

IMPROVE EDUCATION  
PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT  
ADDRESS INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGES  
ADOPT SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC STRATEGIES  
MEET HUMAN NEEDS & PRESERVE LOCAL CULTURE

FOCUS OUR  
MAUI ISLANDS  
NUI OUR FUTURE

Own it!

## Our Heritage: The Norwegians



McGregor Point, Maalaea, Maui

**WORDS ON THE PLAQUE:** This monument commemorates the arrival of the Norwegian barque *Beta* which dropped anchor near this spot on February 18, 1881, and of her sister ship *Musca*, which arrived in Honolulu May 13, 1881. They brought more than six hundred Norwegians, Swedes and Danes to work in the sugar cane fields and mills of the Hawaiian Kingdom — the first and only mass migration of Scandinavians to these islands. For their contribution to the life of this land, as well as those of their countrymen who proceeded or followed, our mahalo and aloha. The Scandinavian Centennial Commission, February 14, 1981, the centennial date. This monument was restored in the year 2006, in celebration of the 125th anniversary of the Scandinavians arrival in Hawaii.

Sometimes called “the forgotten immigrants” more than 600 Norwegian men, women and even some children shipped out from Drammen, Norway in 1880, having signed up to work in ‘paradise’ on the booming sugar plantations in the Sandwich Isles, Kingdom of Hawaii. After a brutal six-month voyage, they went mostly to the island of Maui.



Captain Christian L'Orange, an early plantation owner, was commissioned by King Kalakaua to bring the Norwegians to the islands. But there was discontent and

controversy from the very start when they found that the labor contracts they signed in Norway, written in Norwegian, were fundamentally different from the contracts presented on arrival, written in English. Many felt they had been misled and staged one of the first labor strikes in the islands. As soon as their contracts expired the majority of Norwegians left for the U.S. mainland. A small number of Norwegians remained in Hawaii working as skilled tradesmen, craftsmen or merchants.

Although the emigration to Hawaii was a failure, the Norwegians who stayed left a lasting legacy. Today there are many Hawaiians who are immensely proud of their part Norwegian ancestry and feel it an honor to trace their heritage to the ‘Beta’ and ‘Musca.’

The  
Norwegians  
went out on  
strike,  
frustrating  
the plantation  
owners who  
had only dealt  
“with meeker  
races.”

~ Eleanor Davis  
*Norwegian  
Labor in Hawaii*



FOCUS MAUI NUI is a community-driven vision for the future of our islands, spearheaded by Maui Economic Development Board, Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to the economic well-being of Maui County. VISIT [www.focusmauinui.com](http://www.focusmauinui.com) or CALL 808.270.6801