

Publication Number: T1182

Publication Title: Records of the Government of American Samoa, 1900-1958

Date Published: n.d.

## RECORDS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF AMERICAN SAMOA, 1900-1958

### Introduction

American involvement in the Samoan Islands began on March 2, 1872. On that date, Commander Richard Meade of the United States Navy concluded an agreement with the Samoan chiefs that gave the United States exclusive rights to the harbor at Pago Pago. Great Britain and Germany desired annexation of the islands as well, and the conflicting claims of these three nations nearly led to an outbreak of hostilities in 1889. To avoid any recurrence of this situation, tripartite control over Samoa was agreed to in that same year, but the agreement was short-lived. The Samoan people were divided by dissension over internal matters, and in 1898 civil war broke out.

The United States, Great Britain, and Germany decided that only partition could restore peace to the islands. Accordingly, Great Britain renounced its claims to Samoan territory in favor of Germany, and the Treaty of Berlin of 1899 placed the seven eastern islands of Tutuila, Annu'u, the Manu'a group, Swain's Island, and Rose Island under United States control, while Western Samoa became a German possession. This agreement was ratified by the Senate on February 16, 1900. Three days later President McKinley issued an Executive Order which remained the basis of authority of the government of American Samoa for over fifty years:

The island of Tutuila, of the Samoan group, and all other islands of the group east of longitude 171 degrees west of Greenwich are hereby placed under the control of the Department of the Navy for a naval station. The Secretary of the Navy shall take such steps as necessary to establish the authority of the United States and give the islands the necessary protection. (Order dated February 19, 1900)

The order was the extent of specific authority delegated by the Secretary of the Navy of the first Commandant of the Naval Station at Tutuila and to his successors. The limit of control exercised over the Samoan people was left to his discretion, and he was accountable only to the Secretary of the Navy. The lack of detailed specification of his authority in civil matters troubled the first Commandant and those who followed him. Even after 1905, when the Commandant of the Naval Station also received a commission as Governor of American Samoa, the extent of his authority remained obscure.

Under the first Commandant, Benjamin Tilley, a system of "indirect rule" was established. Purely local matters remained in the hands of the local chiefs, and the traditional Samoan way of life received as little interference as possible. An Administrative structure was established which remained in effect until the end of the naval administration of the island. Three districts, the Eastern, Western, and Manu'a Districts, were organized, and each was headed by a Samoan chief. The three districts were subdivided into fourteen counties under the leadership of county chiefs. The counties in turn were subdivided into fifty-two villages, each governed by a pulenu'u, or village chief, and a council of matais, who were family heads.

The judicial structure, which was part of the administrative arm of the government, was organized in a similar manner. A High Court was established, and under it were five District and many village courts. In

1903, the Office of the Secretary of Native Affairs was created, incorporating supervision of the judiciary among its many functions. The Secretary, one of the only civilians in the naval government, was the second most important official in the government. The duties of the Secretary of Native Affairs included serving as a district judge, acting as a liaison between the Governor and the Samoan people, supervising district governors, judges and magistrates, as well as the copra industry, police, and tax collection. Thus the Secretary's powers were extensive; he was sheriff, prosecutor, and judge.

Gradually other departments were added to the government of American Samoa, although none had powers as great as the Office of Native Affairs. In 1913, the Departments of Treasury, Customs, Public Health, and Agriculture came into being, and in 1919 a Public Works Department was added. A number of boards and commissions were also gradually created. Ten such bodies existed by the end of the naval administration, including the Board of Education, Auditing Board, and the Land Commission.

The legislature of American Samoa, called the Fono, was not an independent branch of the government. The Fono had no power to make laws, but was an annual meeting of chiefs called by the Governor to advise him in the governance of the islands. He held full legislative power; the Fono could only draft resolutions and hope that he would follow them. The Annual Fono changed little during the naval government until 1948, when it became bicameral. The upper house, called the House of Ali'i, was composed of chiefs who gained membership in that body by virtue of their high titles. The lower house, called the House of Representatives, consisted of county delegates chosen by open meetings in the Samoan tradition. The Fono's powers, however, still remained only advisory.

Thus under naval rule, the Governor exercised the same authority over the Samoan people that he exercised over Navy personnel in his role as Commandant of the Naval Station. This situation inevitably produced discontent and resentment among the Samoans. During the 1920's the discontent emerged in the form of a movement known as the Mau, which means opinion. A committee of chiefs set itself up as an opposition government, demanding the establishment of a civil government to replace the existing naval one, which the chiefs declared was autocratic and overbearing. It also demanded that United States citizenship be extended to the people of American Samoa.

After 1930, the Mau's strength had largely dissipated. One reason was the expectation that American Samoa would be organized as a territory in the early 1930's. For nearly thirty years the islands had been largely ignored by Congress. In 1929, however, the Senate finally recognized the cession of Tutuila to the United States, which had occurred in 1900, and the 1904 cession of Manu'a. At the same time, Congress established a commission to be composed of four members of Congress and three Samoan chiefs to investigate conditions in American Samoa and recommend Congressional action concerning the islands. In 1930 the Commission heard eleven days of testimony in Hawaii and Samoa. Its recommendations took the form of an Organic Act providing United States citizenship for American Samoans and setting up separate executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the government. The Organic Act failed, however, in the House of Representatives in 1933.

Some government reform did occur as a result of the Commission's report, though. In 1931 the Office of the Secretary of Native Affairs, which had drawn much criticism because of the Secretary's extraordinary powers, was abolished. The Office of the Attorney General was created to take over the administrative functions of the Native Affairs Department, and a separate judicial branch was established under the leadership of a Chief Justice, who was a civilian.

Naval government continued in American Samoa without major change of incident throughout the war years. Military activity on the islands had always been considerable, but World War II brought Samoa's military importance to a peak. It was a peak which fell off sharply, however. In 1947 the Secretaries of State, War, Navy and Interior recommended to the President that American Samoa, Guam, and the Trust

Territory of the Pacific be transferred from Naval jurisdiction to that of the Department of the Interior. Executive Order 10264, issued June 29, 1951, followed this recommendation, and on July 1 of that year a civilian government was established in Samoa and the Tutuila Naval Station was closed.

In the switch from military to civilian rule, the form of the government of American Samoa changed very little. In 1952 there was a revision of the organization of the judicial branch. The village courts were abolished and their jurisdiction transferred to the District Courts, and the High Court was broken into three separate divisions: appellate, probate and trial. The largest change occasioned by the transfer to the Interior Department was in the Fono, which also was reorganized in 1952. Members of the House of Representatives were elected after this time by secret ballot. The House of Ali'i was replaced by a Senate composed of members chosen by the Samoan custom of the open meeting. At the same time, the Fono was made a permanent body instead of an annual meeting, and it gradually assumed more power and responsibilities, although it remained advisory.

Under the administration of the Department of the Interior American Samoa received its first Constitution. Written by a Constitutional Convention, it was ratified and approved by the Secretary of the Interior in 1960, and it became the basic law of the territory of American Samoa on October 17, of that year.

This preliminary inventory describes 183 feet of records that were transferred to the San Francisco (Region 9) Federal Records Center in May of 1969 from the Offices of the Governor and Attorney General, and from the High Court of American Samoa, located at Pago Pago. The records relate to the period between 1900 and 1966. They are a part of Record Group 126, Records of the Office of Territories.

## CONTENTS

<u>Roll</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	Records of the High Court Series No.5 Annual Reports of the Secretary of Native Affairs to the Governor: 1901, 1905-1925
2	Series No. 6 Unclassified Papers, 1902-1936 Island Filing Number 8A – Affairs of American Samoa, 1903-1928 Island Filing Number 8F – Licenses and Permits, 1924-1929
3	Papers of the Secretary of Native Affairs, 1902-1936 and undated papers Attorney General Files 8A – Affairs in America Samoa, 1903-1928 and undated papers Attorney General Files 8F – Licenses and Permits, 1925-1929 and undated papers Attorney General Files 8J – Public Works, 1925-1930 Papers Regarding Native Officials, 1918-1925
4	Series No. 11 Censuses of 1900, 1901, 1903, 1908-1909 Census of 1912
5	Census of 1916
6	Census Papers of 1920, 1922, 1926, also undated papers and a few papers 1923 at the end of the reel

7                   Census of 1945, Eastern Tutuila, Western Tutuila, and Manu'a, and Swain's  
                       Island

8                   Series No. 12

9                    Gun Petitions, 1905-1912

                      Village Affairs

                      Building Permits, 1900-1913

                      Misc. Petitions to the Governor, 1918

                      Investigators, 1901-1925

                      Gun Petitions, 1913-1925

10                  Village Resolutions, 1899-1919 and undated papers

                      Village Regulations, 1905-1924

                      Naval Station Regulations for American Samoa, 1900-1926

11                  Series No. 16

                      Native Agreements, 1904-1925

12                  Series No. 17

                      Fono Proceedings, 1905-1947

13                  Records of the Governor's Office

                      Series No. 1

                      Criminal Code, 1892

                      Code of Law, 1900-1906

                      Code of Law, 1912

                      Code of Law, 1937

                      Fragments of the Codes of Laws, 1939, 1941, 1942, 1945, 1946

14                  Codification of Laws for American Samoa, draft, 1946

                      Codification of Laws for American Samoa, revised, 1946

15                  Series No. 2

                      Regulations, Proclamations, and Orders of the Government of American  
                           Samoa, 1900-1956

16                  Fragments of Regulations, Proclamations, and Orders, 1946-1948

                      Misc. Orders, Regulations, Letters, Investigations, 1929-1941

                      Executive Orders, 1940, 1941

                      Regulations and Proclamations, 1941, 1942

17                  Laws and Regulations, 1945-1947

                      State Department Business, 1947-1949

                      Misc. Papers Regarding Organic Law for American Samoa, March 10, 1949

                      Executive Orders, 1948-1953, 1956

                      Proclamations, 1951-1953

18                  Series No. 4

                      Fono Proceedings, 1902-1926

                      Fono Proceedings, 1927-1929

19                  Fono Proceedings, 1930-1938

                      Fono Proceedings, 1939

20                  Fono Proceedings, 1940-1946

21                  Fono Proceedings, 1947-1949

22                  Fono Proceedings, 1949, 1950

23                  Series No. 5

                      Annual Reports on Government Affairs, 1902-1921

                      Annual Reports on Government Affairs, 1922-1923

24                  Annual Reports on Government Affairs, 1923-1929

25                  Annual Reports on Government Affairs, 1930-1933

26                  Annual Reports on Government Affairs, 1934, 1935-1938

27 Annual Reports on Government Affairs, 1940-1945  
 28 Annual Reports on Government Affairs, 1946-1950  
 29 Annual Reports on Government Affairs, 1951-1956  
 Series No. 6  
 General Interest Files, 1872-1948  
 The Case of the Motor Vessel Samoa, 1942-1947  
 30 Series No. 10  
 Congressional Hearings, 1930  
 Series No. 11  
 Evans vs. Ripley, 1921-1927  
 31 Subject Files, Subgroup I, 1900-1942)  
 Series No. 14  
 Agriculture  
 Barstow Foundation  
 32 B. F. Kneubuhl  
 Birds of Samoa  
 Books of Samoa  
 Census of American Samoa  
 Cemeteries  
 Churches and Missions  
 Communications  
 Consuls  
 Copra  
 33 Customs  
 Education  
 Entertainment  
 34 Governmental Affairs  
 Governmental Affairs: Political Unrest  
 35 Civil Government: 1922  
 Civil Government: Controversy, 1915-1926, File No. 1  
 Civil Government: Controversy, 1922, 1925, 1926-1928, File No. 2  
 Civil Government: Controversy, 1929-1930, File No. 3  
 Civil Government: Controversy, 1936, 1949, File No. 4  
 Civil Government: Relative Correspondence, 1925, 1926, 1936  
 36 Lands and Estates  
 Lepers  
 Matai Names  
 Max Haleck  
 37 Medical Reports: Miscellaneous  
 Medical Reports, 1899-1913  
 38 Medical Reports, 1914-1924  
 Barstow Foundation: Medical School  
 Papers Relating to Medical Students  
 39 Naval Observatory Blunt's Point, 1904-1908  
 Organic Act, 1930-1933  
 Permits, Buildings, Licenses, 1900-1940  
 Political Development Report  
 Postal Service  
 40 Public Works, 1900-1902  
 The Schooner Leona  
 German Firm Seized, 1918

Ships and Boats  
 The Seth Parker  
 The Building of the Manu'a (Schooner)  
 The Sinking of the Tahiti  
 Ships and Boats: The Grounding of the Princeton  
 Final Report on Tahiti School with Handing Over Notes  
 Ships and Boats (Miscellaneous)  
 Ships and Boats, Seumanutafa's Barge  
 Unlabelled Papers on the M.V. Samoa  
 41 Wm. Simon  
 Swain's Island  
 Trial-Toeupu, Murder  
 Weather Data, Manua Hurricane, 1915  
 Weather Data, Storm, 1918  
 Weather Data, Hurricane, 1926, 1927  
 Weather Data, Hurricane, 1936  
 Western Samoa, 1900-1901  
 42 Subject Files, Subgroup II, 1945-1958  
 Series No. 14, cont.  
 Alcoholic Liquor Control  
 Appropriations  
 Contracts  
 Correspondence of Governor Huber  
 Flag Day (there is some war damage claim material in this file)  
 43 Leases  
 Local Government  
 Letters of Cartwright Barrow  
 Medical School – Lepers  
 Personnel  
 Public Works  
 Samoan Industry  
 Star Kist Tuna  
 Supply  
 Trial of the Murder of Muliaga  
 General Judicial File  
 44 Tafuna Airport  
 Water Report  
 Water – Fluoridation  
 Subject Files, Subgroup III, 1931-1954  
 Series No. 14, cont.  
 Affairs in American Samoa  
 Boy and Girl Scouts  
 Fire Works  
 Fita Fita  
 Fono of Samoa  
 Fono Resolutions  
 Governor Darden's Speeches  
 The Government of Guam – Hurricane  
 45 Government of Guam  
 Hydrographic Data, Part 1  
 Hydrographic Data, Part 2

- Matai Names
- Rose Island
- Samoan Industry
- School Buildings, Supplies
- Captain T. Darden
- Tafuna Airport
- Taxes
- Reports to the United Nations, 1947-1956
- Reports to the United Nations, 1947-1956
- 46 Reports to the United Nations
- Weather Data, Hurricane: 1931
- Weather Data, Storm: 1939
- Papers Relating to Western Samoa
- 47 Subject Files, Subgroup IV, 1952
  - Series No. 14, cont.
    - Budget Papers
    - Christmas Cards
    - Christmas Party
    - Commissary Store
    - Commodity Administrator
    - Comments on the Green Book (Includes Department of Interior Survey on  
Government of American Samoa)
    - C.D.R. Bewick's Special File
    - Fire Bill
    - Gas-LL
    - Government of the Virgin Islands
    - Hawaiian Sugar Planter's Association Exp Farm
    - Incoming Mail Log
    - 48 Incoming Mail Log
    - Information Bulletin
    - Invitations
    - Liuone's Case
    - Macaulay and Budget
    - Memos and Orders, Miscellaneous Meetings
    - News Reports
    - Public Improvement and Planning Commission
    - Shark
    - Supply
    - Tafuna Airport
    - U.N. Information
    - Welfare and Recreation
- 49 Records of the High Court
  - Series No. 4
    - Codification of Laws/Regulations Samoan and English Language
      - a) Including Some Regulations, 1933-1937, dealing mostly with schools
      - b) A 1912 Translation into English of "Samoan Laws" by Dr. E. Schultz of  
Western Samoa
      - c) A Report by Secretary of Native Affairs, 1901
- 50 Continue of Codes of American Samoa
  - a) 1946, Volumes I & II
  - b) Including Minutes of Sessions of Committee of the Whole House of

- Representatives and House of Ali'i
- 51 Records of the Governor's Office  
Series No. 7  
Proposed Designs for the Flag of American Samoa  
Series No. 8  
General Studies on American Samoa by the Governors office, dealing with  
Geography, History, Government, People, etc.
- 52 Series No. 12  
Speeches & Ceremonies, including Programs for:  
a) Public School Demonstration of Day, 1936-1938  
b) Flag Day  
c) Malya, Fono, etc.
- 53 Series No. 13  
Investigations and Copies of Inquiry, 1945-1953  
a) Individual Complaints  
b) State Department Reports—Explosion on S.S. Chehalis  
c) Conduct of Government Officials  
d) Appointment of a Civilian Committee to Study Naval Administration of  
American Samoa and Guam
- 54 Records of the Attorney Generals Office  
Series 11  
Records of Boards, Commissions, Committees, etc. (Note: Records of the  
Court-connected "Insanity Committee," "Board of Pardons & Paroles,"  
and "Board of Inquiry with Power of Coroner as to Cause of Death of Dr.  
Chisolm" contain sensitive and confidential material, and have not been  
filmed.)  
a) Alcoholic Beverage Control Board  
b) Board of Directors, Bank of American Samoa  
c) U.S. Compensation & Claims Commission "Stevedoring Case" 1944-  
1946  
d) Constitutional Committee  
e) Board of Inquiry (damage to cocoa beans, Nelson vs. U.S., General  
Cocoa vs. U.S.)  
f) Board of Investigation for (a fire)  
g) 8-A, Public Hearings, Volume III only "Special Industry Committee"  
h) 10-D, Personnel Advisory Board
- 55 Series 13  
Copra Fund Books (prices, names of contractors, etc.)
- 56 Series 12  
District and Village Matters  
a) 8-G, Reports of Local Government Officials  
b) 8-D, Public Works—re. 9-C, Cater Systems, 9-B, Schools Buildings, 8-K,  
Tafuna Air Field  
c) Investigation of Administration of Swain's Island with Testimony  
by Samoans  
d) 8-B, Aid for Agriculture (government management of Mormon Ranch  
e) Navy Removal and Relocation of Part of Faienta Village  
f) A Food Shortage Letter  
g) A Court Martial Letter
- 57 Series 7  
Immigration and Emigration Records, 1937-1965



This series contains letters and affidavits of identity, passenger lists, travel permits and related correspondence. NOT FILMED are certain Visas and passport-related material which the State Department has restricted from reproduction.

Detailed Roll List of Reels 57-62

8-F (1)

- a) Travel Permits, Passenger Lists (1936-1942)
- b) General Immigration Files (parts not filmed), 1940-1943
- c) Reports on Number of Passports Renewed
- a) Continuation of (c) above
- b) Quota Reports (Form 258--back sides not filmed)
- a) 8-F (1) (1944-1947)
- b) Immigration Correspondence and Cases (some visa and passport material not filmed)
- c) Some Registrations
- d) Also Including Village Lists of Taxpayers
- e) Also Correspondence re: Stowaways "Stragglers" Adoptions, etc.
- a) Affidavits (1933-1950)
- b) General Immigration File (parts not filmed)

58

Letters of Identity

- a) Letters of Identity (1950-1951)
- b) General Immigration File (contains a few folders, some of which were not filmed)

59

Letters of Identity (also including some telegrams concerning detained Samoan students)

- a) Letters of Identity and Affidavits
- b) Some Not Filmed Visa Information

60

Letters of Identity and Affidavits

- a) Letters of Identity
- b) General Immigration File (part not filmed)
- a) Letters of Identity and Affidavits (March 1954-September 1956)
- b) General Immigration File (parts not filmed)
- a) Letters of Identity and Affidavits
- b) General Immigration File (parts not filmed)

61

Affidavits

- a) Letters of Identity (June 1959-May 1960)
- b) Passenger Lists (January 1959- November 1960)
- c) General Immigration File, Travel Permission (parts not filmed)
- d) Also a Proposal for Tafuna Airfield

62