



GEORGE “PETE” WIMBERLY

In the years when Hawai‘i tourism was growing at a rapid rate, Pete Wimberly was hard at work inventing a style of resort architecture that was creative, exotic, and imaginative. His landmark projects helped define Hawai‘i tourism and created a Hawai‘i-based business designing resorts around the world.

Pete came to Hawai‘i in 1940 at the age of twenty-four as a journeyman architect, working at Pearl Harbor. After the war he set up a partnership with Howard Clark and the new firm landed the job of renovating and refurbishing the Royal Hawaiian Hotel for post-war vacationers. As his career developed, Pete took on a wide range of resort projects ... everything from the monumental Sheraton Waikīkī Hotel to the quintessentially tropical Coco Palms Resort on Kaua‘i. Some of his other signature designs include the Hyatt Regency Waikīkī, the Kona Hilton, and Sheraton Maui.

Pete was naturally suited to be a Hawai‘i architect. He came to work in shorts, short-sleeved shirts and sneakers without socks in an era when the “Big Five” companies dressed up. He loved the outdoors and developed a skill for auto racing. His island mentality extended into the design of his buildings. His love for Hawai‘i’s tropical environment also meant that he had a dislike of air conditioning. His buildings were noted for their flowing indoor-outdoor spaces and the use of Hawaiian materials and motifs, such as thatch bamboo, lava rock, and tropical landscaping.

While many of Pete’s signature projects are in Hawai‘i, he developed a name for himself as a creative force in the Pacific region. Pete and two other Hawai‘i tourism pioneers—Earl Thacker, and Bill Mullahey—held court and hatched plans nearly every morning over breakfast at the Royal Hawaiian dining room. He traveled the Pacific with Pan American Airways executive Mullahey looking for new areas for resort development. In order to stimulate interest in the Pacific region, Pete and Mullahey were instrumental in founding the Pacific Asia Travel Association in 1952.