

PACIFIC HISTORIC PARKS: HONORING THE PAST, INSPIRING THE FUTURE

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Pacific Historic Parks was founded in 1979 as a non-profit cooperating association that supports the National Park Service and the sites they protect. Proceeds of Pacific Historic Parks fund education materials, museum exhibits, and interpretive programs.

Pacific Historic Parks' mission is to support the USS Arizona Memorial and other Pacific historic locations through education and interpretive programs, research, preservation, and restoration to perpetuate the memory of events and to honor the people involved in these sites.

DECEMBER 7, 1941: A TURNING POINT IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Yesterday, December 7, 1941 – a date which will live in infamy – the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan. [...] I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December seventh, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire.

These were the words of United States President Franklin Roosevelt in response to the Japanese Naval Fleet attacking American forces stationed in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. United States vessels stationed at Pearl Harbor were sunk or damaged, including all 8 battleships that were the heart of America's Pacific Fleet. 75% of American airplanes were destroyed. 2,390 Americans were killed and over 1,100 were wounded. The Japanese had 29 planes shot down with the loss of 55 airmen.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor helped shape America and its role in the world. Out of the smoke and flames of Pearl Harbor a new nation emerged – one that would actively confront threats to world peace. The shock and rage of the attack ignited a fighting spirit in America never before seen. This outrage led to the adoption of the slogan “Remember Pearl Harbor” as the nation rallied to the war effort. Volunteers flooded recruiting centers and America's industrial might geared for war.

The Shrine Room, photo by National Park Service



USS Arizona Memorial and Battleship Missouri, photo by National Park Service



The site today represents a pivotal moment in the US and world history. In December 2008, an Executive Order established World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument and the National Park Service was directed to manage World War II sites in Oahu, including the USS Arizona, USS Oklahoma and USS Utah Memorials and Visitor Center.

The USS Arizona Memorial honors the 1,177 crewmen who died as a result of the attack. The hull is also a tomb for more than 900 sailors who remain within. The 184-foot-long memorial structure spans the mid-portion of the sunken battleship and consists of three main sections: the entry room; the assembly room, a central area designed for ceremonies and general observation; and the shrine room, where the names of those killed on the Arizona are engraved on a marble wall. The USS Arizona Memorial grew out of wartime desire to establish a memorial at Pearl Harbor to honor those who died in the attack. According to its architect, Alfred Preis, the design of the Memorial, “Wherein the structure sags in the center but stands strong and vigorous at the ends, expresses initial defeat and ultimate victory... The overall effect is one of serenity. Overtones of sadness have been omitted to permit the individual to contemplate his own personal responses... his innermost feelings”.

Today, roughly 2 million people from all over the world visit the memorial every year. This memorial at this former battlefield embodies the lessons of our past and our vision for the future. Its legacy is the assurance we will never forget Pearl Harbor.

TANGIBLE CONNECTIONS TO THE PAST

There is no admission charge to enter World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument. Since the park does not generate funds from admission fees, one of the greatest challenges Pacific Historic Parks faces is offering a variety of quality education programs that are accessible to all visitors. Pacific Historic Parks must fund education programs through donations, grants, and fee-based activities.

Pacific Historic Parks recognizes that youth are the key to perpetuating the history and memory of Pearl Harbor. This article will highlight a few of the educational components that are offered to children so that they can observe this battlefield as a symbolic place for commemoration. Essentially, through ed.

Keiki Ranger Activity Book

A booklet was designed to help children understand the history of Pearl Harbor. The word, “keiki” means “child” in Hawaiian and this book was designed for the youngest visitors in mind.

The booklet prompts youth to visit specific memorials and artifacts to understand their significance at the site. For example, they are directed to the large map at the site and asked to find Hawaii's location in relation to the continental United States and Japan so they can get a better sense of how geography was a factor in determining the attack.

Another place they are directed to go to is the ship's bell, which was sunk in Pearl Harbor along with the ship and salvaged from the wreckage. Using this tangible artifact, youth can learn a little about how life was like for the USS Arizona soldier.

Youth are also brought to the Remembrance Circle, which is a memorial that recognizes all those killed, including civilian casualties. There are over 2,300 people listed and the Junior Ranger booklet prompts kids to reflect on the great cost of the attack.

Sadako Peace Crane Project

Pacific Historic Parks promotes literacy while educating about the impact of war through a book written by Eleanor Coerr titled *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*. The story follows the life of a young girl named Sadako Sasaki, who becomes gravely ill and eventually dies from the aftereffects of the atom bomb that was dropped on her hometown of Hiroshima, Japan. We host an education program that involves reading this book and folding a 1,000 paper cranes in Sadako's honor. Paper cranes are a symbol of peace and healing and in 2012, the Sasaki family graciously offered to donate one of the last paper cranes folded by Sadako before her death.

Punahou School became involved with the fundraising for the Sadako exhibit at Pearl Harbor after the crane was donated. The students raised more than \$6,000 US dollars, which became part of the funds used to build the new exhibit in Pearl Harbor. Masahiro Sasaki, Sadako's brother, visited the memorial and placed a wreath with Lauren Bruner, a USS Arizona Survivor, during a ceremony that unveiled the paper crane. It is very significant that this crane is now exhibited at Pearl Harbor, the site where the Pacific War began for America with the attack on Pearl Harbor by Japan. Showing this united front to promote peace touched the community and inspired our youth.

Today, Punahou students and faculty continue to share Sadako's legacy and her message by visiting Pearl Harbor almost every month of the school year with student volunteers and several Japanese language teachers to tell park visitors about Sadako's story and teach other visitors how to fold paper cranes so they can be collected and mailed to Hiroshima.

Guided Fieldtrips: A Witness to History

School groups visit the USS Arizona Memorial as a way to help educators achieve ongoing objectives in their school curriculum. We collaborate with local teachers and meet students at their schools to give a presentation that shares the stories of what happened at Pearl Harbor. Students then visit the memorial and focus on specific themes.

The biggest obstacle that prevents the Hawaiian PreK-12 grade schools from coming to the memorial is transportation. In 2018, Pacific Historic Parks received a grant from the National Park Foundation that will allow us to bus in over 1,000 students from the local underserved areas of Waianae and Nānākūli. We are continually looking to find grants and raise donations to eliminate the barrier of transportation for students to visit their park.

Pearl Harbor Survivors

Beyond the memorial are the people who witnessed the Pearl Harbor attack. Pacific Historic Parks and the National Park Service have nurtured a close relationship with Pearl Harbor survivors. They are dedicated and have supported education by volunteering to come weekly and sometimes daily to the memorial to sign autographs and share their stories with visitors.

Their stories, such as the ones told by Pearl Harbor Survivor Jimmy Lee who was only eleven years old and living on Oahu when the attack happened, must be passed down to the next generation so children understand the personal side of the event.

Pearl Harbor Virtual Reality Center

In sustaining the programs we described here, Pacific Historic Parks has had to find ways of funding in order to offer free programs. In 2016, Pacific Historic Parks developed an app that can be used from a smart phone and a virtual reality (VR) headset. Youth will be able to relive the events of December 7, 1941 by engaging in virtual reality experience at Pearl Harbor.

With the use of VR, children can walk the main deck of the USS Arizona and meet a few of the sailors aboard the battleship, witness the attack on Battleship Row, and venture aboard the USS Arizona Memorial itself.

By offering a mix of free and for-fee programs, Pacific Historic Parks seeks to perpetuate its mission while being sustainable at the same time.

HONORING THE PAST AND INSPIRING THE FUTURE

As a non-profit organization whose mission is to educate the next leaders of our country about the important stories found at World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument, we encourage other organizations that maintain and preserve important battle sites to consider the following points:

Symbolic Places of Commemoration

The meaningful setting of Pearl Harbor provides unique opportunities for reconciliation among former Pacific War combatants. The memorials serve as icons of enduring peace and reminders of the healing that is still ongoing.

In providing a variety of educational experiences that commemorate our past, we must have an awareness of the story that we are trying to convey. It is important to take note of the physical things that are in the battlefield, such as the memorials, plaques, statues, sculptures. These objects help tell the main parts of our enduring message.

As organizations that protect battlefields and develop education programs, we need to ask ourselves:

- who or what do these memorials commemorate?
- who created these memorials?
- to whom are the monuments important?

- what do these memorials tell us about what we value in our society?
- Answering these questions can give us greater awareness of the message and the stories we are passing on to future generations.

Find Relevancy

In Pearl Harbor, there is a marble wall in the Shrine Room of the Memorial engraved with over 1,000 men who died onboard the USS Arizona that tragic Sunday morning. While the room is haunting and powerful, we have to also be cognizant of the fact that simply visiting the site is not enough to tell the story to our visitors. There must be continual efforts of engagement between the visitor and the resources found at the site.

As leaders in organizations that commemorate the past, we have to continually find ways to make the sacrifices of the people before us relevant and meaningful. We have to help visitors answer the question: what does this story mean to me?

In revamping our education programs in Hawaii, we intent to add more stories that resonate with local youth. We hope to use themes that align with curriculum standards within the Hawaii State Department of Education Benchmarks and Standards. We will spend this year focusing on the meaning of legacy how the events of Pearl Harbor affected the people of Hawaii.

Showcase Multiple Perspectives

Battlefields have thousands upon thousands of stories to tell. There are a multitude of perspectives that can be presented.

- what would a Japanese pilot have been thinking as he reached Pearl Harbor from above?
- what might a young child living in Oahu have felt on the morning of the attack?
- what would a Japanese American have felt when they were forced to an internment camp at Honouliuli in Hawaii?

When looking at an event, there is always more than one perspective or approach or point of view. It is a good exercise to spend time thinking about why different groups may see the same event in different ways. Oftentimes a different story emerges when those multiple perspectives are put together. The result is an enriched historical understanding.

Foster Stewardship

A key component in educating about the past and for the future involves opening up avenues for individuals to take action and be part of the preservation of the site.

It might take the shape of being a docent at the visitor center, showing others how to fold paper cranes, or manning a donation table. Stewardship or volunteerism is education in action. It is the culminating goal of education because it opens doors for people to donate their time and energy to honor this final resting place.

When stewards from the community are inspired to honor by playing an active role to protect and preserve their national treasure, we are ensuring the stories are passed down to the next generation. ●