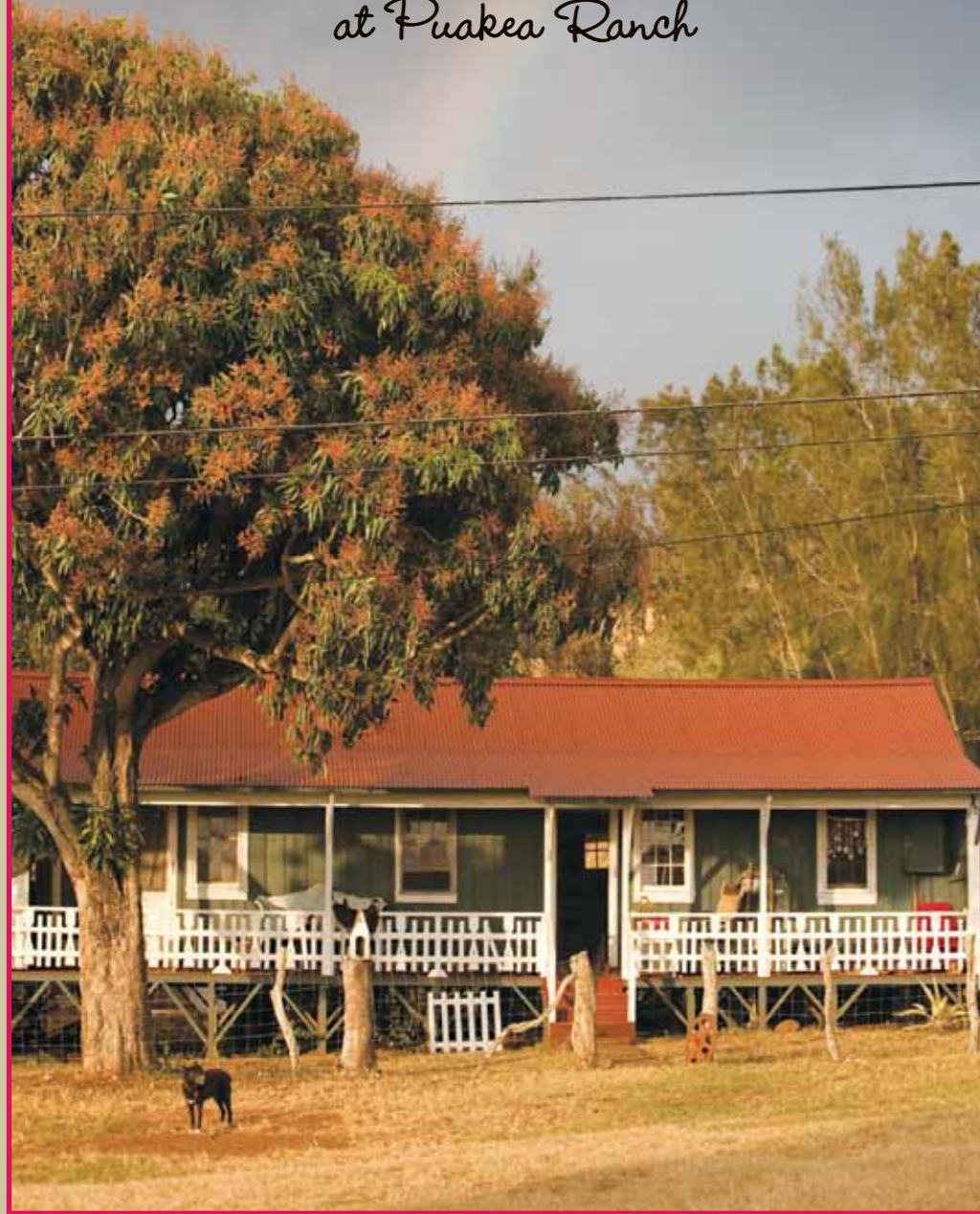


Ranch Revival

Part II

Owners restore and preserve
two more cowboy cottages
at Puakea Ranch



With a rainbow overhead, Cowboy House once served as a bunkhouse for Hawaiian and Filipino cowboys in the 1940s. "Cowboy House was the heart of Puakea Ranch, with much activity and laughing children," says Christie Cash, owner, who has artfully renovated the dwelling.



Born in Cowboy House, Yoshi Kawamoto was a third-generation foreman at the ranch. In the 1940s, he built a two-bedroom home on the property.

By Kristina Anderson
Photography by Giselle Thompson

Told again and again that the historic paniolo dwellings on her Hawii property were beyond repair, Christie Cash nevertheless persevered to save them all.

She and husband Jay Nelson have restored not just one, but all four aging cottages, homes and bunkhouses on Puakea Ranch "board for board." Two of them, Yoshi's House and Miles Away, were featured in the December 2009 issue of *At Home* magazine. Now, two more restored homes add to the legacy: Cowboy House and James Cottage.

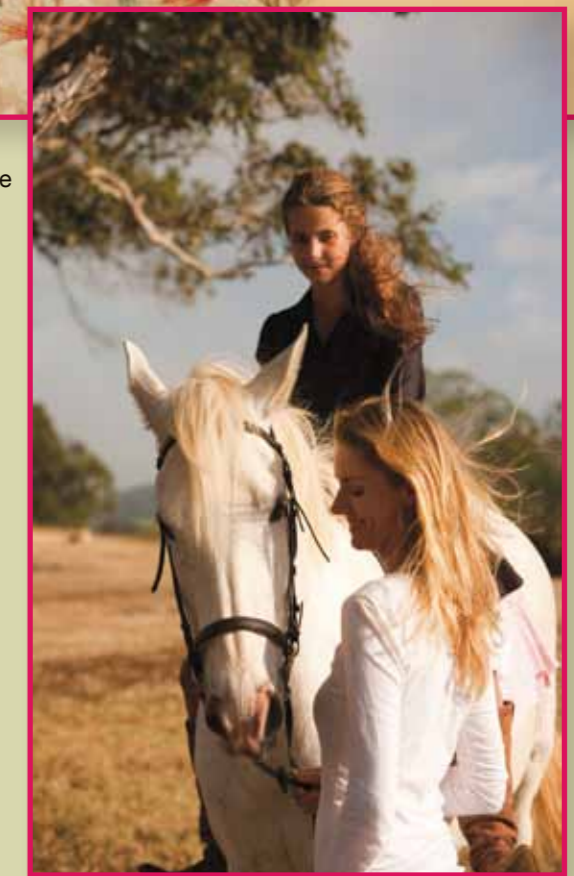
A guest-ranch vacation retreat since 2006, Puakea Ranch offers patrons the opportunity to enjoy low-key luxury while immersed the genuine Hawaiian/Japanese paniolo heritage of the Kawamoto family, who lived in these homes near the turn of the century. ►



Light and airy, the living room of Cowboy House pays homage to the Yoshi Kawamoto, who once ranched these lands. Yoshi's son, Alvin, recently made the Hawaiian tree saddle displayed under his father's photo. Christie's décor throughout includes custom fabrics, distressed armoires and four-poster beds, offering an inviting vintage feel.



Cowboy House unveils glorious views of Puakea Bay from the front porch.



Puakea Ranch owner, Christie Cash, with her daughter, Alivia, on horseback.

“Although other families lived here, the Kawamoto family is the one we most associate with Puakea Ranch,” says Christie, who purchased the 33-acre ranch in 2005. Working under the guidance of a historic architect/consultant, Christie went about restoring the buildings as close to original condition as possible.

It hasn't always been easy, and it's almost certainly been a slightly obsessed labor of love. Just the floors alone would challenge any preservationist. By removing several years of paint and linoleum, Christie salvaged the Douglas fir flooring in Cowboy House. Unfortunately, the floors in James Cottage could not be saved, so Christie installed new tongue-and-groove flooring there.

In both homes, restoration specialists carefully removed, re-glazed and reinstalled the original blown-glass windows.

Like the other homes, Cowboy House and James Cottage both showcase the original bathhouse footprints and elements such as small Japanese furos.

“We didn't want to destroy the furos so we left them intact,” Christie explains of the small tubs, which contemporary guests might want to use for a foot bath or to bathe small children.

“The original furo would have had a fire box with a metal plate under it to heat the water, which obviously we had to remove during the renovations,” she adds. “This bathing system is such a longstanding Japanese tradition that we wanted to honor it by making it work with all the modern amenities.”

Aiming to impart a Zen feeling in the baths to echo the heritage of the first owners, Christie also added such natural elements as lava rock, stone and wood to both bathrooms, creating a soothing ambience. Bella Pietra sourced the vessel sinks, which were carved from a solid piece of rock sawed in half; while Aloha Woods provided the mango and lychee slabs.

Country décor and original art maintain a cozy feeling in the cottages, while custom linens offer a gracious sense of luxury. “These old homes did not have closets,” Christie says, “so we've brought in armoires for storage. I guess living was simpler back then — people didn't own much.”

As the oldest home at Puakea Ranch, Cowboy House is the place Zenjiro Kawamoto first lived with his young wife after immigrating to Hawai'i from Hiroshima, Japan, in the late 1800s. The Kawamoto children — Yoshi, Masa and Thelma — were all born in the Cowboy House. Later, in the 1940s, both the Cowboy House and James Cottage housed ranch hands in the bare-bones bunkrooms. ▶



This amazing bathroom occupies the existing footprint of the original washhouse used by the cowboys, which included a Japanese furo. Sheets of ili ili stone came from Tile Warehouse, while the blue rock tiles are broken remnants from West Hawaii Concrete. Aloha Woods provided the lychee slab for the sink, as well as Douglas fir for the tongue-and-groove ceiling.



Lined with java plum trees planted in the 1930s, the country lane leading to Yoshi's House provides a lovely trail for horseback riding. Christie and Jay's daughter, Alivia, is pictured here with her friend, Tyler.



A one-room studio, James Cottage required more renovation than the other dwellings on the ranch. Christie gutted the kitchen, adding a butcher-block counter and dual porcelain sink. The cottage's original windows have been relocated so they face the front of the house.

“It's so important to hang on to these historic places.”
— Christie Cash,
Puakea Ranch



Guests at James Cottage can soak in a hot tub located off the back porch.



The newly refurbished kitchen was once a detached cookhouse back in the day. It was physically relocated and attached to Cowboy House in the 1960s. Christie and Jay added the window seat and butcher-block cooking island, incorporating the board-and-batten look for the base. The flooring and windows are original to the cookhouse.



Cowboy House has three bedrooms; this one can be entered from the living area or off the front porch. Furnishings reflect a breezy country style that complements the original Douglas fir flooring and single-wall, board-and-batten construction. Local carpenters crafted the bed.

KALOKO SHUTTER; 4.7383 in; 5.25 in; Black plus three; 000052110r1

Hilo Oral and Facial; 4.7383 in; 5.25 in; Black plus three; 000052097r1

Hi Engergy Con Kumu Kits; 9.653 in; 10.75 in; Black plus three; 000051510r1

“Four generations of Kawamotos lived at Puakea Ranch, where they carried on a tradition of ranching and fine saddlemaking,” recounts Christie. To pay homage to the family craftsmen, Christie placed the Hawaiian tree saddle, newly made by Yoshi’s son Alvin, in Cowboy House, along with numerous framed family photos of Yoshi’s father, grandfather and great grandfather. Original rawhide lassos and other paniolo artifacts also grace the walls.

Taking about a year to complete, the painstaking renovation now qualifies both Cowboy House and James Cottage to join the ranch’s other two homes with a listing on the Hawai’i State Register of Historic Places.

“It’s so important to hang on to these places,” says Christie of the cottages. “Restoration is difficult; it’s definitely not the easiest or most economical route you can take. And it’s a huge commitment. But our goal is to ensure that the historic preservation of these dwellings, and the family memories that were built there, will continue long after we’re gone.” **AH**