



# Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard  
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500  
blr@raremaps.com

## Plan of the City of Honolulu Oahu, Sandwich Islands.

**Stock#:** 35023  
**Map Maker:** Anonymous  
**Date:** 1858 -1859 ca  
**Place:** n.p.  
**Color:** Pen & Ink with Wash Color  
**Condition:** VG+  
**Size:** 28 x 21 inches  
**Price:** \$24,500.00



### Description:

#### ***A Remarkable and Previously Unknown Early Manuscript Survey of Honolulu***

Highly important early manuscript map of Honolulu, Hawaii, likely dating from the late 1850s, and most likely the work of Hawaii's most important early surveyor William C. Webster.

The present manuscript town plan is of considerable historical importance as one of the great early maps of Honolulu and one of the first to depict the town at the birth of its modern planning. The map would seem to have been drawn at about the same time as perhaps the most famous important early survey map of Honolulu, John W. Makalena's map of *Honolulu* dated April 23, 1858 (the "Makalena Map") and shortly before the completion of a map entitled *Plan Showing The Waikahalulu Water Lots in Honolulu Harbor . . .* dated October 1857 (the "Water Lots Plan"), which as also been attributed to William Webster.

The map is a marvelous amalgam of the same information contained in the two maps above, being a more advanced general plan of Honolulu than the Makalena map and a more primitive version of the new street grid shown north of the Esplanade which would be subdivided shown on the Webster's Water Lots plan.

### Historical Overview

There are very few early maps of Honolulu. Virtually all of the early printed maps are exceedingly rare, and there are only a handful of surviving manuscript maps in institutional collections. On the basis of style and content, this map appears to date from the late 1850s, during a period of transformative change of the city's waterfront, and was likely drafted by William C. Webster, one of early Hawaii's most prominent and



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skilled mapmakers. The map embraces all of 'Old Honolulu', from the Nuuanu River in the northwest to just past Punch Bowl Street in the southeast, and just beyond Beretania Street in the north and the harbor front in the south. The quality and precision of the draftsmanship is very high, and the outlines of all streets are demarcated and labeled.

The map features the outlines of certain buildings, designates 'Palace Square' and details the various quays and jetties along the harbor. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the map, and the feature which reveals much about its dating and possible creator, is its depiction of the Waikahalulu-Esplanade area, which lies south of Queen Street and east of Fort Street. While the rest of the map depicts things as they appeared on the ground, this area is shown as it was proposed to appear following the conclusion of a land reclamation scheme that was then under way, but which was far from concluded.

It is this last fact that also points strongly toward Webster as its maker and puts the map's date at sometime around 1857 to 1859. Notably, the configuration of the recently reclaimed area which would become the Esplanade area bears a similarity to the Water Lots Plan, also attributed to Webster, and reflects the culmination of the process which the Government of Hawaii had commenced in 1851 with Walker's *Plan of the part of Waikahalulu on the Reef at Honolulu belonging to H. Kalama*, dated April 12, 1851, which was the first map to outline the proposal to fill in the Reef area and create the Esplanade.

### The Early Mapping of Honolulu

Honolulu Harbor, a small, but excellent natural anchorage was long prized by the native peoples of Oahu, although it was bypassed by the first wave of European explorers. The haven was first encountered by foreigners in 1794, by the English Captain William Brown, aboard the *Butterworth*. In 1804, the previously independent Oahu was conquered by King Kamehameha the Great, and included as part of the united Hawaiian Kingdom. Kamehameha moved the Royal Court to Waikiki, and then Honolulu Harbor in 1809, before it was returned to Kona, on the Island of Hawaii, in 1812.

The first known mapping of Honolulu Harbor was conducted by the Russian explorer Otto von Kotzebue in 1816-7, whose pair of charts of the area were published in St. Petersburg in 1823. This was followed by a manuscript chart of the harbor drawn by 'Tabulevich', the draftsman for the voyage of Vasili Golovnin in 1818, and Louis Isadore Duperry's *Plan du Port D'Onorourou* (Paris, 1819). A chart drawn by Charles Malden, R.N.'s, the *South Coast of Woahoo and Honorourou Harbour* (surveyed 1825, but published only in 1841) notably features the outline of the town within its greater context. Each of these charts focused as navigational aids to access the harbor, and not to detail the town itself. During this period, Honolulu was a low-density and spread-out village, traversed by rough paths, with no formal plan or streets, and therefore virtually nothing to survey or otherwise depict.



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### **Plan of the City of Honolulu Oahu, Sandwich Islands.**

During the 1820s and 1830s, Honolulu increasingly became a key port of call for Trans-Pacific trade and the whaling industry. The south coast of Oahu had the finest anchorages and the largest expanse of prime agricultural land in Hawaiian Islands, and was increasingly favored by Western merchants, planters and missionaries. Seeking to bring order to the chaotic settlement, in 1838, Queen Kahumanu II decreed that a fixed series of streets should be constructed across the town. In compliance, buildings that were in the path of straightened thoroughfares were torn down and the basic network of streets of downtown Honolulu was established.

The earliest map to outline the new pattern of streets was by Charles Wilkes' U.S. Exploring Expedition's *Harbour of Honolulu Island of Oahu* (1840, published 1845). In 1843, Captain Richard Charlton, the British Consul in Honolulu drafted a manuscript map that was the first to detail and label the major buildings of the town.

By the mid-1840s, Honolulu had emerged as the premier town of the Hawaiian Islands, surpassing Lahaina (on Maui) in both population and commercial importance. The national capital was moved back to Honolulu in 1845. That year, Governor Kekuanaoa of Oahu, commissioned the German surveyor H. Ehrenberger to create the first formal street survey of Honolulu, which was published in *The Friend* on October 1, 1845. This was soon followed, in 1847, by Theophylus Metcalf's manuscript street plan of Honolulu.

### **New Developments and Transformative Changes to Honolulu Harbor**

From 1848, two key developments would require Honolulu to be mapped to more exacting standards, a project to redevelop the harbor and the King's program to divide and disperse the island's commonly-held lands to members of the Hawaiian nobility.

The tiny waterfront of the harbor and the port infrastructure were woefully inadequate to handle the current level of trade, let alone the expected increase in volume. Moreover, silt from the Nuuanu River was progressively filling in the harbor. In response, R.C. Wyllie, the British Consul and future Hawaiian Foreign Minister, proposed an ambitious harbor expansion and redevelopment plan. However, the cost of his designs initially put off members of the Hawaiian House of Representatives. Harbor redevelopment would take place, but only gradually.

As a first measure, in 1848, a breakwater was built from the end of Maunakea Street, protecting the harbor from the sediment deposited from the Nuuanu (visible on the present map as the long thin extension below Maunakea Street). In 1850, the House of Representatives approved a plan to spend up to \$500,000 on land reclamation and harbor expansion. The primary focus of this plan was the Waikahalulu Reef, an area of shallow water along the shore, directly to the southeast of the harbor front, beyond the



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fort, and south of Queen Street. A key consideration in the plan was that the fort, which had guarded the harbor since 1816, had been rendered largely inoperable as a defense structure. This followed the destruction of its artillery in 1849 during a rash action by French sailors protesting the islands' restrictions on Roman Catholicism. It was determined that the fort, which now acted as a jail, should be destroyed, and its mass used for landfill. It was also hoped that sediment from dredging the harbor would compete the task of filling the Waikahalulu Reef, potentially tripling the size of Honolulu's wharf front.

In 1848, King Kamehameha III commenced his great land redistribution scheme, called the "Great Mahele". Up to this point, all land on the Hawaiian Islands had been held in common socage under the sovereignty of the King. The new reforms would see the Hawaiian Islands divided up and granted to various members of islands' nobility, who would, in turn, rent or lease land to tenants (including foreigners). The Mahele naturally required detailed and accurate surveys of the islands to be made, a process that would take decades to complete. As the capital, Honolulu was among the first places surveyed. The King saw fit to divide Honolulu into four noble estates, and the exact locations of the boundaries of these lands were critical to all new surveys, including those done for the harbor redevelopment plan.

William C. Webster (1827-62), a young Scottish surveyor, was officially charged with surveying the harbor and planning the Waikahalulu reclamation scheme. He was described as "perhaps the best trained and qualified civil engineer in the islands" of his time and "a very careful surveyor", and served as the land agent for Hawaii's crown prince, the future Kamehameha IV. Webster would spend the last two years of his short, but impressive, life as the Speaker of Hawaii's House of Representatives.

As a key part of his surveying project, Webster completed the manuscript *Plan of part of the Waikahalulu on the reef at Honolulu belonging to H. Kalama*, dated April 18, 1851. In this plan, Webster projected a new quayside projecting far into the harbor from the existing shoreline. Specifically acknowledged by his plan was the fact that the entire reef was claimed by Queen Kalama as part of her Mahele grant. However, Kalama's title to the waters so far off shore was contested and legal wrangling held up the redevelopment of the harbor for some time. Finally, in 1855, the Queen agreed to relinquish her title to the reef to the government in exchange for a payment of \$22,000.

In 1856, the harbor redevelopment scheme got under way in earnest. That year, workers began to tear down the old fort, as illustrated by T.A. Hull's chart, *Honolulu Harbor* (London, 1856). The Hawaiian government purchased a dredging boat from the United States, the Kaulu, and proceeded to clear and deepen the channels into the harbor.

It was decided that, in part to pay for the land reclamation scheme, new lots built on the reclaimed Waikahalulu Reef would be sold at public auction. Even before the land had been filled in, in 1857, the



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### **Plan of the City of Honolulu Oahu, Sandwich Islands.**

Water Lots Plan was drafter (likely by Webster). This map proposed that four new east-west streets would be created, ending with the Esplanade, which would line the quayside. Fort Street would be extended down towards the Esplanade, and four new north-south thoroughfares would be created. The street blocks were then divided into 'water lots', to be sold at a public auction to be held on May 15th, 1858.

Meanwhile, Prince Kamehameha (King Kamehameha V), then Minister of the Interior, commissioned the native Hawaiian surveyor John W. Makalena to create a detailed survey of the City of Honolulu, with the object of delineating the exact boundaries between the four different Mahele grants. Makalena's finished manuscript, dated April 23, 1858, was the most accurate street plan of the city to date and bears a great deal of similarity in both its content and its clean and neat style to the present manuscript. Curiously, however, Makalena's depiction of the harbor from the fort southeastwards is decidedly archaic. It shows the fort as still standing and no development to the Waikahalulu Reef area. In reality, by 1858, the fort had been entirely torn down and the reclamation of the reef was well under way. The map is also quite small, especially in comparison to the present manuscript map, being only 12 x 15.5 inches, versus the 28 x 21 inch size of the manuscript.

The Waikahalulu land reclamation project made gradual progress, but proceeded more slowly than anticipated, for the endeavor was a little beyond the capabilities afforded by the Kaulu and the work crews. Nevertheless, by 1860 an 11 acre reclaimed area, extending along the Esplanade to just past Alakea Street, had been completed. Webster's original plan had also since been simplified to include only two (as opposed to three) new east-west streets. While all four of the north-south streets in the reclaimed area had been given names (Fort and Alakea Streets were established streets that had been extended, while Kekuanaoa and Kilauea streets were brand new), the east-west streets had not yet been given their permanent names (Halekauwila Street and Allen Street).

### **The "Plan of the City of Honolulu Oahu, Sandwich Islands" in Context**

It is in this context that the present "Plan of the City of Honolulu Oahu, Sandwich Islands" appeared. This plan was by far the most accurate street survey of Honolulu to date, and was drafted on paper by the use of a compass (the circular compass lines are still visible). The depiction of the older town beyond Queen Street is intended to precisely depict Honolulu as it appeared at the time that the map was made. All of the streets, with their names and the outlines of buildings, correspond to how Honolulu appeared in the later 1850s and early 1860s, when the population was approximately 15,000. Distinctly, however, the depiction of the area south of Queen Street, or the Waikahalulu-Esplanade area, is as originally planned, but not yet constructed, following designs of how the area was intended to appear after the proposed land reclamation scheme was complete. The preliminary nature of this part of the map is demonstrated by the fact that the eastern part of the street system in this area, as drawn on the map, differs from the final



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### **Plan of the City of Honolulu Oahu, Sandwich Islands.**

street layout, as completed, which was not completed until the 1890s.

Evidence suggests that the present map was drafted towards the very end of the 1850s, by the time that the new street plan for Waikahalulu had been decided upon, but before it was completed, and before many of the streets were given their permanent names. The appearance of the outline of a house in the middle of 'Princess Street', suggests that this proposed thoroughfare had not yet been completed, and that some obstructions still remained. Moreover, none of the north-south streets are named, and are only identified with numbers, suggesting that the map was drafted shortly before 1860, when three of these streets were named. Also 'Princess Street' (later Halekauwila Street) and 'Prince Street' (later Allen Street) must have been early provisional names, for they did not endure, and they do not seem to appear in histories of Honolulu.

Beyond this, the title of the plan refers to the Hawaiian Islands as the "Sandwich Islands", a name given in 1778 by Captain James Cook in honor of his patron, the Earl of Sandwich. This designation is important, as by this time the term Sandwich Islands was generally viewed as archaic. While never accepted by the native Hawaiians, the name was popular amongst British settlers, but was increasingly rejected by Americans as a sign of British imperialism. It progressively fell out of use from 1840 onwards, and by 1865 was considered entirely obsolete, so supporting a dating for map from before this time.

Speculation that the present map was drafted by William Webster is supported by a number of factors. First, there were then very few surveyors and draftsmen in Hawaii who were capable of creating such a precise and fine town plan. The map does not accord to the style of any other known contemporary mapmaker in Hawaii, but some of the writing and the neatness of the style of the present map bears resemblance to some of Walker's other known works. In terms of content, it would make perfect sense that Webster would be involved in making a general map of the town, including a revised plan of the Waikahalulu-Esplanade development. Indeed, this map may have been employed as a marquis piece to illustrate Webster's plans for redeveloping the harbor. Moreover, the reference to the "Sandwich Islands" in the title suggests that the author of the map was likely British, for no American or Hawaiian surveyor would have used that term during this period. The very fine and careful quality of the draftsmanship suggests that the map may have been intended for publication.

### **Conclusion**

The present map is one of only a few surviving early manuscript plans of Honolulu. Standing out for its exquisite draftsmanship and accuracy, it provides an unparalleled view of the city as it appeared in the late 1850s, along with aspects of planned future development. The most probable maker of the map was William Webster, one of Hawaii's most important early surveyors, and may well have been constructed as an overview of his recently commenced redevelopment plan of the Honolulu Harbor and its waterfront.

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**Plan of the City of Honolulu Oahu, Sandwich Islands.**

We are not aware of any map of Honolulu which in any way approaches the historical importance of the present manuscript having been offered on the market during the last generation.

**Detailed Condition:**

Manuscript map, pen and wash on paper, some age toning, but overall very fine, the annotation "circa 1850" added to title in a later hand.