

Female Seminaries

Back in the beginning of the 19th-century, it was believed that women should be educated to understand domestic economy, because they were to play the major role in educating the young, primarily in their homes, and later as school teachers (as the school population grew and there was a shortage of teachers).

Gender segregated schools were established. The seminary's primary task was professional preparation: the male seminary prepared men for the ministry; the female seminary took as its earnest job the training of women for teaching and motherhood. (Horowitz, Beyer)

Although schools for upper-class women were in existence prior to the 19th-century, the female seminary for middle-class women became the prevailing type of institution from 1820 until after the Civil War.

The most prominent female seminaries on the continent were Troy Seminary (1821,) Hartford Seminary (1823,) Ipswich Seminary (1828,) Mount Holyoke Seminary (1837) and Oxford Seminary (1839.)

Western-style education did not begin in Hawai'i until after American Protestant missionaries of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) arrived in 1820.

Hawaiian female seminaries grew out of the evolution of education of middle class white women in the US. Because the primary educators responsible for developing the education system of Hawai'i were Americans, the educational practices for Hawaiian girls tended to mirror, but not necessarily duplicate, what was taking place on the continent. (Beyer)

It was believed that women would have to be educated to understand domestic economy because they were to play the major role in educating the young, primarily in their homes, and later as the school population rose and there was a shortage of teachers, as school teachers. "(T)he ultimate goal of all education was the attainment of fine ethical character. This ethical character was deemed the directing force in life, the basis of citizenship and of all activity."

"This focus led to the growth of female schools based upon the 'cult of true womanhood.' By the middle of the 19th century, due to the industrial revolution, the 'true' woman was a middle-class woman, bound to the home in the service of family, the state, and the church. The 'cult of true womanhood' consisted of four related ideas.

First, there was a sharp distinction between home and the economic world that paralleled a perceived distinction between male and female nature. Second, the home was designated as the female's only sphere of influence. Third, women were considered morally superior to men. And finally, the role of the mother was idealized in terms of her attention to and sacrifice for husband and children. (From Beyer)

The founders of the female seminaries were at first men who were committed to providing education for women, but as time went by, more of the founders were women. The financial backing for these seminaries were typically from private sources and the tuition charged the students. Enrollment varied between 50 to 100 students.

The early seminaries preferred girls between the ages of 12 and 16; the instruction at these schools tended to be learning by doing in connection with practical arts of the household. Due to the lack of substantial financial support, many of these schools used a Lancastrian or monitorial system, whereby the more advanced students acted as monitors to supplement the scarcity of teachers.

The aims of these early seminaries were to prepare for life. The elements in this life preparation that were stressed included the following: Christian religion and morals, domestic training, maternal influence and social usefulness, training for the teaching profession, physical health, intellectual enjoyment, and mental discipline.

The American Protestant missionary societies both sponsored and supported female seminaries for these qualities; their missions required educated women to help their husbands evangelize the natives within their mission field.

The men of the mission to Hawai'i were prepared for the work by education, work experience, and the sense of a calling. Their backgrounds were usually rural, and often farming had been the family livelihood. They were from the middle class. Their education had been preceded by engagement in various kinds of work: the employment with charitable or religious concerns; and traveling the northeast with tracts, Bibles, and the missionary message, or the call to revival.

The women of the mission were quick, efficient, and multi-talented. Also from rural, middle-class backgrounds, they were adaptable in terms of skills, worked to fund their own education, and were not accustomed to leisure or easy living. Most had secured their education at intervals, while supporting themselves by teaching, by farm labor, or skilled trade. When the daughters of these missionaries or new recruits from the US took over the education of Hawaiian females during the last 40 years of the 19th century, many more were trained in the female seminaries of the US.

In the Islands, the first female seminary students were adult Hawaiian women. Patricia Grimshaw states: "... that (s)oon after their arrival in Hawai'i in 1820, and over the next three decades, New England missionary women embarked on an ambitious plan to transform Hawaiian girls and women to notions of femininity upheld by their culture."

Hawaiian Female Seminaries

"The plan and design of the Female Seminary is to take a class of young females into a boarding school—away in a measure from the contaminating influence of heathen society, to train them to habits of industry, neatness, and order ..."

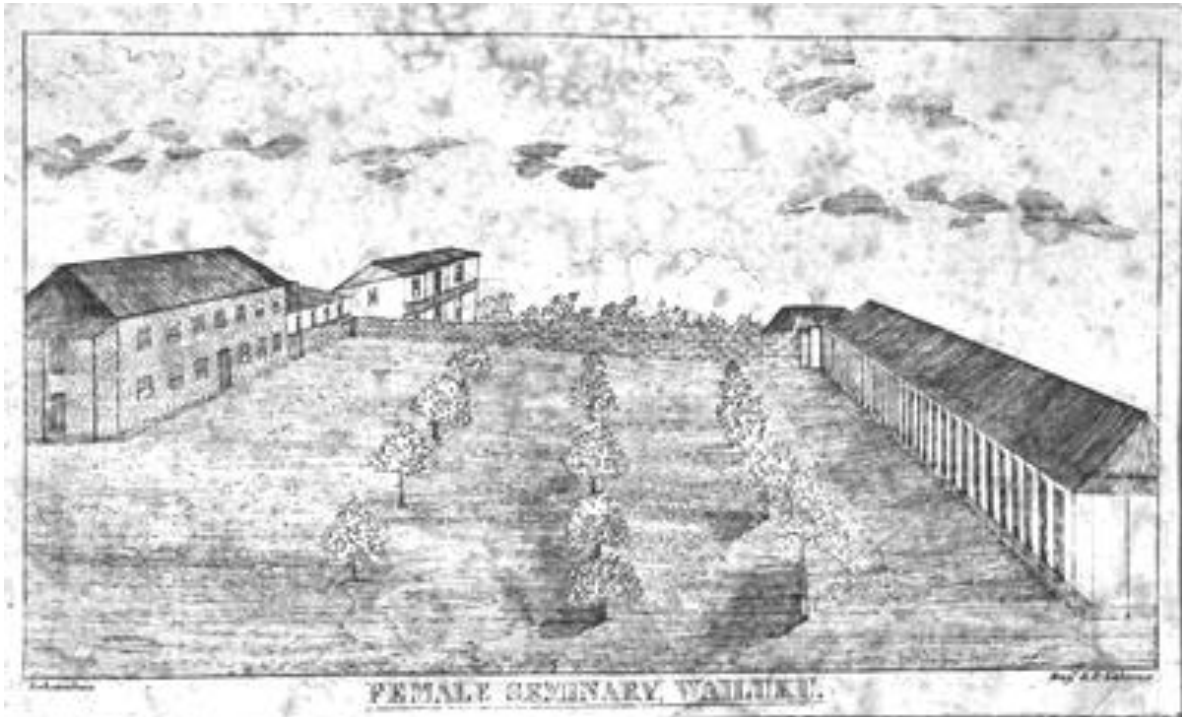
"... to instruct them in employments suited to their sex, to cultivate the minds, to improve their manners and to instill the principles of our holy religion - to fit them to be suitable companions for the scholars of the Mission Seminary and examples of propriety among the females of the Sandwich Islands." (Dibble)

In 1835, at the general meeting of the Mission, a resolution was passed to promote boarding schools for Hawaiians; several male boarding schools and two female boarding schools were begun (Wailuku Female Seminary on the island of Maui and the Hilo Girls Boarding School on the island of Hawai'i.)

Wailuku Female Seminary

Wailuku Female Seminary (or the Central Female Seminary, as it was first called) was the first female school begun by the missionaries. It received support at a time when the missionaries were experimenting with both boarding schools and a manual labor system.

In 1837 the missionaries opened the Wailuku Female Seminary to educate girls to be “good Christian wives” for the graduates of Lahainaluna a school for boys at Lahaina. A boarding school, they thought, would have a deeper influence than day classes.



The opening of the school raised some concern by the Wailuku missionaries: “It will be remembered that our station is really on West Maui, and now may be considered as having only one man to attend to the appropriate missionary work of the station.”

“The Seminary about to go into operation is for the benefit of the islands generally & will occupy the whole time of its teacher. So that E Maui with a population of some 20,000 has really no missionary”. (Wailuku Station Report, 1837)

Rev. Jonathan Green, his wife Theodosia and Miss Maria Ogden were the first teachers, followed by Edward Bailey and his wife Caroline. Green noted, “the object of our Seminary is to impart to the pupils, and through them to the entire population of Hawaii, a thorough going Christian education.”

As to their studies, “They have attended to Reading, Writing, Mental and Written Arithmetic, Geography Sacred and Civil, Exhibition of Popery, Gallaudet’s Book on the Soul, and Natural Theology.” (General Meeting Minutes, 1841) By 1849, however, the Mission Board was unable to raise money, and the Wailuku Female Seminary was closed after its 12th year. (MHS)

Hilo Girls' Boarding School

Fidelia Coan, the wife of Reverend Titus Coan, began Hilo Girls' Boarding School in 1838. She had been before her marriage a teacher at Middlebury Female Seminary in Vermont. The Hilo school was opened for 20 girls from seven to 10 years old. Hilo residents helped erect and furnish the school building, and arranged to supply food for the pupils.

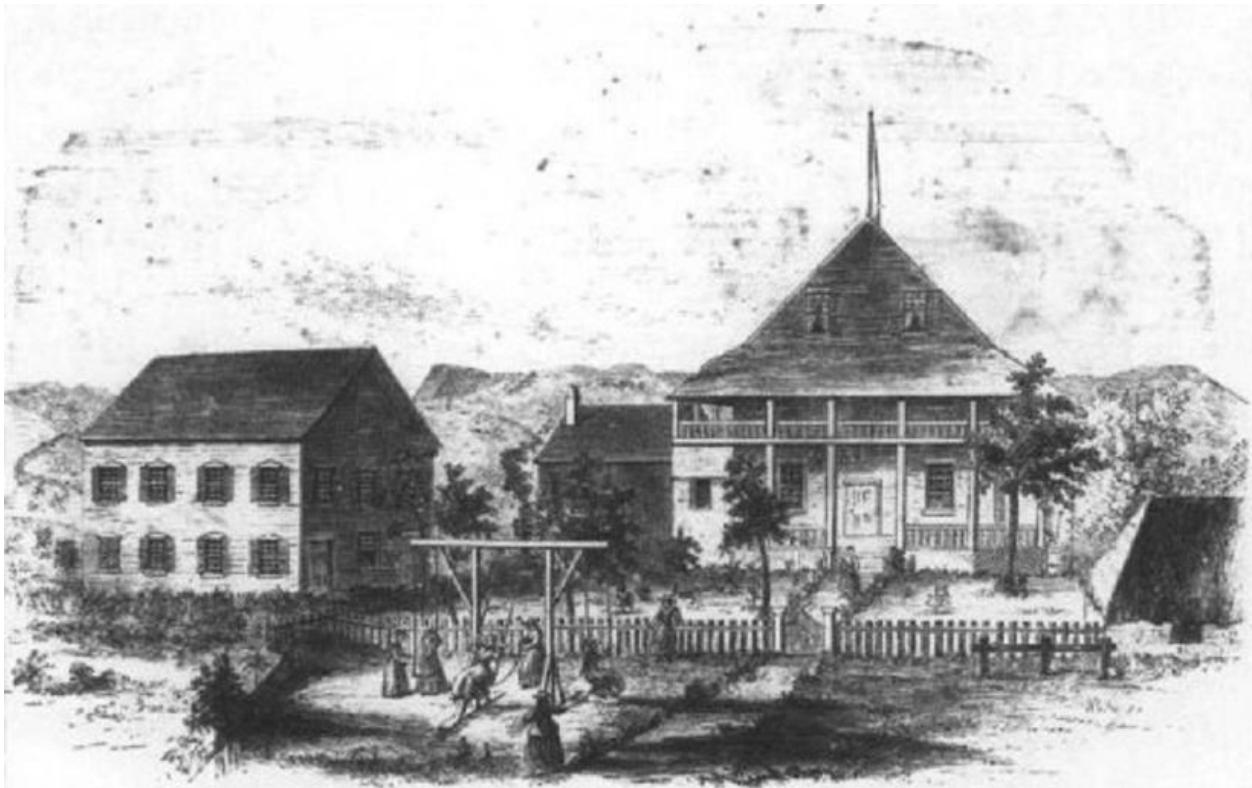
Since the school only lasted for eight years, it never was able to satisfy its objective of providing wives for the boys of Hilo Boarding School. Nevertheless, the girls who were trained at the school did distinguish themselves "for neatness, skill, industry and piety." Fidelia Coan states her curriculum was "rudiments of necessary book knowledge, and of singing, sewing, washing and ironing, gardening, and other things." Ultimately, the school closed due to Mrs. Coan's failing health. (Beyer)

Makiki Family School

On January 16, 1860, the Privy Council authorized the chartering of the Makiki Family School. In family schools, young girls lived in the homes of the instructors; the instruction included both academics and domestic craft. The latter was usually accomplished through the teachers modeling civilized behavior and the management of the home. The closing of Wailuku School had freed Miss Maria Odgen, and she was called upon to establish this school. It later closed, with the formation of Kawaiaha'o Seminary.

Waialua Female Seminary

In 1862, Orramel Hinckley Gulick and his wife, Ann Eliza Clark Gulick (a graduate of Mount Holyoke Seminary,) began the Ka'ū Seminary on the Island of Hawai'i. Both were the children of missionaries (Peter Johnson Gulick and Fanny Hinckley Thomas Gulick; Ephraim Weston Clark and Mary Kittredge Clark.)



Due to the isolated location of the seminary, it was difficult to attract many students to the school. As a consequence, tuition and board were free, as long as the girls were placed under the parental care of the teachers of the school until the girls were married or obtained employment.

In 1865, after struggling to fill the school, it was decided to move the school to Waialua, O'ahu, on the Anahulu Stream. It opened there on August 7 with 50-students, ranging in age from 11 to 15. As with other schools at the time, the students were instructed in the Hawaiian language.

In December of 1870, the school closed when the Mission sent the Gulicks to evangelize in Japan. Waialua Female Seminary reopened on April 3, 1871, under the direction of Miss Mary E Green (another missionary descendent and graduate of Punahou and Mount Holyoke Seminary.) Miss Green ran the school until 1882; the property was sold and the money was given to the trustees of Kawaiaha'o Seminary in Honolulu to make further improvements there.

Kawaiaha'o Female Seminary

"Honolulu Female Academy (is) another of the schools provided by Christian benevolence for the benefit of the children of this highly favored land. This institution will, it is hoped, supply a felt need for a home for girls, in the town of Honolulu, yet not too near its center of business." (Pacific Commercial Advertiser, April 13, 1867)

"The inception of this school emanated from Mrs Halsey Gulick. In 1863, when living in the old mission premises on the mauka side of King street, she took several Hawaiian girls into her family to be brought up with her own children ... The mother love was strong in that little group as some of us remember." (Hawaiian Gazette, March 23, 1897) "It might be claimed that the real beginning was when Rev. Dr. Gulick and wife first occupied the Clark house, and on March 6, 1865, opened a family school for girls." (The Friend, April 1, 1923)

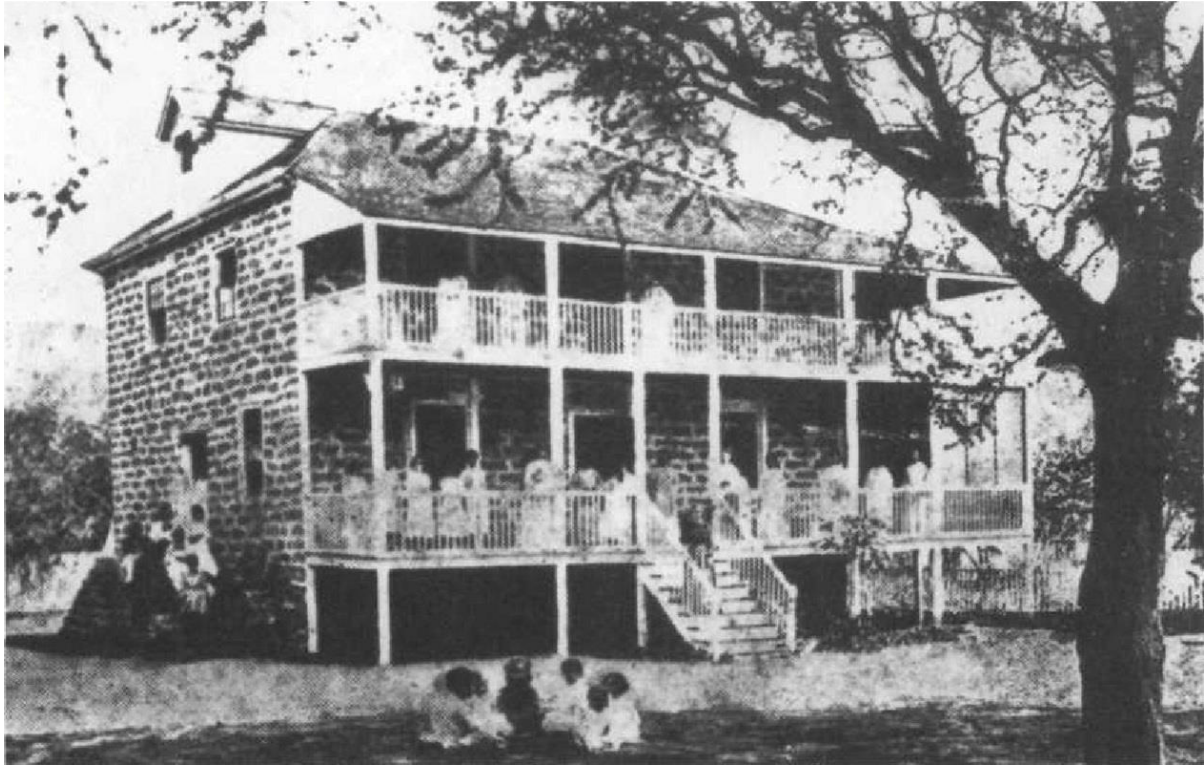
In 1867, the Hawaiian Mission Children's Society (HMCS - an organization consisting of the children of the missionaries and adopted supporters) decided to support a girls' boarding school. An early advertisement (April 13, 1867) notes it was called Honolulu Female Academy.

Miss Lydia Bingham (daughter of Reverend Hiram Bingham, leader of the Pioneer Company of missionaries to Hawai'i) was invited to return to Honolulu to be a teacher in this family school; she was then principal of the Ohio Female College, at College Hill, Ohio.

"Her love for the land of her birth and interest for the children of the people to whom her father and mother had given their early lives, led her to accept the position, and in March, 1867, she arrived on the Morning Star via Cape Horn." (Hawaiian Gazette, March 23, 1897)

HMCS appropriated funds for repairs and additions to the buildings; "(t)he old stone buildings which had formerly been used as printing office and bindery by the mission, with the house of Rev EW Clark, then occupied by Dr. H. Gulick, were repaired and remodelled, to enlarge and make more comfortable the necessary rooms for the school now successfully started."

"It would be impossible to tell those of you who only know the present building, how crowded and uncomfortable some of those rooms were but we rejoiced, for it was improvement! Miss Bingham soon became principal of the school." (Hawaiian Gazette, March 23, 1897)



It was later named Kawaiaha'o Female Seminary. It started with boarders and day students, but after 1871 it has been exclusively a boarding school. "Under her patient energy and tact, with the help of her assistants, it prospered greatly, and became a success." (Coan)

At first the school was designed to prepare Hawaiian girls to become 'suitable' wives for men who were at the same time preparing to become missionaries and work in the South Seas. This objective took the back seat to industrial education as new industrial departments were added. This included sewing, washing and ironing, dressmaking, domestic arts and nursing.

The mainstay of the curriculum involved furnishing complete elementary courses, including music, both vocal and instrumental, and training in the household arts. Concerts given by the girls helped the school to make money.

In January 1869, Miss Elizabeth Ka'ahumanu (Lizzie) Bingham arrived from the continent to be an assistant to her sister. Lizzie was a graduate of Mount Holyoke and, when she was recruited, was a teacher at Rockford Female Seminary. (Beyer)

"To those of us who were then watching the efforts of these Christian ladies the school became the centre of great interest. The excellent discipline, the loving care, the neatness and skill shown in all departments of domestic life, the thoroughness of the teaching and the high Christian spirit which pervaded it all caused rejoicing that such an impulse had been given to education for Hawaiian girls." (Hawaiian Gazette, March 23, 1897)

"Every Sunday one of the teachers accompanied the Girls to Kawaiaha'o Church diagonally across the street to the morning service." (Sutherland Journal)

“When Miss Bingham came to Hilo (on October 13, 1873 she married Titus Coan,) the seminary was committed to the charge of her sister, whose earnest labors for seven years in a task that is heavy and exhausting so reduced her strength, that in June, 1880 she was obliged to resign her post.” (Coan)

In 1905, a merger with Mills Institute, a boys’ school, was discussed; the Hawaiian Board of Foreign Missions purchased the Kidwell estate, about 35-acres of land in Mānoa valley. By 1908, the first building was completed and the school was officially operated as Mid-Pacific Institute, consisting of Kawaiaha’o School for Girls and Damon School for Boys. Finally, in the fall of 1922, a new coeducational plan went into effect - likewise, 'Mills' and 'Kawaiaha’o' were dropped and by June 1923, Mid-Pacific became the common, shared name.

Two other female seminaries came into existence: Kohala Female Seminary and Mauna’olu Seminary (East Maui Female Seminary.) Kohala Female Seminary and Mauna’olu Female Seminary continued to exist through the 1920s, offering a high school diploma to their graduates.

Kohala Female Seminary

The Kohala Girl's School was Reverend Elias Bond's last major undertaking. For 30-years prior to the 1874 founding of the Kohala Girl's School, Reverend Bond ran a boarding school for boys. His decision to build a separate facility to educate native Hawaiian women in Christian living and housekeeping was made in 1872.

The Kohala Seminary (Kohala Girl’s School) is located mauka of Kalāhikiola Church; it consists of six wood frame buildings scattered over approximately 3 acres. The main residence building is a generally rectangular two-and-one-half story structure; the building was constructed in 1874 and was used as dormitory and classroom space. In 1955, the school stopped functioning.

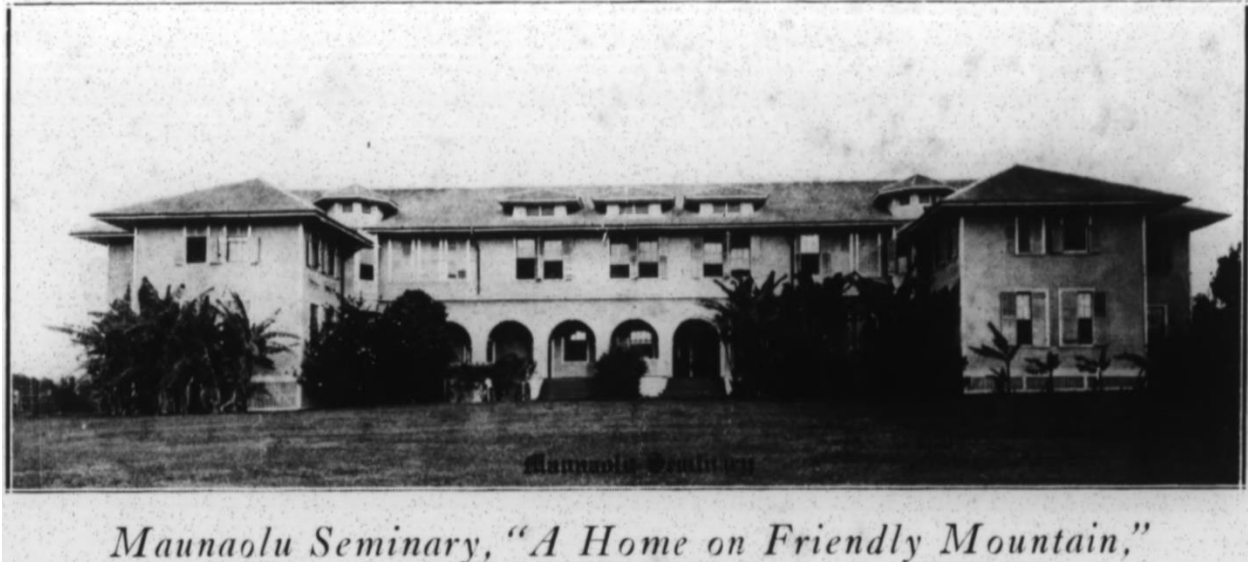
Mauna’olu Seminary

The last of the female seminaries that was begun by the missionaries was initially called the Makawao Family School. Reverend Claudius B. Andrews and his wife, Anne Seward Gilson Andrews, began it in 1861 in a location above Makawao Village on the island of Maui.

Mauna’olu Seminary is an out-growth of the “East Maui Female Seminary.” It first sprang into existence, through the earnest desire of the Andrews for a school for Hawaiian girls, where they might be educated in the atmosphere of a Christian home, and so be equipped for their future life work.

It was here that Mr. and Mrs. Andrews with their family first conceived the idea of a "Home School" for Hawaiian girls, as Mr. Andrews said, "Where the girls are to be taught as my own daughters". A year after the school began, Mrs. Andrews died.

Throughout the next seven years, Reverend Andrews received help from a variety of people, and attendance grew to 70 students. But then, in 1869, the school building burned; the school was temporarily closed, but reopened in 1871. Reverend Andrews, along with his second wife, Samantha Andrews, were in charge of operating the school. (The second Mrs. Andrews was a sister of his first wife.) Miss Helen E. Carpenter was engaged as an assistant teacher. Both Samantha Andrews and Helen Carpenter were graduates of Mount Holyoke Seminary. In 1874, the latter was appointed principal.



Throughout the following years, the curriculum included the usual academic courses in reading, mathematics, literature, history, language (all instruction was in English), geography, spelling, civics and the Bible. The industrial departments included sewing, domestic arts and culinary.

After a second fire in 1898, Mauna'olu Seminary moved into temporary quarters; then, in 1900 Mauna'olu was rebuilt in a place closer to Pā'ia on land known as Pu'u Makani (windy hill). Mauna'olu Seminary continued to exist through the 1920s, offering a high school diploma to their graduates. Its last commencement was in June 1942.

End of the Female Seminaries

At the end of the century, all the female seminaries in Hawai'i began to lose students to the newly-founded Kamehameha School for Girls.

This latter school was established in 1894; it was not technically a seminary or founded by missionaries, but all the girls enrolled were Hawaiian, and its curriculum was very similar to what was used at the missionary-sponsored seminaries. (Lots of information in this summary is from Beyer.)

Missionary Period

Over the course of a little over 40-years (1820-1863 - the "Missionary Period"), about 180-men and women in twelve Companies served in Hawai'i to carry out the mission of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) in the Hawaiian Islands. Collaboration between Native Hawaiians and American Protestant missionaries resulted in, among other things, the

- Introduction of Christianity;
- Development of a written Hawaiian language and establishment of schools that resulted in widespread literacy;
- Promulgation of the concept of constitutional government;
- Combination of Hawaiian with Western medicine; and
- Evolution of a new and distinctive musical tradition (with harmony and choral singing)