

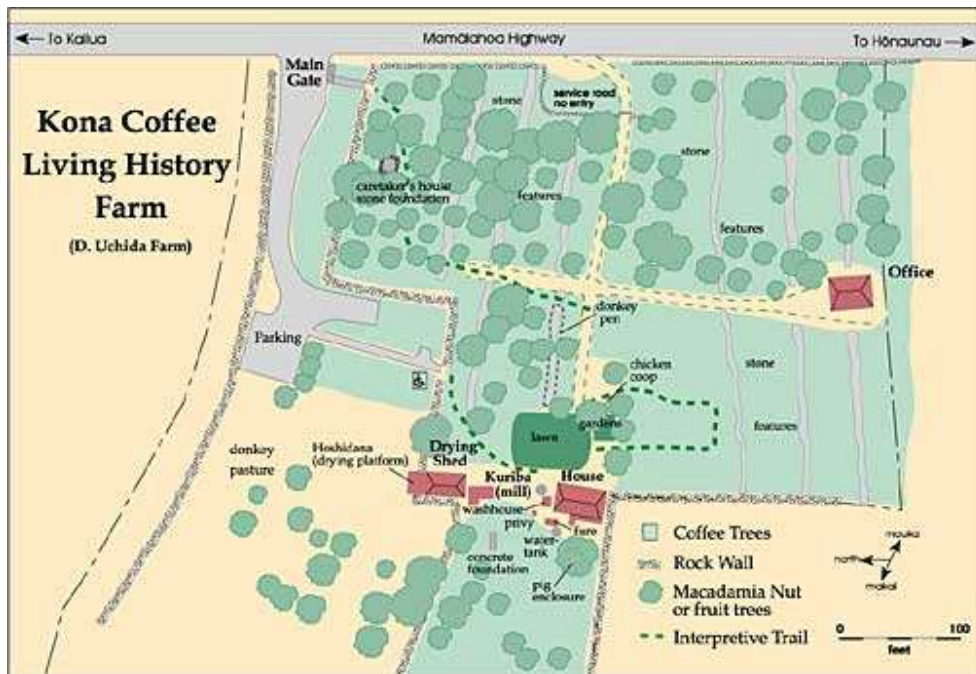
Kona (Hawai'i) Historical Society—Kona Coffee Living History Farm

Dr. Tom Woods, Making Sense of Place, has been the Lead Planning Consultant working with staff, community advisory groups, and other consultants from 1992- until opening in 1999.

To help plan, develop, and open the project, Dr. Tom Woods, of Making Sense of Place, Inc., worked for several years with KHS Director Jill Olson; Sheree Chase, KHS Kona Coffee Living History Farm Project Manager and Kona Historical Society Curator; Mary Parr, Kona Historical Society Collections Manager; Spencer Leinewebber, Architect; additional consultants; the Uchida family, whose farm is preserved here; and many other wonderful coffee farm community representatives who are part of the “living history” of coffee farming in Kona. The Kona Coffee Farm is open to the public and can be visited near Captain Cook, Hawai'i. Link to the Kona Historical Society's web page for additional information.

Link to the Kona Historical Society's

Kona Historical Society's Coffee Farm: <http://marble.he.net/~khs/tours/coffeefarm.shtml>



Map courtesy of the Kona Historical Society.

Praise for the Kona Historical Society's Kona Coffee Living History Farm

Since opening in 1999, the Kona Coffee Living History Farm has enjoyed tremendous success and has already become a “model” project for other museums in Hawai'i. The Kona Historical Society received several prestigious awards in 2000 recognizing the high quality project:

- *Award of Merit*, American Association for State & Local History
- *Honor Award*, National Trust for Historic Preservation
- *Preservation Award*, Historic Hawaii Foundation
- *Outstanding Employer for Persons with Disabilities Award*, State of Hawaii
- *Environmental Hero*, American Red Cross

National Endowment for the Humanities Reviewer Comments

“... a fresh, new approach to historic site interpretation”

“... an innovative, integrated exhibition, with...great vitality.”

Daniel Inouye, U.S. Senator

"The Uchida project is not a Kona project or a Hawai'i project. It is a national project which tells in eloquent and dramatic language that this is an American Story which represents success, family values, and independence."

George Takei, actor Commander Sulu in Star Trek

"[I]t was the best living history museum yet."

Judith Fox-Goldstein, Director, University of Hawai'i-Hilo Conference Center and President, Destination Hilo

"You have developed a program that is creative, informative, and most crucial...it is interactive and encourages learning in its most stimulating form."



Kona coffee beans ready for picking at the Kona Coffee Living History Farm. (Photo by Tom Woods.)

Visitors have joined in this chorus of accolades. In year 2000 exit surveys, 99% of 5,000 visitors gave the site an "excellent" rating. Since it is a sensitive restoration of a fragile farmstead, visitation will remain at moderate levels, but is soon expected to reach 10,000.

- More than one Nisei (second generation Japanese immigrant) senior citizen has walked away from the tour with tears in her eyes, saying, ". . . ohhh, this is so real, not like one museum, it's just like my mom folk's house."
- Manoa School 4th grader Youana Choy wrote, "The coffee farm was the most greatest, and most exciting farm I ever been to. I hope I can go to the farm again with my whole family."
- More from Judith Fox-Goldstein, Director of the Conference Center and Hawaiian Adventure Program at the University of Hawaii at Hilo, who wrote to support the coffee farm for an Award of Merit from the American Association of State and Local History.

As the leading travel education program in the state, we have a great responsibility to provide authentic cultural experiences that will allow our visitors to learn about our culture and history in the most exciting and innovative way.

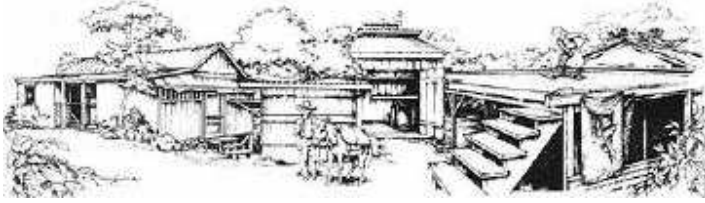
The rave reviews, of the 'Uchida Farm' experience, have supported our findings that this is a remarkable venue for teaching, learning and experiencing the unique history of Japanese immigrants. The interactive experience allows our students and visitors (ranging from 8 yrs-80 yrs) an intimate experiential journey that re-creates the authentic history of Japanese coffee farmers.

As educators, parents, and historians we are compelled to present our history so that our children's lives will be enhanced and enriched by learning about our past. The Uchida Farm offers this opportunity and the value, of the experience, for our island children and all of our visitors is exceptional.

The coffee mill (left) and *hoshidana* (right) before restoration and opening. A *hoshidana* is a specially designed Kona coffee building with a roof on rails that can be slid aside when the sun is out to dry coffee placed on a platform beneath it. (Photo by Tom Woods.)



Interpretive program in the house sewing room after the site opened in 1999. (Photo by Tom Woods.)



Sketch of Kona Coffee Living History Farm, courtesy of Kona Historical Society.



Starting a fire in the Japanese “kitchen fireplace” after the site opened in 1999. Slatted walls above the fireplace let the smoke waft out of the kitchen. (Photo by Tom Woods.)

Description of the Kona Coffee Farm

The Uchida family coffee farm perches on the slopes of Mauna Loa, in the heart of Kona's historic "coffee belt." According to the Hawaii State Register Nomination, "The Uchida Coffee Farm is an amazingly intact site which demonstrates the coffee farming lifestyle and technology used between 1900-1940s by Japanese coffee farmers in Kona."

Daisaku Uchida and his wife Shima Maruo both emigrated from Japan just after the turn of the century. Their lifestyle and experiences are typical for Japanese coffee farming families of the period.

Built in 1925, the farm site is in remarkably good condition and consists of a six-room, single-story farm house, coffee processing mill (*kuriba*), drying roofs (*hoshidana*), and outbuildings which include wooden water catchment tanks, a Japanese style bathhouse (*furo*), sheds, an outhouse, and chicken coop. The kitchen has changed remarkably little since its construction: the original concrete stove and fireplace where rice and vegetables were prepared are still in place, as is the primitive, aboveground plumbing. Smoke from daily cooking without a chimney has stained the interior walls black.

Many original tools remained on the farm after Daisaku and Shima's son, Masao Uchida, and his family left the farm in 1994. Since the project began, KHS has worked successfully with the Uchida family to find the household items used on the farm during the 1920s and 30s. Because of the family's strong

support for the project, the KHS has assembled a remarkably complete collection of the original handmade and modified farm tools, household items, and furniture.

Historians can trace Hawaii's ethnic diversity to the successive waves of immigrants imported by the sugar planters to meet their labor needs. With the native population decimated by disease and migration from rural agricultural areas, planters needed to increase their supply of cheap foreign labor. Beginning in the 1850s, planters brought in Chinese immigrants, followed by Portuguese laborers during the 1870s and 80s.

The first shipload of Japanese laborers arrived in Hawaii illegally in 1868. Between 1885 and 1925, approximately 185,000 Japanese immigrated to Hawaii. As the last and largest ethnic group recruited by sugar planters in the 19th century, the Japanese entered at the very bottom of the plantation system and received the lowest wages and poorest housing. The law bound workers to three-to-five year contracts and it authorized imprisonment and fines if laborers failed to fulfill their contracts.

Daisaku Uchida was a typical part of this migration. He arrived in Honolulu on September 27, 1906 aboard the *Nippon Maru* from Kumamoto Prefecture, *Suyshu*, in southern Japan at the age of 19. Shortly after he arrived, he signed a three-year contract with Lihue Sugar Plantation on Kauai, where he remained until 1909.

Most of the Japanese who came to Kona arrived as laborers to pick coffee for large plantations during the 1890s. Between 1890 and 1900, the Japanese population in Kona climbed from 2% of the total population in 1890 to 27.7% of the population in 1900. Most were single males who intended to return to Japan with savings earned in Hawaii.

The Issei began leasing five to ten acre coffee farms as early as the 1890s. Since family cooperation was an essential element in every aspect of the farming operation, each family member played an essential role. The change from the large coffee plantation system to the small, family-run farm, revolutionized the coffee industry and kept it alive. As newcomers, Japanese usually leased the poorer farms left by more affluent Caucasian, Portuguese, and Chinese farmers.

In October 1913, Daisaku and Shima leased five acres of coffee land from E.C. Greenwell, then later the Arthur Greenwell family. Initially, the couple occupied a small house on the land where their first three children were born. Like most Japanese coffee farmers, they lived in an almost cash-free economy, relying on the credit system for the purchase of staples and fertilizer. Mostly self-sufficient, they raised their own vegetables, made *miso*, and traded vegetables for fish and tofu. Typical of coffee pioneers, Shima Uchida used and reused everything. When they purchased staples, such as rice or flour, they carefully washed the bags, bleached, ironed, and used them as a ceiling covering, and any number of useful items. Everyone contributed to the support of the family. They expected children to help around the house and to work on the farm, picking coffee from the time they were very small.

Japanese coffee farmers developed important new technology for processing coffee. This technology helped improve methods of production and is unique to the Kona coffee industry. The Issei invented, and the Nisei improved, the *kuriba*, a mill designed to pulp coffee cherry, and the *hoshidana* for drying the coffee. A *hoshidana* was a drying platform designed as a second level floor that was covered with a gable roof that rolled on tracks. Coffee could be dried here when the sun was out, then the roof rolled back to cover it when it began to rain.

Today, the sons and daughters of Issei coffee farmers continue to farm, taking great pride in the success of the industry their parents worked so hard to maintain. With the development of the gourmet market during the 1980s, the industry has enjoyed a renaissance of unparalleled proportions.

Research and Planning for the Kona Coffee Farm

At the outset of planning, KHS developed a draft master plan for the farm and identified several reports it needed prior to a final master plan and the commencement of development. Many of these reports were interdependent and had to be completed in concert. As part of a NEH Planning Grant, we developed the following reports:

- ! Social History Research Report(s)
- ! Historic Structures Report
- ! Landscape Report
- ! Collections Report and Furnishing Plan
- ! Conservation Assessment and Treatment Plan
- ! Educational Program Framework
- ! Interpretation Plan and Manual

Collaboration and Community Involvement

KHS has worked closely with other museums and community support groups during the planning for the project. Just as KHS began planning to conserve and interpret the coffee farm, the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) approached the Society to collaborate on a traveling exhibit about coffee farming. JANM had recently received a NEH Planning Grant to develop a traveling exhibit--*The Kona Coffee Story: Along the Hawaii Belt Road*. The project was completed with the fund-raising assistance of the local Kona community. In 1996 it received an Award of Commendation from the American Association for State and Local History.

KHS and JANM have worked together on both projects by collecting and sharing information and resources related to the history of Kona=s Japanese-American Kona coffee farmers. While related in their topic and collections, the projects differ in scope and format. While KHS will have a permanent, living history exhibition located on an original site with a time frame between 1925-1945, JANM=s temporary traveling exhibition spans a 100-year history of the coffee industry from the 1890s to the present.

KHS also works very closely with community groups to achieve the goals of the project. Drawing on its considerable community support, KHS formed the Friends of the Uchida Farm and the Kona Coffee Farm Steering Committee to advise on all aspects of the project, to help raise money, and to provide volunteer labor.