



Princess Ruth Keelikolani (1826-1883) was a direct descendant of King Kamehameha I. Her first husband (who was Governor of Hawaii) died in a measles epidemic, at the age of 27.

When her adopted son ([Crown Prince William Pitt Leleiohoku II](#)) died of rheumatic fever in 1877 (at the age of 23), she inherited his property. Owning about 9% of the Kingdom of Hawaii, she was Hawaii's largest landowner.

She was also a very large woman who had been a beauty in her youth. Her face appeared to have a deformity, in later life, due to surgery on her nose.

Although she owned vast resources, including beautiful homes, Princess Ruth preferred to live in a [traditional Hawaiian grass home](#). Although she understood English, she preferred to speak Hawaiian.

In 1855, she became the [Royal Governor of the Island of Hawaii](#). She served in that capacity until March of 1874. During her tenure, Princess Ruth had significant power and stature.

Princess Ruth was close to her cousin, Bernice Pauahi Paki Bishop. Her Will had a single beneficiary, Princess Bernice, who inherited about 353,000 acres of Hawaiian land from Princess Ruth (plus a [beautiful mansion](#) in Honolulu, known as [Keoua Hale](#), which was completed in 1883, not long before Ruth's death).

Some well-known areas in Hawaii are built on land once owned by Princess Ruth. They include downtown Honolulu, Hickam Air Force Base (which was damaged in the Pearl-Harbor attack), Royal Hawaiian Hotel, Princess Kaiulani Hotel, Moana Hotel and part of Honolulu's International Airport.

Click on the image for a better view.

Credits:

Image of Princess Ruth online, courtesy National Anthropological Archives (Smithsonian Institution Research Information System).

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Princess Ruth Keelikolani - Hawaiian Landowner

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