

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

21051005  
+ 21051005

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Mother Waldron Playground  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number Coral, Halekauwila, Pohukaina Streets and Lana Lane  not for publication  
city, town Honolulu Lana Lane  vicinity  
state Hawaii code HI county Honolulu code 003 zip code 96813

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property <input type="checkbox"/> private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local <input type="checkbox"/> public-State <input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	Category of Property <input type="checkbox"/> building(s) <input type="checkbox"/> district <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site <input type="checkbox"/> structure <input type="checkbox"/> object	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
		<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
		<u>1</u>	_____ sites
		_____	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects		
_____	<u>1</u> Total		

Name of related multiple property listing:  
City & County of Honolulu Art Deco Parks; Playgrounds Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
Recreation

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
Recreation

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement

Art deco

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation NA

walls NA

roof NA

other NA

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Mother Waldron Park is a 1.76 acre parcel bounded by Coral, Halekauwila and Pohukaina Streets and Lana Lane. It is located in the heart of Kakaako, an area of mixed light industrial and residential use.

It features a painted brick perimeter wall, approximately 3' high, which zig-zags down Coral Street. Circular piers articulate the four convex corner entries and the mid-block entries from each of the three streets. The brick wall on the Lana Lane side is approximately six feet high. Brick curbing and paving is used to further embellish the corner entries and delineates the sidewalk from the parking on the Coral Street side.

Each of the angles of the zig-zag wall which project into the playground area are built with rounded pier ends, presumably to protect children who might run into them. The zig-zag design allows for the planting of Royal Poinciana trees along the perimeter of the park to shade the benches built on the interior side of the wall. The benches within the angles of the Coral Street wall are curved, while benches on the other three sides of the park and in the middle are straight. All the benches are capped with red Padre tile.

The focal point of the playground is the comfort station pavilion, which stands in the middle of the park on the Diamond Head side. This is a single story brick structure with rounded corners and entries. Covered, curving pergolas supported by brick columns extend from the comfort station. A small, open stage area was made by incorporating a two-step semi-circular platform in the middle of the pavilion with a recessed niche in the wall of the comfort station. A flat roof covers this entire structure, and sandstone paving surrounds it.

The playground layout is symmetrical, with the axis of the pavilion and Coral Street entry dividing the park in two. This mid-point is further heightened by the presence of a lawn space. The playground was divided into one section for the younger children and another for the older. Both sides had volleyball, basketball and shuffleboard courts. But the younger children have see-saws and swings and the older handball courts.

The Department of Parks and Recreation renovated the pavilion in 1968 and resurfaced the site in 1978. Otherwise it remains unaltered and has had no additions.

See continuation sheet

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties.

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)  
recreation  
architecture

Period of Significance  
1937

Significant Dates  
1937

Cultural Affiliation

Significant Person  
"Mother" Margaret Waldron

Architect/Builder  
Harry Sims Bent

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Mother Waldron Park is significant for its associations with the playground movement as discussed under the context section of the multiple property documentation form. Similarly its architectural significance is covered in that form. It is also significant for its associations with the earlier work of Margaret Waldron in the Kakaako district.

In 1930 and 1931 the City and County of Honolulu acquired the property on which Mother Waldron Playground is situated. In 1936, the Park Board approved and implemented Harry Sims Bent's design for the park. The playground was constructed using F.E.R.A. labor and was opened to the public in September 1937.

Mother Waldron Playground was named to honor Mrs. Margaret Waldron (1873-1936), who was a public school teacher and playground director. She was of Irish-American, Hawaiian ancestry and taught fourth-grade at Pohukaina School, and was director of the playground at Atkinson Park from its opening in 1916 to 1931. Atkinson Playground was located between Coral, Keawe, Foundry and First Streets, only a few blocks away from the location of the present Mother Waldron Playground. Known for her interest in the poor, Mrs. Waldron earned a reputation for "civilizing" the youth gangs in the Kakaako area through her playground work. In 1930 city officials attempted to change the name of Atkinson Playground to Mother Waldron Playground. Such an honor broke with the municipal policy against commemorating living persons in such a manner. Mrs. Waldron refused to have her name given to the playground, and thus instead, her name was bestowed upon the Bent designed playground a year after her death.

City and County officials erected Mother Waldron Playground as a model project, and the playground was identified as, "an ideal example of the small neighborhood playground," by child welfare specialists and teachers. Lewis Mumford drew special attention to "the spirit called forth in the Mother Waldron Playground," and suggested that this model playground's combination of function and form ought to be "infused into all the city's other playground activities." Almost 60,000 people used the playground during daylight hours in 1941, and an additional 26,000 utilized its facilities for evening sports and gatherings.

Mother Waldron is perhaps the best of Bent's playground designs and a fine example of his art deco-moderne styling. In it aesthetics and practical considerations are integrated into a design that remains appealing and useful.

See continuing sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Robert R. Weyeneth and Ann Yoklavich

"1930's Parks and Playgrounds in Honolulu:  
An Historical & Architectural Assessment" (Honolulu: 1987)

Lewis Mumford. "Whither Honolulu" (Honolulu, 1938)

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic-preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Geographical Data

Acres of property 1.76

UTM References

A	Zone	Easting	Northing
C			

B	Zone	Easting	Northing
D			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

This nomination includes all the property owned by the City & County of Honolulu in 1988 as described by Tax Map Key 2-1-51: 5

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

This is the historic boundary of the playground.

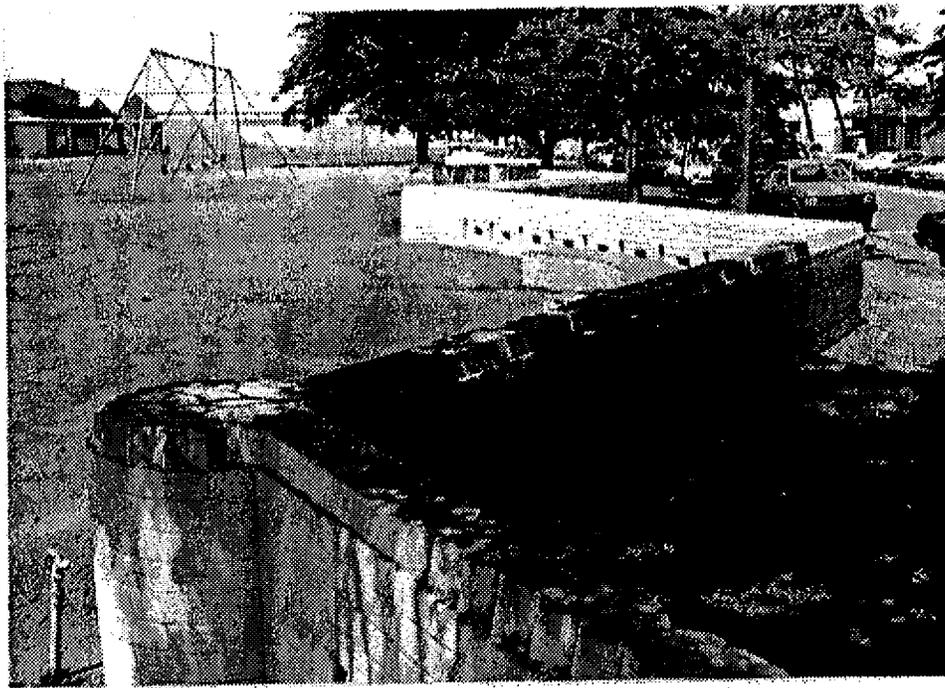
See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

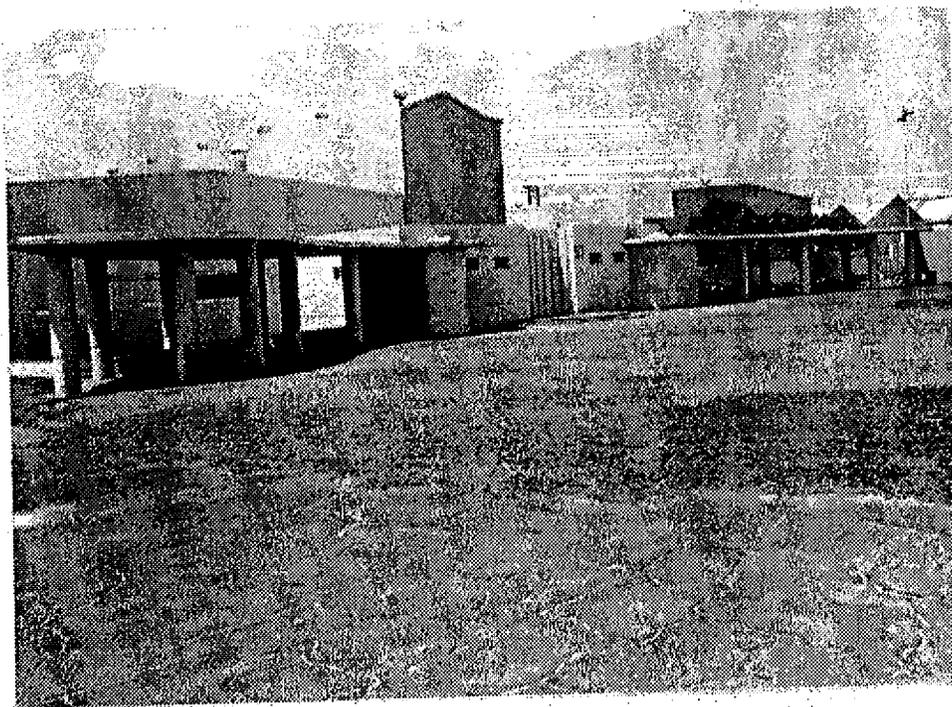
name/title Don Hibbard Director  
 organization State Historic Preservation Program date 4/20/88  
 street & number 1151 Punchbowl Street, Room 310 telephone 548-6408  
 city or town Honolulu state HI zip code 96813







**Mother Waldron Playground - Wall**



**Mother Waldron Playground - Pavilion**

21015006  
+ 21015002

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

file with Mother Waldron

# National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

Park

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

### A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

City & County of Honolulu Art Deco Parks and Playgrounds

### B. Associated Historic Contexts

City & County of Honolulu Art Deco Parks and Playgrounds of the 1930s

### C. Geographical Data

The island of Oahu.

See continuation sheet

### D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

## E. Statement of Historic Contexts

Discuss each historic context listed in Section B.

The context of "City and County of Honolulu Art Deco Parks and Playgrounds of the 1930s" relates to the themes of recreation and architecture and includes all the parks and playgrounds designed by Harry Sims Bent in the 1930s in Honolulu, which retain their integrity. There are five such properties included in this nomination: Ala Moana Park, Haleiwa Beach Park, Mother Waldron Playground, Kawananakoa Playground, and the Ala Wai Clubhouse.

At the national level, a well organized and influential playground movement in America sprang from the Progressive fervor of the opening decade of the twentieth century. Behind it lay a genuine humanitarian concern for the welfare of children and young adults living in urban poverty, as well as a frankly meddlesome interest in reforming the poor and assimilating recent immigrants.

Initially private groups, rather than public agencies, undertook efforts to build playgrounds in American cities. Some of the first privately operated playgrounds open to the public were established in Boston in the 1880s, but most cities witnessed a burst of private initiative in the following decade. A major objective of private playground organizers was to convince city officials that public recreation ought to be a municipal responsibility. As a result by the opening decade of the twentieth century most large American cities had established playgrounds owned and operated by municipal governments.

Shifting from an initial desire to get children off the streets, the playground movement evolved in the first two decades of the twentieth century into a well-organized and articulate national crusade. Its proponents saw the playground not only as a refuge from urban perils, but also as a place of social reform. They believed play had educational value, and emphasized that it should be organized and supervised by the director of the playground.

The social mission of playgrounds was emphasized in playground literature across the nation and in Honolulu. In Hawaii, as elsewhere, the goal of playground activities not only included vigorous physical exercise and mental satisfaction, but also the ability to work as a team member and to develop "a disposition to strive for high ideals." It was felt that playgrounds developed such virtues as: health, physical efficiency, morality, initiative, self-confidence, imagination, obedience, a sense of justice, happiness and good citizenship. At the same time they discouraged such undesirable traits as: idleness, temptation, exclusiveness, social barriers, selfishness, gang spirit, rowdyism, unfairness, and delinquency.

Initially administration of municipal playgrounds was delegated to existing agencies such as park boards or school boards. However, many cities eventually established special playground commissions, which often led to jurisdictional problems. By the 1930s and 1940s cities began to consolidate separate parks and playground agencies into a single "recreation" department.

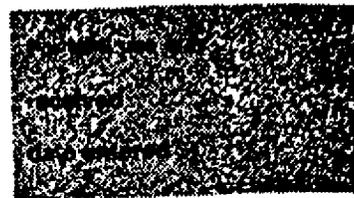
See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

City &amp; County of Honolulu Art Deco

Continuation sheet Parks &amp; Playgrounds Item number E.1

Page 1



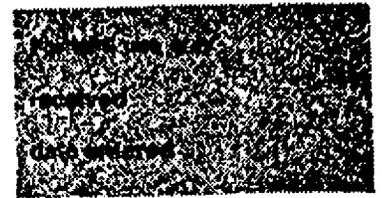
The Honolulu experience with public playgrounds and parks followed the national pattern. The most active early proponent of playgrounds in Hawaii was the Free Kindergarten and Children's Aid Association, which established the first public playground in the city in 1911 at the corner of Beretania and Smith streets in the heart of Chinatown. This playground prospered, its builders maintained, when they hired a "well-educated" and "energetic" young lady "who understood perfectly what a playground stood for."

Largely through the association's efforts, a Recreation Commission was established within the city government in 1922, following the recommendations of Henry Stoddard Curtis, a former secretary of the nationwide Playground Association and the author of Education Through Play, who lectured in Hawaii in 1920. Julie Judd Swanzy, the president of the Free Kindergarten and Children's Aid Association, was named as the Commission's chair. The association turned its four playgrounds (Beretania, Kamamalu, Atkinson, and Aala) over to the city, and promptly opened five new municipal playgrounds: Kaimuki, Dole Park, Kalihi-Kai, Kauluwela, and Kalihi-Waena. By 1936 the Recreation Commission supervised forty playgrounds and social centers in Honolulu.

The emphasis on the social benefits of play for young people had important implications for the physical design of this type of urban park. The playground of the early twentieth century represented a significant departure from nineteenth century conceptions of a park. Rather than a carefully laid out landscape, planned as the antithesis of the cityscape and with the expectation that contemplation of natural scenery would have a tranquilizing effect on its city-weary visitors, the twentieth century playground was usually of modest size and was conceived as a utilitarian space, sometime embellished with landscaping effects or architectural detail, but frequently not. The playground was a setting for supervised play and not contact with nature. As a consequence playgrounds tended to resemble the city block from which they had been carved, rather than verdant nature. The idea of the playground was to provide usable play space close to home in the densely populated sections of the city, not a green oasis set apart from the city.

During the 1930s, the City and County of Honolulu created a stunning set of parks and playgrounds. It was at this time that the concept of organized play in Hawaii found its most architecturally significant expression. Federal assistance was made available to the city park system after 1933, through the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and, briefly, the short-lived Civil Works Administration (CWA). Providing manpower for the most part, rather

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet Parks & Playgrounds City & County of Honolulu Art Deco  
Item number E. 2 Page 2

than funding, these two New Deal agencies permitted local officials to embark on a major parks construction program. Subsequently, two other federal agencies, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the National Youth Administration (NYA) made it possible for the city government to deploy an army of playground directors to staff the new playgrounds.

Honolulu was in a good position to take advantage of these federal programs as it had recently reorganized the administration of its parks and playgrounds, by centralizing them under the Honolulu Park Board in 1931. Charles Lester McCoy, who was chairman of the Honolulu Park Board from 1931 to 1941, is remembered today as the "virtual founder of Honolulu's modern park system." His personal commitment to parks, combined with his administrative ability to get things done despite the scant resources of the time, profoundly shaped the growth of the city park system at this time.

One of McCoy's most far-reaching decisions was to employ Harry Sims Bent as park architect in 1933. It is Bent's work that gives the 1930s parks their architectural distinctiveness. Bent came to Honolulu to supervise the construction of the Honolulu Academy of Arts for the New York firm of Bertram Goodhue and Associates. He was also involved in the design or construction of the C. Brewer Building, and the residences of former Governor Carter and Clarence Cooke. All these properties are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Bent was one of a group of architects who throughout the 1930s advocated the development of a regional form of architecture appropriate for Hawaii. In addition to the above mentioned buildings, other major buildings designed by Bent include: the Douglas Cooke residence, the Hanalei School and the Pineapple Research Institute at the University of Hawaii.

The presence of both angular "zig-zags" and curvilinear shapes in Bent's park work reflect the influence of the art deco and moderne design. Lewis Mumford noted that Bent's designs kept with the spirit of these styles as his parks made no "attempt to reproduce archaic patterns or draw upon foreign historic sources." The parks primarily reflected national trends in architecture; however, the use of such local materials as coral, sandstone and "boulder concrete", and the embellishment of some of the parks with locally inspired art provided some sense of the regional context of Hawaii.

The use of "boulder concrete" is of special note. This material is a form of concrete extended through liberal use of coral and lava rock filler. Its use was predicated by the limited funds available for park construction during the 1930s. The frequent repeating forms in the "boulder concrete" method of construction also permitted employment of unskilled depression relief labor.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

City & County of Honolulu Art Deco  
Parks & Playgrounds Item number E.3

Continuation sheet

Page 3

Bent started to work for the Honolulu Park Board on the Ala Moana Park project in 1933. His work at Ala Moana included the canal bridge, entrance portals, sports pavilion, the banyan courtyard, and lawn bowling green. In the smaller parks Bent was often responsible for the overall layout as well as the structures, including walls, comfort stations and pergolas. During the 1930s he designed the following parks for the City and County of Honolulu: Mother Waldron Playground, Kawananakoa Playground, Lanakila Park comfort station, Kalihi-Waena Playground, Haleiwa Beach Park structures, the Ala Wai Clubhouse and the Park Service Center by Kapiolani Park. Of these parks, Ala Moana, Mother Waldron, Kawananakoa, Haleiwa and the Ala Wai Clubhouse are the only ones to retain sufficient integrity to warrant nomination.

Despite the limitations imposed by the Depression, Bent's designs achieved a definite richness and variety. He used the repetitive patterns with great imagination. The simple smooth concrete surfaces, typically flat roof lines and open pergolas of Bent's work recall Mediterranean architecture, which was often cited at the time as an appropriate prototype for Hawaiian buildings.

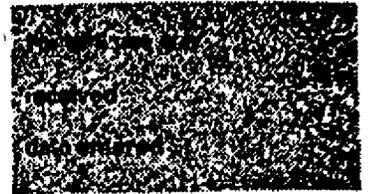
Lewis Mumford found Bent's work to have a, "handsome, clear-cut character" that was "in harmony with regional needs." He likened Bent's park work to Robert Moses' efforts in New York during the 1930s (prior to Moses' more massive, autocratic designs). He considered Bent's designs to be "brilliant," and went on to note:

Too often playgrounds are regarded by municipal authorities as permanent waste-spaces -- or unoccupied lots -- set aside for play. That the very spirit of play is enhanced by taking place in a setting that shows order and vision often does not occur to the municipal departments concerned; hence, ugly chicken-wire fences, clay or bare asphalt surfaces, and a complete innocence of all aesthetic device. Honolulu has made a valuable departure from this stale tradition by providing, in some of its new playgrounds, structures that have none of this tawdry makeshift quality; they are rather examples of building art worthy to have a place beside the open-air gymnasiums or palestra of the Greeks. The handsome bounding wall, the judicious planting of shade trees, the retention of grass wherever possible, translate the spirit of organized play to the area itself.

While influenced by national and regional design of the period, Bent's designs remain unique. Although following the spirit and forms of the art deco and moderne styles, his level of ornamentation lies between the two styles, never reaching the exuberance of art deco or the severity of moderne. He strikes a balance, incorporating playfulness into sturdy, utilitarian structures. His park designs are typical of the period and represent the work of a master and possess high artistic value.

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Associated Property Types



Continuation sheet

Description

Item number

F. II

Page 1

The City and County of Honolulu Art Deco Parks and Playgrounds are relatively flat, open, landscaped areas defined by a few major trees, and modest structures. They are all rendered in an art deco style and usually have a wall encircling them. The structures are of masonry construction employing a variety of materials, including: brick, concrete, coral, sandstone lava rock and "boulder concrete".

The parks and playgrounds vary in size from Ala Moana Park's 76 acres to Mother Waldron's 1.76 acres. They serve a variety of functions. Mother Waldron and Kawanakoa are urban playgrounds; Haleiwa and Ala Moana, beach parks; and the Ala Wai Clubhouse was constructed to serve people involved in outrigger canoeing. All stand within their environments as distinct entities unto themselves and their boundaries are readily identifiable by the walls that encircle their peripheries.

Still actively in use, these parks and playgrounds are readily associated with the development of parks and playgrounds in Honolulu for the period of the 1930s, the result of their art deco design. Mother Waldron and Kawanakoa Playgrounds are also associated with the ideology of the playground movement through their locations and utilitarian designs. Although a number of playgrounds were developed in Honolulu between 1911 and 1938, these are the only two to retain their historic integrity.

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**F. Associated Property Types**

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I. Name of Property Type Art deco parks and playgrounds

II. Description

(See continuation sheet F II)

III. Significance

These parks and playgrounds are significant for their associations with the development of parks and playgrounds in Honolulu during the 1930s. They are also architecturally significant as their design is typical of the period and they reflect the work of Harry Sims Bent, one of the more prominent architects practicing in Honolulu at this time. See the context for additional information.

IV. Registration Requirements

In order to be considered for inclusion in this nomination the parks and playgrounds had to retain their original design in terms of their overall major structural elements and boundaries. However, plantings and landscaping might have been changed over the course of time, as well as recreational equipment and playing fields within the park or playground. Also individual structures might have been somewhat modified, so long as the modification was not to such a degree as to compromise the historic character of the overall park design.

See continuation sheet

See continuation sheet for additional property types

### G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

A survey of the City and County of Honolulu's Art Deco Parks and Playgrounds was undertaken by the City and County of Honolulu's Department of Parks and Recreation with the support of a historic preservation grants-in-aid, administered by the State Historic Preservation Office. These art deco parks and playgrounds are a highly visible component of Honolulu's cityscape. They have stood out for a number of years as distinct products of their period, and easily lent itself to such a thematic study. The property type to be examined was based both on its function as a county park and on its art deco style.

The possibility of doing a study of all city and county parks was examined, but insufficient moneys existed to allow such a study to be undertaken. It was decided to do the 1930s parks as they were such a highly visible entity and comprised the bulk of the historic parks under the City and County's jurisdiction.

The City and County of Honolulu hired Robert Weyeneth and Ann Yoklavich to undertake the survey. The survey consisted of investigation of archival records, including those of the Honolulu Parks Board. From these investigations all the parks of the period were identified and histories prepared. In addition all the properties were visited and assessed in terms of their integrity and significance, which were based on the National Register standards. Of the eight parks identified, five were found to have sufficient integrity for inclusion in this nomination.  See continuation sheet

### H. Major Bibliographical References

Weyeneth, Robert and Yoklavich, Ann K.

"1930's Parks And Playgrounds in Honolulu: An Historical & Architectural Assessment," (Honolulu: 1987)

Weyeneth, Robert, "Ala Moana: the People's Park" (Honolulu: 1987)

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- State historic preservation office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency

- Local government  
 University  
 Other

Specify repository: State Historic Preservation Office

### I. Form Prepared By

name/title Don Hibbard Program Director  
organization Department of Land & Natural Resources date April 20, 1988  
street & number 1151 Punchbowl Street telephone 548-7460  
city or town Honolulu state Hawaii zip code 96813