



## HISTORY OF THE WAIKIKI AQUARIUM

The Waikiki Aquarium is the third oldest aquarium in the U.S. and has a venerable history in Hawai'i. The Aquarium opened on March 19, 1904. Built by a gift from Mr. and Mrs. Charles Montague Cooke, Sr., on leased land donated by James B. Castle, it was operated as a commercial attraction by the Directors of the Honolulu Rapid Transit Authority who wished to show the world the riches of Hawai'i's reefs. They also saw the Aquarium as an attraction to entice trolley riders to the end of the new trolley line, which was located across from the Aquarium in Queen Kapiolani Park.

When it opened in 1904, The Honolulu Aquarium, as it was called then, was considered state-of-the-art, with 35 exhibits and 400 marine organisms. William Jennings Bryan and Jack London were among the notable visitors of that era.

The Aquarium's first director, Frederick Potter, a clerk for the Honolulu Rapid Transit Company, was transferred to manage the Aquarium. Despite his lack of formal training in marine sciences, Potter was a vigorous supporter of Hawaiian ichthyology and served as Aquarium director until May 1940. The Potter's angelfish, *Centropyge potteri*, was named in his honor.

In 1912, the Aquarium began its tradition of research when the C.M. Cooke Estate donated funds for a marine biology laboratory adjoining the Aquarium. Dr. Charles Edmondson was the first director of this lab and also the first professionally-trained marine zoologist to live in the Hawaiian Islands. When the property lease expired in 1919, the newly-formed University of Hawai'i assumed control of the Aquarium and laboratory.

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Spencer Tinker was appointed the second director of the Aquarium in 1940, after serving on the faculty of the University of Hawai'i Zoology Department. Tinker is well known for his books on Hawaiian fishes, Pacific crustaceans and other marine life. While at the Aquarium, he directed construction of a new aquarium building, including the drilling of a saltwater well to supply the display tanks. The new facility, known as the Waikiki Aquarium, opened in 1955 about 100 yards from the original aquarium site. Tinker retired in 1973. Tinker's butterflyfish, *Chaetodon tinker*, was named for this second director.

By 1974, the Aquarium was in need of a new vision. The research function of the Aquarium moved to two new institutions: the Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology (HIMB), and the Pacific Biomedical Research Center. There were no education programs and museum exhibits consisted of cases filled with thousands of seashells with no conservation message.

Fortunately, the situation reversed dramatically when Dr. Leighton Taylor was appointed the third director in 1975. An ichthyologist by training, Taylor was on the U.H. Zoology faculty. He understood the need for a new aquarium vision committed to education, conservation and research, and he realized the need to diversify revenue sources. The education department, volunteer program, library, research facility, Aquarium logo, gift shop, Friends of the Waikiki Aquarium (FOWA) and first exhibits master plan (1978) all came into being during his tenure. In addition, the Aquarium's present mission statement evolved from Taylor's vision of what the Aquarium could become.

Taylor departed the Waikiki Aquarium in 1986. He also has a fish named in his honor, Taylor's goby, *Trimma taylori*.

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Dr. Bruce Carlson became the Waikiki Aquarium's fourth director in 1990. He joined the Waikiki Aquarium in 1976 as a graduate student, along with a number of other staff who now serve as department heads. Carlson worked closely with the staff, the University, and the community to develop the present mission statement, a set of clearly defined goals, a master plan and a new exhibits master plan. He was also responsible for the design of new and more naturalistic exhibits that focused on aquatic life and habitats of Hawai'i and the western Pacific. Under his leadership, the Waikiki Aquarium was designated a Coastal Ecosystem Learning Center of the Coastal America Partnership in 2000.

In 2004, the Waikiki Aquarium celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary along the shore in Queen Kapiolani Park. During the memorable year, the Aquarium also welcomed a new director, Dr. Andrew Rossiter. With Dr. Rossiter's arrival, the Aquarium, its members and guests saw the return of its popular summer concert series, Ke Kani O Ke Kai, as well as new exhibits such as bearded armorhead, seahorses, giant clams and jellyfish.

As the Waikiki Aquarium looks forward to the next 100 years, it continues to be committed to educating Hawai'i residents and visitors to our Island about the unique aspects of the Pacific and the importance of conservation, while creating a fun and entertaining atmosphere.

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