

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic American Samoa's Defenses: Blunts Point Battery

and/or common Blunts Point Battery

2. Location

street & number Matautu Ridge _____ not for publication

city, town _____ vicinity of Pago Pago

state American Samoa code 60 county Tutuila Island code 050

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: private

4. Owner of Property

name Government of American Samoa

street & number _____

city, town Pago Pago _____ vicinity of _____ state American Samoa 96920

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Government of American Samoa

street & number _____

city, town Pago Pago _____ state American Samoa 96920

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Blunts Point Naval Gun has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date _____ federal state county local

depository for survey records National Register of Historic Places

city, town Washington _____ state D.C.

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The World War II Blunts Point battery is located on Matautu Ridge at Tulutulu (Blunts) Point on the west side of Pago Pago Harbor and southeast of the village of Utulei. The two 6-inch naval guns are at an elevation of approximately 200 feet and overlook the entrance to Pago Pago Harbor. The lower gun is the property of the Government of American Samoa.

The 6-inch gun is mounted on a concrete platform and is surrounded with a circular concrete parapet about four feet high. Whatever drains the parapet may have are now plugged and the emplacement is half full of water. The breech block is frozen open. The gun and its carriage have been stripped of many movable parts, but, other than rust, they are in good condition. A short distance below the emplacement, on the side of the trail that leads to the battery, is a concrete magazine built into the side of a cliff. It is a standard magazine of that period except that around three of its walls is a series of drain holes at ground level. This feature was possibly the result of the heavy rainfall and high humidity in Samoa. Traces of camouflage paint are on the face of the magazine. The thick vegetation on Matautu Ridge gave the battery excellent concealment. At the same time, the lower gun area provides grand vistas of Pago Pago Harbor and the ocean. A large water tank stands between the gun emplacement and the magazine but, because of changes in elevation and vegetation, it is not a visual intrusion from either.

A similar 6-inch gun battery was installed at Breakers Point on the east side of Pago Pago Harbor. Both weapons were removed and there are no traces of the emplacements today. There is a magazine at the base of the ridge which is similar to the one at Blunts Point.

The government-owned gun, its emplacement, and the magazine at Blunts Point are recommended for inclusion in a national historic landmark.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	community planning	landscape architecture	religion
1400-1499	archeology-historic	conservation	law	science
1500-1599	agriculture	economics	literature	sculpture
1600-1699	architecture	education	military	social
1700-1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian
1800-1899	commerce	exploration settlement	philosophy	theater
x 1900-	communications	industry	politics government	transportation
		invention		other (specify)

Specific dates 1940-1943

Builder Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Blunts Point battery at American Samoa is symbolic of the grim months following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, when the Japanese advances in the Pacific appeared to be unstoppable. Samoa was a vital link in the route from the United States to Australia and New Zealand, and Japan's 1938 Basic War Plan called for its seizure. There was considerable evidence in early 1942 that Japan was preparing to seize Samoa, especially after its advance into the Gilbert Islands to the north and New Britain to the west. The United States rushed the 2d Marine Brigade to strengthen American Samoa's defenses and the 3d Brigade to defend Western Samoa and Wallis Islands. American Samoa became the largest Marine Corps installation in the Pacific Ocean. After the Battle of Midway, a Japanese invasion was no longer a threat. Samoa continued to play an important role as a Marine Corps advanced training center in jungle warfare and a staging area for the coming battles in the South Pacific. World War II coastal guns in situ are extremely rare in the Pacific, thus adding to this battery's significance.

Background

European influence in the Samoan islands, especially the magnificent harbor of Pago Pago at Tutuila Island, began in the eighteenth century. The United States Navy also became interested after Commander Charles Wilkes, U.S. Exploring Expedition, visited in 1839. In 1872, Commander Richard Meade, USS Narragansett, arrived at Pago Pago seeking rights for a coaling station. Although the local chiefs were agreeable, the U.S. Congress failed to ratify a treaty. On more than one occasion during these years clashes occurred between American landing forces and Samoans.

Germany and Great Britain were also interested in acquiring rights in the Samoas and tensions grew among the three nations. In 1899, however, agreements were reached among the parties. Great Britain withdrew from the area. Germany gained control of Western Samoa. Eastern Samoa became

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Tutuila Island

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

0	2	5	3	5	0	6	0	8	4	2	0	0	8	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

A rectangle of land 100 feet wide and 400 feet long on the tip of Natautu Ridge to encompass the lower gun emplacement and the magazine. The water tank within this boundary is non-historic and is excluded.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Erwin N. Thompson, Historian

organization Western Regional Office, NPS

date June 26, 1986

street & number 450 Golden Gate Ave

telephone 556-4165

city or town San Francisco

state California 94102

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title date

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

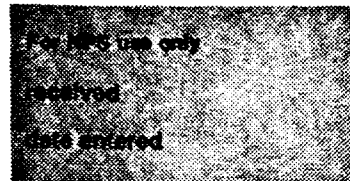
date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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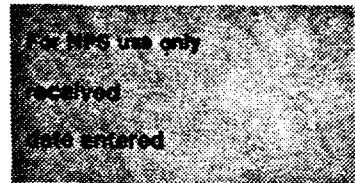
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an American territory. The U.S. Navy established a station in Pago Pago Harbor and the commanding officer was appointed governor of American Samoa. The first land defenses for Pago Pago were erected in World War I, when fears of German raiders in the Pacific led to the installation of a 3-pounder and a 3-inch gun, both on Blunts Point.

Japanese expansion in Asia and the growing tensions between that country and the United States led to the dispatch of the 7th Marine Defense Battalion to Pago Pago in December 1940. The battalion was a composite infantry-artillery unit with an initial strength of only 25 officers and 392 enlisted men. The naval governor received authorization to construct coastal defenses and antiaircraft positions. Four 6-inch naval guns and six 3-inch antiaircraft guns were already in storage at the naval station. The 6-inch guns were installed in two batteries, at Blunts (Tulutulu) Point on the western side of Pago Pago Harbor and at Breakers Point on the eastern side. The antiaircraft guns were placed mostly in the hills behind Pago Pago, and a number of 155 mm guns mounted to guard against enemy landings to the east and west of Pago Pago Harbor. The command also cut trails to possible landing beaches, laid communication wire, and constructed beach defenses. The Marines recruited and trained Samoans as a reserve force. The 1st Samoan Battalion, Marine Corps Reserve, was a going concern by the time of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Following that attack, Japan quickly captured Guam, Wake, and the Gilbert Islands, and invaded the Philippines, Burma, Malaya, Thailand, Java, and New Britain. By early 1942, only the sea area between the Hawaiian Islands and the United States and the supply route through the South Pacific to Australia were still in Allied hands. Admiral Ernest J. King, Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet, ordered Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet, to maintain communications with Australia at all costs, chiefly by protecting the Hawaii-Samoa line immediately. Concern was felt that the Japanese would break into that route from their new bases in the nearby Gilbert Islands.

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The immediate response to the crisis was to organize the 2d Marine Brigade in southern California. The brigade was composed of the 8th Marine Regiment, the 2d Battalion of the 10th Marines, and the 2d Defense Battalion. The Marines sailed from San Diego on January 6, escorted by carriers Yorktown and Enterprise. Meanwhile, the 7th Defense Battalion manned its defense positions. The Samoan Reserve Battalion was ordered to active duty. Rumors and false alarms abounded. Then, on January 11, a Japanese submarine shelled the naval station from the north side of Tutuila. The shelling did little damage but two personnel were wounded.

The 2d Marine Brigade arrived in Pago Pago Harbor on January 23. The aircraft carriers sailed on to conduct the United States' first carrier strike against the enemy, in the Gilbert and Marshall islands. The commanding officer of the brigade, Colonel (soon to be a brigadier general) Henry L. Larson, took over as the military governor of American Samoa. Navy Catalina patrol bombers were attached to the brigade and they flew reconnaissance and antisubmarine missions. By keeping lights on and working in shifts, an airfield was completed in March. The air element consisted of one Marine fighter squadron, VMF-111, and one scout-bomber squadron, VMO-151. About fifty concrete pillboxes were built at potential landing beaches. For its first three months in Samoa, the brigade's time was taken up in defense construction, with no time for combat training.

The same day the 2d Brigade landed at Pago Pago, Japanese troops captured Rabaul on New Britain, further endangering Samoa. If the Japanese advanced on Australia, they would want to cut the supply route from the United States first. New Zealand appealed to the United States for aid in defending Western Samoa where it had a garrison of less than 160 troops. Agreements were reached with New Zealand, and with the Free French concerning Wallis Island which geographically is a part of the Samoas. The United States was now responsible for the defense of all. The 7th Defense Battalion transferred to Western Samoa and the 8th Defense Battalion traveled to Wallis. The 3d Marine Brigade, composed of the 7th Marine Regiment and the 1st Battalion of

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the 11th Marines, was organized in March 1942. It arrived in Western Samoa on May 8. Some of its units went on to Wallis. To exercise overall authority, Headquarters, Samoan Area Defense Force was organized on Tutuila. Major General Charles F.B. Price became the commander of the force and military governor of American Samoa. Tutuila garrison increased in April with the arrival of the 1st Raider Battalion. Later, a barrage balloon squadron arrived for the defense of Pago Pago Harbor. In June 1942 an inspecting admiral found 8,000 personnel stationed in American Samoa, more than 5,000 in Western Samoa, and 2,600 on Wallis.

Japan's successes in early 1942 caused it to speed up its strategy. It now planned three successive conquests: 1. Port Moresby in New Guinea, to secure air mastery of the Coral Sea. 2. Midway Islands, to strengthen its perimeter of defense and lure out the U.S. Pacific Fleet and destroy it. 3. Samoa, Fiji, and New Caledonia in order to cut the route from the United States. None of these plans succeeded. Because of casualties suffered in the Battle of the Coral Sea early in May, Japan postponed the invasion of Port Moresby until July. Then, Japan's utter defeat in the Battle of Midway in June removed any threats to Samoa's safety as well as canceling any option concerning Port Moresby.

Samoa now became a vast advanced jungle-warfare training camp for replacements and reinforcements of Marines being forwarded to amphibious operations in the Solomons and elsewhere. For a seven-month period ending in July 1943, all Marine replacement battalions raised on the East Coast of the United States trained in Samoa. The Blunts Point battery is dramatic evidence of that time in Samoa's history.

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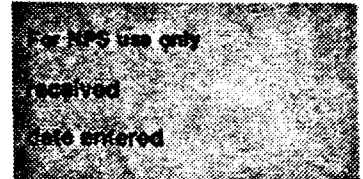
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