

# Timeline

American Samoa, like many other South Sea islands, is a tropical paradise in the South Pacific. But beneath the dramatic mountain peaks and swaying palm trees, lies a strong U.S. Naval and World War II connection that lasted a good part of the late 1800s and over half the 1900s—spanning nearly 90 years.

**February 14, 1872:** Commander Richard W. Meade, USN, commanding USS Narragansett, anchored in Pago Pago Harbor to investigate the possibility of establishing a naval station there.

**March 2, 1872:** Commander Richard W. Meade, USN and Mauga Manuma of Pago Pago signed the first American-Samoa treaty at Gagamoe Stream in Pago Pago giving the United States the exclusive right to establish a coaling station for its fleet on Pago Pago Harbor.

**January 17, 1878:** A treaty which “merely guaranteed the United States a site for a naval station at Pago Pago” (though not the exclusive privileges of the unratified treaty of 1872) was signed by Le Mamea Maaka, Samoa’s envoy to the United States, and the U.S. Secretary of State, William M. Evarts.

**March 2, 1889:** The U.S. Congress appropriated “the sum of \$100,000 for the purpose of permanently establishing a station for coal and other supplies for the naval and commercial marine of the United States on the shores of the Bay of Pago Pago, Samoa, in pursuance of the rights acquired by the Treaty of 1878.”

**August 5, 1898:** The U.S. Navy Department ordered civil engineer Frank T. Chambers to proceed to Tutuila to construct a wharf, coal shed and other buildings.

**February 16, 1900:** The Berlin Agreement was ratified by the United States Senate. Under the terms of the treaty, the eastern Samoa islands (Tutuila, ‘Aunu’u and Manu’a) became a U.S. Territory. Germany gained control of Upolu and Savaii and the other western isles, and in return gave up her interests in Tonga and the Solomon Islands. Britain relinquished her claims in Samoa, colonized the Solomon Islands and retained a sphere of influence in Tonga.

**February 19, 1900:** President William McKinley put Tutuila and all the Samoan islands east of 171 degrees west longitude under the authority of the U.S. Navy. On the same day, Secretary of the Navy John D. Long named these islands “U.S. Naval Station Tutuila.”

**January 6, 1903:** The U.S. Naval Station Tutuila received its first foreign guest, Dr. Wilhelm Heinrich Solf, the Imperial Governor of German Samoa who arrived on board the SS Ventura;

**February 8, 1904:** The Department of the Navy authorized the purchase of a site at Blunts Point, Togotogo Ridge, Tutuila for the construction of an observatory, and a trail leading to it;

**April 17, 1910:** American Samoa’s Fita Fita Barracks was dedicated at the U.S. Naval Station Tutuila.

**July 7, 1911:** The islands of Tutuila, ‘Aunu’u and Manu’a, formerly designated as “U.S. Naval Station Tutuila,” were officially designated as “American Samoa,” although the actual Naval Station in Fagatoga and Utulei continued to be called “U.S. Naval Station Tutuila.”

**April 7, 1917:** The United States declared war on Germany, and the U.S. Navy seized the German ships Staatssekretar Solf and Elsass, which had enjoyed refuge in Pago Pago Harbor since August 6, 1914. There was no resistance.

**March 4, 1925:** Swains Island was annexed by the U.S. Congress and became part of American Samoa.

**February 20, 1929:** The U.S. Congress approved the cession of Tutuila (which occurred on April 17, 1900) and Manu’a (which was signed by Tui Manu’a Elisara on July 14, 1904 and was recorded in the courthouse on July 16, 1904).

**January 9, 1941:** A board of four U.S. Naval officers, chaired by Lieutenant Commander N.W. Sears, prepared a joint plan for the defense of Samoa, based on recommendations made by the Marine Corps Captain Alfred R. Pefley in 1940. The defenses included four 6-inch guns, six 3-inch guns and fourteen 50-caliber anti-aircraft guns. Provisions were also made for patrol vessels, coastal lookouts and mine warfare.

**February 14, 1941:** Rose Atoll was made a Naval Defense Area by Executive Order of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Today, all that is left of this history are some historic buildings, gun sites, stories and photos of an era when the United States took control of the eastern Samoan Islands. It was at a time when the European powers were dividing up the Pacific and then sought to stop Japan as it began its invasion of the Pacific.

**February 17, 1941:** Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Harold Raynsford Stark, instructed the Commandant of U.S. Naval Station Tutuila, Captain Laurence Wild to construct a double anti-torpedo net extending from Blunts Point to Whale Rock (300 yards), and then about 300 yards further east, leaving a channel of about 300 yards on the eastern side of the entrance to Pago Pago Harbor. The cost was estimated at \$137,000, not including the cost of the sono-buoy.

**July 10, 1941:**

The organization of the First Samoa Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve began. All recruits were enlisted as privates and were paid 70 cents a day with a uniform allowance of \$5. After four months, their pay was raised to \$1 a day.



**January 11, 1942:** At 2:26 am “a Japanese submarine surfaced about 10,000 yards off the north coast of Tutuila between Southworth Point and Fagasa Bay,” and fired about 15 projectiles from its 5.5-inch deck gun at the U.S. Naval Station Tutuila over a period of approximately 10 minutes. The first shell struck the rear of the store of Frank Shimasaki, one of Tutuila’s few Japanese residents. The store was closed at the time, as Mr. Shimasaki was interned because of his ‘foreign background.’ The next one inflicted slight damage on the naval dispensary, the third landed on the lawn behind the naval quarters known as “Centipede Row,” while the fourth hit the stone seawall outside the customs house. The others fell harmlessly into the harbor. The fire was not returned, notwithstanding the eagerness of the Samoan Marines to test their skill against the enemy. No American or Samoa Marines were wounded. Commander Edwin B. Robinson, who was bicycling behind Centipede Row, was wounded in the knee by a piece of shrapnel and “a member of the colorful native Fita Fita Guard” received minor injuries, they were the only casualties. This was the only time that the Japanese attacked Tutuila during World War II, but Japanese submarines did patrol the waters around Samoa prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, and were active in the area throughout the war.

**January 19, 1942:** At the U.S. Naval Station Tutuila, “information was received that a powerful task force was closing in. ‘Condition Red’ sounded, and the 7th Defense Battalion girded itself to resist an amphibious assault. Word soon spread that these ships were part of a convoy bringing reinforcements. Later in the day, a flight of planes launched from the carrier Wasp roared over the island, and a float plane from one of the cruisers landed in Pago Pago Harbor.”

**January 22, 1942:** On Tutuila, the Training Officer for the Samoan Defense Group said that the purpose of the Marine Corps’ Advanced Jungle Warfare Training Center, located in Malaemi Valley, was to “prepare infantry replacements to take their places in combat organizations, training programs stressed conditioning marches and exercises, individual combat, cover and concealment, field fortifications, infiltrations tactics and countermeasures, sniper tactics and countermeasures, infantry weapons, jungle warfare, small unit tactics and amphibious training.”



Marine Generals Larsen (middle) and Price (right).

**March 6, 1942:** Brigadier General Henry L. Larsen, USMC, was the first person to land at the Tafuna Air Base, which was not yet complete. As Commanding General of the Samoan Defense Group, he had received “secret orders dated March 6 1942, which mandated strong mutually supporting defensive positions, consisting

from East to West of the Islands of Strawstack (Tutuila), Strawhat (Upolu), and Strawman (Savaii), with the outpost island to the northwest called Strawboard (Wallis Island). The code name for the entire Samoa Defense Group was Straw.”

**April 2, 1942:** The first airplanes of Marine Air Group 13 (MAG-13) landed at Tafuna Air Base. Few of the Marine pilots were experienced and training conditions were difficult. Heat, bugs, mud and rain made even the construction of an adequate camp difficult. While attempting to train aviators, the men of MAG-13 also put in time as infantry, each squadron functioning as one company of two platoons plus one .30 caliber machine gun platoon. The group was supported in these defensive efforts by a tank company, a heavy weapons platoon, a three-inch battery, and one section of the islands barrage balloon squadron.

**April 6, 1942:** The Utah Construction Company, with Marine Corps assistance completed the first runway of the Tafuna Air Base. It was 2,500 feet long and 250 feet wide.

**April 15, 1942:** Mine laying operations in the approaches to Pago Pago Harbor ceased, after USS Ontario, USS Kingfisher, USS Swan and USS Turkey laid a total of 400 mines in six fields, which were in the following locations: Field A South of Cape Fagauso, Field B in vicinity of Taema Bank, Field C West of Leone Point, Field D South of Cape Iaputapua, Field E West of Southworth Point, Field F Off Afono Bay.

**July 4, 1942:** The U.S. Navy’s Mobile Hospital No. 3 (MOB 3) opened at Mapusaga, with one surgical ward and two patients.

**August 27, 1942:**

The first group of wounded sailors and marines from Guadalcanal arrived at the Navy’s Mobile Hospital No. 3 (MOB 3) at Mapusaga, Tutuila. Seabees from the 11th Battalion began constructing more buildings to accommodate the wounded from this fiercely contested battle.



**December 21, 1943:** In an order from the Commandant of U.S. Naval Station Tutuila Captain J. G. Moyer ordered the Master of the S.S. Typhoon that had arrived in Pago Pago Harbor to turn over the six Japanese prisoners to the Commanding Officer, First Platoon, Second Military Police Company, whom acknowledged receipt of the Japanese prisoners Mayui Iutara aged 36 a ship’s cook, Syoji Tadaki aged 18 seaman, Furukawa Masatuki aged 27 a aviation mechanic, Tokujou Mituru aged 23 seaman, Nakawo Yosimi aged 18 seaman and Nisioka Jankitsi aged 21 a civilian carpenter.

**January 15, 1944:** The First Samoa Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve was disbanded and its personnel were assigned to the Marine Barracks at the U.S. Naval Station Tutuila. The battalion’s strength was “9 Marine officers, 1 Navy officer, 32 American Marines and 494 Samoa Marines.”

**February 17, 1944:** The U.S. Naval Station Tutuila’s destroyer repair base (located below Mt. Alava in Pago Pago Harbor) was completed, and was officially designated as “U.S. Naval Ship Repair Unit, Navy 129.”

**February 19, 1944:** “Operation Roll-Up” a South Pacific operation to close unneeded bases and move them to other locations began.

**April 1, 1944:** The U.S. Navy’s Mobile Hospital No. 3 (MOB 3) left Tutuila. The Naval Station Dispensary then assumed responsibility for medical care.

**August 1, 1944:** The Samoan Defense Group’s area was extended to include bases on Bora Bora (Society Islands), Aitutaki and Penrhyn (Cook Islands). Its total area included the Samoan, Society, Cook, Ellice and Wallis islands, making it the largest Pacific Defense Group.

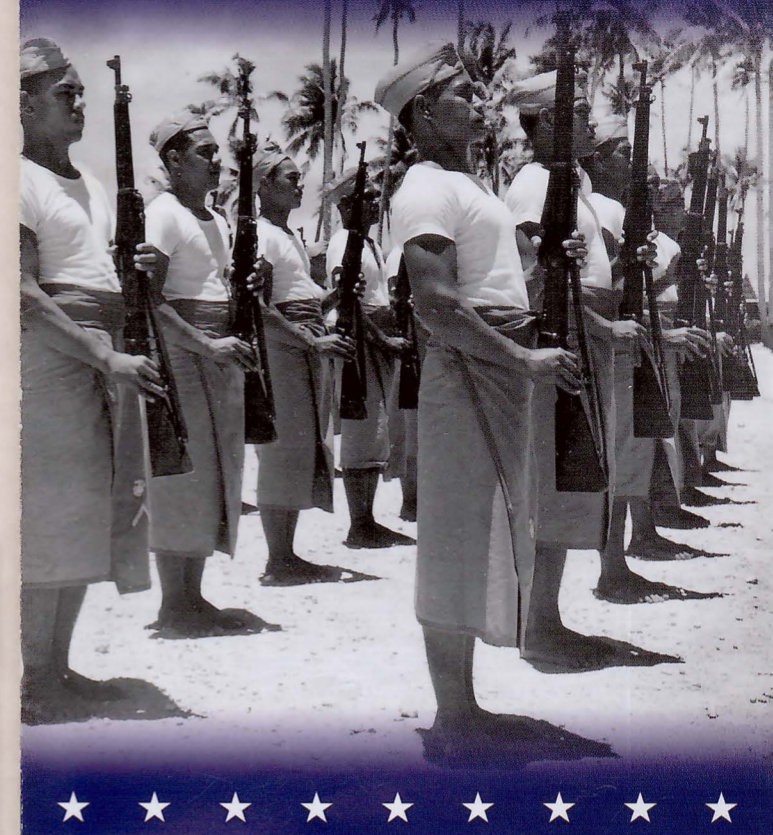
**December 31, 1949:** The United States Naval Station Tutuila was disestablished.

**February 22, 1951:** The U.S. Navy ended its administration of American Samoa.

**March 1, 1951:** American Samoa’s last naval governor, Captain Thomas F. Darden left Samoa aboard the SS Sonoma.

**July 1, 1951:** American Samoa and all Navy property there were transferred to the Department of the Interior from the Navy Department.

## AMERICAN SAMOA U.S. Naval and World War II History



This brochure was funded by the Department of the Interior Office of Insular Affairs and is a partnership project between the following agencies:



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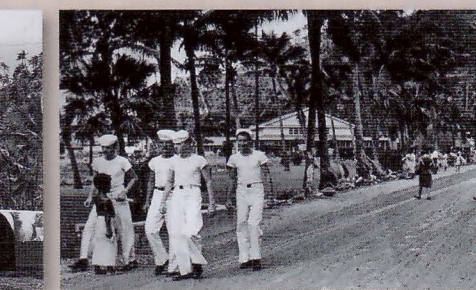
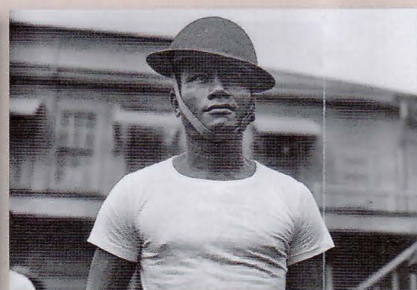


This brochure has been financed in part with Historic Preservation Funds from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

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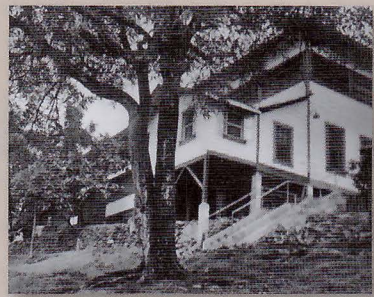
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# World War II Installations on Tutuila Island

**1 The Samoan Hospital** was located on the highway between Pago Pago and the Naval Station and consisted of 40 structures ranging from tiny showers and storage buildings to large wards, nurses quarters and a mess hall. At the rear of the compound were the lepers' quarters, the lepers' fale and quarters for the mentally deranged.



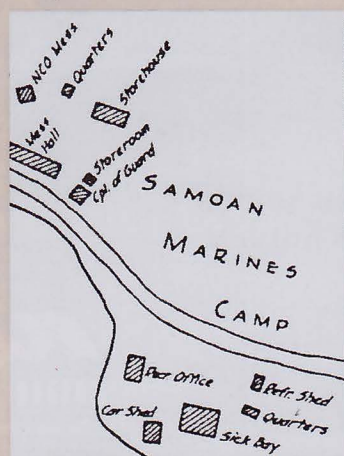
**2 The Happy Valley Command Post**, the Marine headquarters area located just off the main road between Pago Pago and the Naval Station included approximately 70 structures ranging in size and function from small boiler rooms, shelters and latrines to a large administration building, sickbay/pay office, mess halls and quarters.

**3 Satala Naval Cemetery:** On May 4th, 1900 the U.S. Naval Station purchased 4.31 acres of land situated on the north shore of Pago Pago Harbor for the purpose of establishing a cemetery for naval personnel. The Satala Cemetery is historically significant for its unique characteristics of being the first Western cemetery in American Samoa, and for being a naval cemetery that allows for inclusion of civilians; often non-Samoans who had passed away in American Samoa had no family land on which to be buried. Notable individuals are present in the cemetery, in particular the infamous "wild man," a Solomon Islander named Malua.

**4 Tank Farm and Construction Battalion Camp:** Further east at Aua was a tank farm containing 11 large round tanks for diesel oil storage. Scattered pump houses served the tanks and on the western edge of the tank farm was a construction battalion camp with a dozen buildings and mess hall.

**5 The Convoy Escort Repair Base** was located between the highway and the shoreline on the north shore of Pago Pago Harbor. Facilities included a foundry and blacksmith shop, carpenter and pattern shop, sheet metal shop, welding smith shop, shop-fitting shop, light machine shop, heavy machine shop, pipe and copper smith shop, torpedo and ordnance, electrical and radio shop, stores, cold storage and administration stores. The complex also included a power station, several barracks buildings, mess hall and recreation hall. Currently it's the Ronald Reagan Ship Yard and canneries.

**6 Marine Camps:** Between Aua and Breakers Point on the eastern shore of Pago Pago Harbor were three Marine camps. The first of these (the northernmost) was a Samoa Marine camp with 16 structures on both sides of the road. These include quarters, storehouses, three mess halls, a sick bay, guard house and refrigeration shed. The middle camp contained 26 buildings including quarters, mess halls, stores, as well as a movie shed and a post exchange. The southern-most camp contained 21 structures with a



lookout tower, a searchlight tower and a signal tower in addition to the usual quarters, stores and mess halls.

**7 Another Samoa Marine Camp** with about 25 structures was located at Alega on the southern shore of Tutuila east of Pago Pago Harbor.

**8 Dispensary and Power House:** At Amouli, some miles further east from Alega, stood a dispensary and a power house.

**9 Radar Station:** At Tula on the eastern shore of the island was a radar station consisting of 14 structures including quarters, mess halls and storage buildings.

**10 A Recognition Station** was built at Taputapu on the western-most tip of Tutuila. This installation consisted of three quarters, two storehouses, a mess hall and a searchlight tower built directly over its power plant.

**11 Warehouse Complex:** At Fatumafuti, south of Faga'alu was a warehouse complex containing eight storage facilities including two designated for medical supplies.

**12 Telephone Exchange and Warehouse Complex:** At Faga'alu overlooking the approach to Pago Pago Harbor, was a telephone exchange and warehouse complex. The complex contained more than 50 structures including a Marine camp, several warehouses and truck sheds, a large mess hall, showers, a tailor shop and post exchange. The telephone exchange itself was underground at the far northwestern corner of the installation served by a short tramway.

**13 Tafuna Air Base:** This was the largest installation on the island apart from the long-established Naval Station. Much of the airbase is now under the Pago Pago International Airport and various government and commercial buildings in the area. The base included a 6,000 by 500 foot runway, now an active airport runway and a smaller taxiway which is also part of the airport. The airbase included dozens of structures: quarters and mess halls and showers scattered among the propeller shops, ordnance shops, warehouses, hangers, ice plants, offices, garages and workshops. The airbase provided parking for 15 heavy and 60 medium bombers and one million gallons of aviation gasoline were stored in drums at the airfield and another 578,000 gallons in the airfield tank farm.



**14 Advanced Jungle Warfare Training Center and Communications Filter Center:** Located at Mormon Valley (Malaeimi Valley) it included a rifle range, filter center building, three officers' quarters and an officers latrine, three enlisted quarters and an enlisted men's latrine, a mess hall, a movie projector and a garbage platform.

**15 Radio Station:** Vaitogi on the south coast southwest of Tafuna Airbase also had a radio station with a radio building, a generator building and several smaller buildings. Nearby were three quarters buildings.

**16 Mobile Hospital No. 3 (MOB 3)** located near Mapusaga on the main highway between the Naval Station and Leone included over 100 structures: wards housing 500 beds, quarters, mess halls, storage facilities, medical warehouses, dental facilities, fire station, paint shop, maintenance shops, morgue, post office, administration buildings and so forth.



**17 Tank Farm at Utulei/Gatavai** included four fuel oil tanks, five diesel oil tanks, three pump houses, and a loading shed. Only two abandoned World War II era fuel oil tanks, and one abandoned pump house remain at this location. The current tanks are modern tanks.



**18 The Olotele Radar Station** was on a mountain top in 'Aoloaifou Village which is the current home for radio and microwave towers. Well up in the hills it was reached by a tramway from its parking area at the end of Olotele Road. The men who tended the power house and radar machinery had three quarters structures, a mess hall and a latrine. All that remains is the foundation for the radar tower. Down the road to the southeast was the A.A.C.S. radio station with a generator building, radio building, an office and quarters building.

**19 Samoa Marine Camp:** At Pava'ia'i on the main highway south of the Mobile Hospital No. 3 was a Samoa Marine camp including five quarters buildings and an office.

**20 Leone Airfield:** Although the airfield at Leone was never operational, the area on the southwest coast was extensively used for several purposes. The unusable runway measured 300 by 6,000 feet and ran nearly north and south. Just east of the southern end was a borrow pit, while east of the northern end along the main highway was the airport camp with quarters, mess hall, a wash house and warehouses. West of the runway was the Marine Replacement Training Center, a long stretch of quarters, mess halls and training facilities. South of the training center was the Army Radio Beam Stations. West of the southern end of the runway on the grounds of the experimental farm, was the 2nd Separate Medical Company Field Hospital.



**21 The USS Chehalis** is the only World War II shipwreck found in Pago Pago Harbor. This ship sunk on October 7, 1949 following an explosion on the Fuel Dock in Fagatogo as it was unloading fuel. The ship which plied the Pacific during the war sits just over 100 feet below the present fuel dock in the harbor.



**22 Crash and Ditched Aircraft:** During World War II, Tutuila supported the naval airbase at Tafuna maintaining up to 60 fighter aircraft and 15 long range bombers. As a consequence of the intensive training and patrol operations, 43 naval aircraft are reported as having ditched or crashed in the waters around American Samoa between 1942 and 1944 in the vicinity of Tutuila. Some of these sites are war graves and all remain the property of the U.S. Government and are protected by the Sunken Military Craft Act of 2004. None of the ditched and crashed aircraft have been located.

**23 Utulei Anti-Aircraft Batteries:** Two ridges above Utulei Village had a total of five anti-aircraft guns. Utulelei Ridge had three anti-aircraft guns, while Togotogo Ridge had two guns. It is known that the anti-aircraft guns at Togotogo ridge were capable of firing 3 inch shells. It is unknown what type of anti-aircraft guns were in place at Utulelei Ridge. The concrete gun emplacements that held the anti-aircraft guns are still present on both ridges and can be reached following a trail maintained by the National Park of American Samoa that starts at the Blunts Point Guns and ends at Togotogo Ridge.



**24 The Breakers Point Guns** are a second set of two naval guns like those at Blunts Point. They are located across the harbor from Blunts Point on a terrace above, behind, and across the road from Breakers Point. Because of the size of the terrace the guns are placed one next to the other approximately 100 yards apart. Also, in the vicinity below the guns, on the harbor side, are barracks, and a mess hall for the marines manning the guns. Across the road built into the base of the Breakers Point hillside is an ammunition bunker. The guns are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

**25 The Blunts Point Naval Guns** are two large guns that could fire six-inch shells nine miles. These guns were placed at this location to defend Pago Pago Harbor from potential Japanese invading naval forces. They are mounted atop Matautu Ridge, at Tlutulu Point, which is also known as Blunts Point. Matautu Ridge is narrow and therefore the guns were placed one behind the other; a lower and upper gun. The marines who manned the guns were stationed nearby. Stairs behind the upper gun lead up into the mountains to concrete foundations of barracks, offices, and a mess hall. In addition, a ridge behind a modern water tank also has stairs, concrete foundations of support buildings, and an ammunition bunker for the guns. The lower gun is listed as a National Historic Landmark and on the National Register of Historic Places. The upper gun is currently being nominated for similar listing.



**Pill Boxes:** To date 81 pill boxes have been identified by archaeologists along the coast of Tutuila Island. The pill boxes of various styles were manned by crews with automatic weapons and served as an initial line of defense along the coast to resist an amphibious invasion by Japanese forces.

