

On This Site Previously Stood the
NATIONAL DOLLAR STORE BUILDING
HABS No. HI-617

Location: 3638 – 3654 Waialae Avenue
Honolulu, Honolulu County, Hawaii

Coordinates: Latitude 21.2825454, Longitude -157.797940

Construction Date: 1949

Architect: Guy N. Rothwell (Honolulu)
Consulting Architect: Lloyd Gartner (San Francisco)

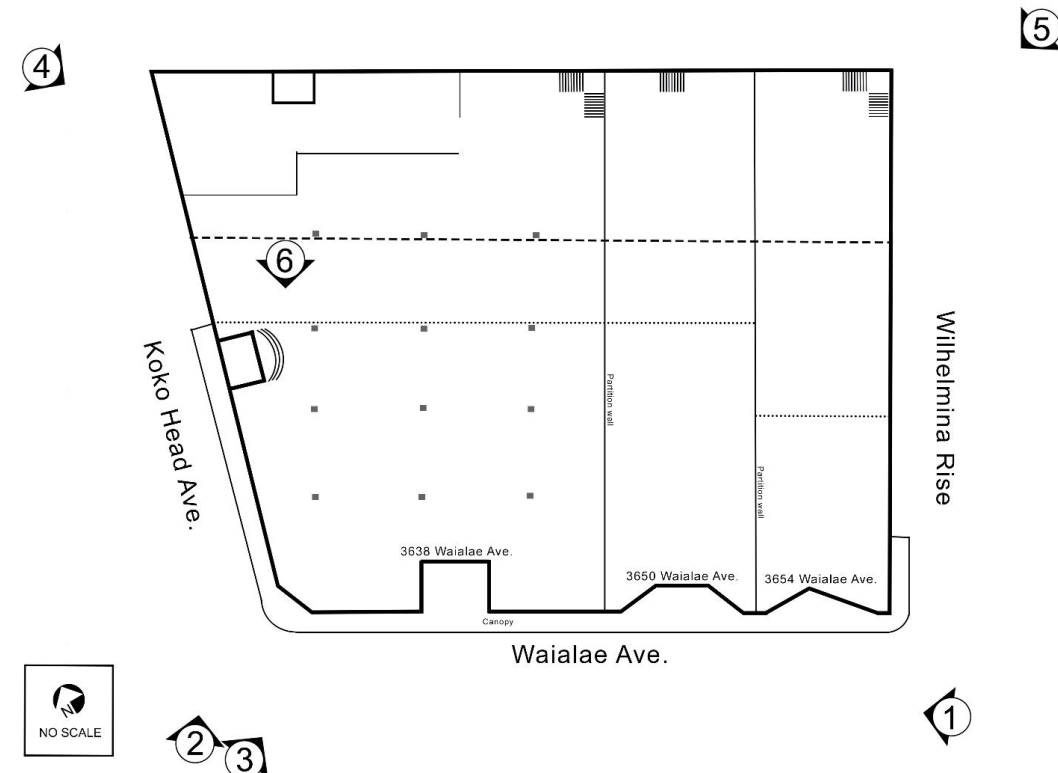
Contractor: Ben Hayashi, Ltd., (Honolulu)

Original Owner/Use: National Dollar Stores, Ltd./ Retail spaces

Present Owner/Use: 3650 Waialae, LLC/ Retail/Office



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SIGNIFICANCE

The National Dollar Store Building is significant for its association with the expansion of the Kaimuki business and retail district in the post-World War II period. The increased availability of automobiles in this era spurred development of the Kaimuki area along Waialae Avenue into a thriving business and retail district after the austere years of World War II. The building features a wide expanse of storefront glazing that was in line with a national design trend to present a more modern storefront. This detail was notable in Hawaii at the time of its construction.

HISTORY

The National Dollar Store building in Kaimuki opened on November 30, 1949, with a retail outlet in the suite at 3638 Waialae Avenue. It was the second store of the national chain in Hawaii. The first opened the prior year at Fort and King Streets in downtown Honolulu. When the first store was opening, plans were already in the works for the second location on Waialae Avenue in Kaimuki.¹

The National Dollar Store Ltd. purchased the Waialae Avenue parcel from the Ah Joe Lee family of Honolulu in October of 1947.² Honolulu architect Guy N. Rothwell was retained to design the building, and by May of 1949 his office had prepared plans. National Dollar Store Ltd.'s consulting architect, Lloyd Gartner of San Francisco, contributed to Rothwell's design. The successful bid of \$279,400 to construct the building was made by general contractor Ben Hayashi, Ltd. of Honolulu. The contract for the building's air conditioning system was awarded to the Von Hamm-Young Co. of Honolulu for their bid of \$27,490. Construction got underway in late May or early June of 1949. National Dollar Store, Ltd. planned to open the building in time for the Christmas 1949 shopping season.³

National Dollar Store Ltd. was begun as a single dry-goods store in Vallejo, CA in 1903 by Joseph Shoong. Its success allowed the Shoong family to expand the business with subsequent stores on the west coast. The business was incorporated in San Francisco in 1921. In 1949, the Kaimuki store was the fiftieth in its chain of stores, which were known for a selection of inexpensive clothing and household accessories.⁴

The National Dollar Store Building was noted for the large expanse of glazing along its storefronts, extending along the entire Waialae

Avenue and wrapping around most of the Koko Head Avenue facade. The extensive glazing on such a large building in Honolulu was touted as an innovative design for a retail store of the period, allowing shoppers visual access to the interior of the store and providing for a multitude of window displays. This design followed a national trend toward using more glass on storefronts, which presented a modern, attractive merchandising strategy aimed at luring shoppers inside to buy.⁵

KAIMUKI

Commercial and residential development of Kaimuki began about 1898 when the area was subdivided and wells were drilled. The sale of parcels was slow until residents and merchants of Chinatown were displaced by the devastating fire of 1900. They built homes in the area and started businesses along the main thoroughfare of Waialae Avenue. Paved streets and sidewalks in 1925 attracted more people to the area. After the economically lean years of World War II, post-war commercial expansion and the increased availability of private automobiles resulted in a thriving retail district in Kaimuki. During this time, the retail space provided by the National Dollar Store Building was an important component of the Kaimuki neighborhood.⁶

This business heyday was relatively short-lived. The 1955 construction of nearby Waialae Shopping Center (now known as Kahala Mall) siphoned off shoppers from Kaimuki businesses. The construction of the H1 Freeway in the 1960s diverted automobile traffic, bypassing the retail area, eventually leading to an economic downturn. Although growth has been stifled for decades, the Waialae Avenue business district survives as an area of small specialty shops and restaurants that draw patrons from a wider pool than just Kaimuki residents.⁷

1 "New National Dollar Store Opens Today," Honolulu Advertiser. September 23, 1948. P. 10.

2 City and County of Honolulu, Real Property Assessment Division. Field books and notes for TMK [1] 3-3-008: 011.

3 "National Dollar Builds New Store in Kaimuki," Honolulu Advertiser. May 26, 1949. P. 27. "National Dollar Opens Kaimuki Store Today," Honolulu Advertiser. November 30, 1949. P. 14.

4 David Armstrong, "National Dollar's final discount," San Francisco Examiner. February 15, 1996. P. B1. "National Dollar Builds New Store in Kaimuki," Honolulu Advertiser. May 26, 1949. P. 27. "Dollar Store Is Due To Be Finished Nov. 1," Honolulu Advertiser. September 28, 1949. P. 9.

5 Pittsburgh Plate Glass Co. (PPG). How to Give Your Store the Look That Sells. (Pittsburgh: PPG). 1951. 3. "Dollar Store is Due to be Finished Nov. 1," Honolulu Advertiser. September 28, 1949. 9. "National Dollar Opens Kaimuki Store Today," Honolulu Advertiser. November 30, 1949. 14. "New McInerney Store Opens Today in Kaimuki," Honolulu Advertiser. August 5, 1953. 7.

6 John Takasaki, "Kaimuki," Hawaiian Journal of History, Vol. 10. 1976. 69-73.

7 John Griffin. "Kaimuki, It seems a lot like Hilo," Honolulu Advertiser. October 9, 1994. B3.











