>

The most prevalent archeological remains on the peninsula are the dry-laid stone walls that are seen everywhere, from the less vegetated areas near the ocean stretching clear back onto the steep land rising toward the pali. Some of these are probably old land division walls, delineating ahupua'as, or kuleanas, ilis, or moos--further land subdivisions that had carefully defined boundaries. Walls were built as stones were cleared from the ground prior to planting and thrown up along the sides of the fields, thereby separating cultivable patches of land or defining individual holdings. Stone fences served as exclosures to keep animals out of cultivated and living areas and may have been used occasionally as pens, although it appears animals usually ran unrestrained. Windbreaks appear as mile upon mile of low parallel stone walls and are especially visible on the northern and eastern coasts near the ocean where they served to shelter sweet potato plants from the strong northern trade winds. Some of the wall construction was done during the historic period. The entire peninsula was utilized,

and so dense was the population and so precious appears to have been the land, that little clearances, about a yard square,

---

12. Ibid.

13. Gary Somers, "Kalaupapa, Package 107, Reconstruct Water System, Phase II, Archeological Survey Progress Report, Through December 23, 1983," typescript, p. 2.

are carved along the rocky sides of the crater of Kahukoo [sic] to its very summit.<sup>14</sup>

Some remains that appear to be small square living quarters on the peninsula, associated with the sweet potato planting, may have served as temporary shelters for workers during periods of bad weather or intense labor.

More difficult to find because of the extensive overgrowth of Christmas berry, lantana, and Java plum, are the old Hawai'ian cemeteries and temples. Thousands of people have been buried on the peninsula, during both the pre-leprosy and leprosy settlement periods. Historic cemeteries are associated with Siloama and St. Philomena churches at Kalawao and line the seashore between Kalaupapa settlement and the airport. A large old cemetery is located adjacent to the road to Kalawao, on the south side, just southeast of the earthen water reservoir. Other early Hawai'ian burials can be found scattered over the peninsula, and some can be seen on the crater rim. Summers, in her 1971 site survey, notes the reported locations of several heiau, with remains ranging from stone pavements to stone platforms, and of other ceremonial sites.

Results of the Park Service 1983-84 field work and an overview of the archeological resources on the peninsula--including theories on land use, settlement patterns, and the distribution of archeological features--were published by the National Park Service in 1985 in a professional report (see Somers citation in bibliography). As archeological sites are identified and evaluated, they will be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with Executive Order 11593 and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1980. In the meantime the National Park Service is exercising caution in all

---

14. Dedication of the Kapiolani Home for Girls, 1885, containing "Molokai. Description of the Leper Colony on this Island," by Robert J. Creighton, Editor, Pacific Commercial Advertiser, p. 36.

rehabilitation/restoration/reconstruction work to ensure that archeological resources are not destroyed or altered.

F. Early Missionary Work

1. Moloka'i Station Established

In 1832, twelve years after initiation of the Sandwich Islands Mission, a young New England minister, the Reverend Harvey R. Hitchcock, was sent with his wife to christianize the natives of Moloka'i. They established the first Christian mission at Kalua'aha, on the southeastern shore of the island, probably then the area of densest population. Despite Kalaupapa's distance from that station, its residents often climbed the pali or came by sea to attend church meetings. Around 1836-37 the missionary reported that "at Kalaupapa[,] a populous district on the windward side of the island and about thirty miles from the station[,] a school of 160 scholars might be collected immediately were there a teacher to superintend it."<sup>15</sup>

2. Kalaupapa Sub-Station Established

Hitchcock held a three-day meeting at Kala'e, on the cliffs above Kalaupapa, in 1838, which was attended by many from the peninsula and the northern valleys. (An out-station of the Kalua'aha mission was established there around 1840.) In 1839 a Hawai'ian missionary teacher named Kanakaokai was stationed on the peninsula. Hitchcock noted on a tour of the island in August of that year that a large stone meetinghouse had been constructed at Kalaupapa with a thatched house for the missionary. Adjacent to the house was a field where cotton was planted to be used at a missionary spinning and weaving school at Lahaina, Maui. Hitchcock also mentioned that people living in Pelekunu were part of the Kalaupapa congregation.<sup>16</sup>

---

15. Report of the Station Kaluaha [sic] for 1836-37, in Molokai Station Reports, 1833-1849, p. 20.

16. Damon, Siloama, pp. 50-51.

In 1841 the population of Kalaupapa, probably including Waikolu Valley, was about 700 persons, of which 30 were church members. Hitchcock noted that "There are considerable comfortable accommodations for a family there[,] a large native house walled in--The meeting house is large."<sup>17</sup> Evidently some of the natives were already Catholics and quite hostile to the Protestants. Hitchcock requested that two families be sent to Kalaupapa because "efforts are already making to get a Popish priest there."<sup>18</sup>

By 1847 the first Kalaupapa stone meetinghouse had been replaced with a more substantial structure measuring twenty-eight by seventy feet. Also another missionary, the Reverend C.B. Andrews, had been assigned as assistant to Hitchcock on Moloka'i. A wave of religious enthusiasm appears to have swept over the island about that time. In 1848 the station of Kalua'aha reported that "Since last general meeting and principally during the last year[,] meeting houses have been built in Kalaupapa, Wailau, Pelekunu, Puahonui [sic] and Kameloo."<sup>19</sup> These houses of worship that were erected in all the principal areas of the island, including the northern valleys, were of the same basic architectural style--stone laid up in mud-mortar, plastered, and whitewashed, with substantial roofs and doors and glass windows. They differed from each other primarily in size.

In 1851 it was recorded that

The People at Kalaupapa who have but recently finished a stone house--60 by 30 feet, are now engaged in collecting funds for a new and more durable one[,] intending to devote the old one to

---

17. Report of the Station Kaluaaha [1841], [Hitchcock,] in Molokai Station Reports, No. 2, 1839-1863, Hawaiian Mission Children's Society, Honolulu, pp. 5-6.

18. Kaluaaha Ap 26 - 1842, [Hitchcock,] in ibid., p. 7.

19. Report of Station of Kaluaaha 1848, in Molokai Station Reports, 1833-1849, p. 25.

the use of the school. They have a bell paid for which has cost them 170(?) dollars --. . . ."20

3. Calvinist Church of 1853 Built  
In 1853

The meeting house roof at Kalaupapa where the people have a bell has fallen down. The event was I believe a joyful one, for now they have resolved to put up a handsome stone building, laid up in lime mortar, instead of their present walls laid in mud.<sup>21</sup>

The Kalaupapa church members reportedly cut coral rock from the nearby reef and burned it in kilns to melt into lime for the mortar used in cementing the lava rocks into the church walls.<sup>22</sup>

The new stone church was built on a plot of land referred to as the King's Acre and similar to many granted by King Kamehameha III in 1850 throughout the islands to be used for church and/or school activities.<sup>23</sup> The building was undoubtedly used heavily by the early inhabitants of the peninsula, but not by the leprosy victims who lived on the other side of the promontory. Not only were most of them unable to travel that far, due to various infirmities and physical disabilities, but most of them were more concerned with everyday survival than the regular practice of religion during the earliest years of the settlement. The pastors of Siloama Church at Kalawao lived at Kalaupapa, probably in the parsonage of the old stone church. Around 1882 the roof, belfry, and church bell were blown off during a severe kona wind. After

---

20. Hitchcocks Report of Kaluaaha 1851, in Molokai Station Reports, No. 2, 1839-1863, p. 3.

21. Report of Molokai. Church, During the years 1853. & 4., [C.B. Andrews], in ibid., p. 1.

22. Damon, Siloama, pp. 55-56.

23. Ibid., p. 56.

standing roofless for several years, the structure was converted by the government into a jail sometime prior to 1900. The graves surrounding the old church were leveled and the grounds were enclosed by a high stone wall. Later another jail was built. The high wall around the old church was torn down and the structure had been converted to a warehouse by 1948.

Illustration 3. Old stone church (peaked roof) in use as jail, Kalaupapa, Molokai, ca. 1895. Courtesy Hawaii State Archives, Honolulu.

Illustration 4. Old stone church (jail) in use as repair shop, 1930s. Courtesy Kalaupapa Historical Society, Kalaupapa.

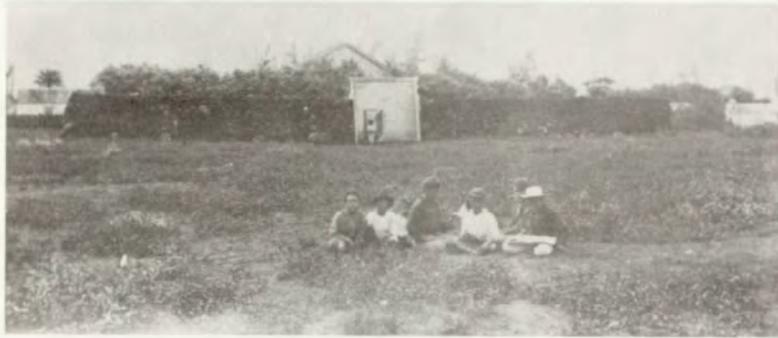


Illustration 5. Old stone church in 1948, in use as warehouse. From Damon, Siloama, p. 48, courtesy of Anwei V. Skinsnes.

Illustration 6. Old stone church in use as vehicle storage shed, 1984. NPS photo.

