THE WAHA'ULA HEIAU

Only 150 feet along the path from the Waha'ula Visitor Center, is the Waha'ula Heiau (Temple of the Red Mouth). Constructed during the 13th century by a foreigner from Kahiki (southern lands), Waha'ula changed the worshipping rituals of Hawaii's people.

Before the time of Waha'ula, customs and rituals of the temples were less stringent. There was a basic understanding that every aspect of nature was the embodiment of some deity, and that the respect of nature in turn brought life.

The new rituals that were a part of Waha'ula changed that; simple rituals and offerings of fish or plants were not always enough to appease the gods. Men became the principal sacrifice while the chiefs commuted with the gods on important matters and undertakings. From here in the district of Puna, the practices of the luakini (human sacrificial temples) spread throughout Hawaii. The luakini remained in use until the early 19th century, after which the advent of the foreigners and a change in customs, brought about new religions.

WAHA'ULA VISITOR CENTER
INFORMATION AND ACTIVITIES

The Congressional Act of June 20, 1938 officially added the Kalapana Extension Lands to Hawaii National Park, now Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. In doing so, one of the most traditionally significant sites of Hawaii was added to an already geologically unique area, making the national park a showcase which intertwines traditions and sciences.

Other than the physical remains of Waha'ula, there is little left as a reminder of the events that occurred here. Fragmented chants and stories are all that remain of once rich oral histories that kept alive traditional knowledge.

Today, the Waha'ula Visitor Center sits along the outer boundaries of the heiau. There are displays and interpretive talks of cultural and ethnobotanical interest. There are also numerous trails throughout areas that serve as vivid reminders of Hawaii's past.

MILEAGE FROM WAHA'ULA

It is a 4-mile drive from Waha'ula to Kaimu (Blacksand Beach). The road passes the village of Kalapana which has prepared food and store facilities. The closest gas stations are in Pahoa, 12.5 miles away. Hilo is 20 miles past Pahoa. The Kiluaea Visitor Center is 27.5 miles from Waha'ula via the Chain of Craters Road.
By lashing logs to holes in the rock, men were able to launch and land their canoes as they went about their daily fishing and traveling. From there the trail turns into the forest. There are cracks in areas here that are holding places for brackish water. These areas made life along a dry coastline much easier. The last section of trail is notably different from the rest. It has been paved with water worn boulders. Placed here hundreds of years ago, this path is a remnant of a series of paths that joined one village to another. The trail ends back at the Waha'ula parking area. If you have any questions, please talk to the visitor center staff. ALOHA.