

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: American Samoa	
COUNTY: Mauputasi	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	FEB 12 1974

1 NAME

COMMON:  
Courthouse of American Samoa

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Courthouse of American Samoa

2 LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Fagatogo

STATE:  
American Samoa

CODE	COUNTY: <u>Tutuila Island</u>	CODE
	<u>Mauputasi Eastern District</u>	

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
Government of American Samoa

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Pago Pago

STATE:  
American Samoa

CODE:

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Courthouse of American Samoa

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Fagatogo

STATE:  
American Samoa

CODE:

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
None known

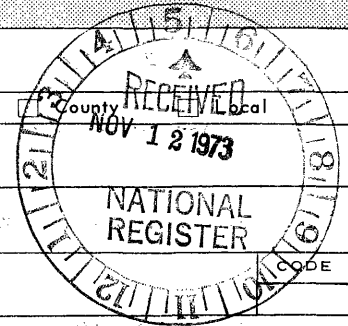
DATE OF SURVEY:  Federal  State

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:



STATE:

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7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE and historic significance.

THE AMERICAN SAMOAN HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
COURTHOUSE OF AMERICAN SAMOA

The Historical Commission has not been able to locate in American Samoa any record indicating the exact time the Courthouse was constructed. However, a careful research was carried out of the U.S. Navy's projects and activities in American Samoa, as far back as July of 1890 when Rear Admiral Kimberly, U.S.N., was instructed to supervise the survey of an establishment of a U.S. Coaling Station in Pago Pago, pursuant to an Act making appropriations for the project (25 Stats. p: 814). The following report is, therefore, based on the results of this research.

The Navy Department on August 5, 1898, ordered Civil Engineer Frank T. Chamber, U.S.N., to proceed to American Samoa for duty in connection with the construction of a wharf, a coal house, and other buildings at Pago Pago, Tutuila. The Commission is fully convinced that the Courthouse was one of the buildings constructed under Chamber's mission.

On March 1899, the Navy Department directed Commander B.F. Tilley, U.S.N., Commanding Officer of the U.S.S. Abarenda which arrived at Pago Pago in the same year, to regard the instructions issued to Civil Engineer Chamber. At the same time, the incumbent President of the United States sent several Americans to help with the construction of the wharf and buildings. Two of these men were Mr. Charles C. King and Mr. Joseph J. Jewett. Admiral Tilley left for Auckland, N.Z. on December 7, 1899, to acquire materials for the completion of the wharf and the buildings.

On July 25, 1900, the U.S. Post Office Department notified the Navy Department that a Post Office had been authorized at the U.S. Naval Station, Pago Pago, Tutuila. It was opened on October 1, 1900. Mrs. Hudson, wife of Chief Boatswain Hudson, U.S.N., was appointed in charge and became the first Postmaster for Tutuila, now American Samoa. This Post Office was built on a piece of land at Malalooa, just below the first Samoan hospital. Forty of fifty feet to the Pago Pago side of the Post Office stood Mr. Jewett's house.

On August 4, 1900, Mr. E.W. Gurr, a New Zealand lawyer and barrister, was appointed by the Commandant as Secretary to the Commandant and also act as Judge and Legal Adviser. His services with the Island Government were severed in 1908.

Interviews with several people whose ages from 55 to 93 years in both American Samoa and Western Samoa, indicated that the Courthouse took nearly three (3) years to complete; and that many people from Western Samoa worked as carpenters in its construction from beginning to end.

From 1898 when Civil Engineer Chamber was assigned to construct the wharf, coal house and other buildings in Pago Pago, to October 1, 1900 when the first U.S. Post Office was opened by Mrs. Hudson, to the tour of duty of Commander E. B. Underwood, U.S. Navy, which started in May 5, 1903 and ended

S E E I N S T R U C T I O N S

**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1890 to present**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			_____

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE **cont'd.**

"From the preceding description it is seen that the Courthouse is a strong reminder of Naval presence on Tutuila."



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"American Samoa Historic Preservation Plan", Volumes I, III May 1973  
 "Courthouse of American Samoa", H.C. Tuiteleleapaga May 1973

HB  
 20  
 1/100

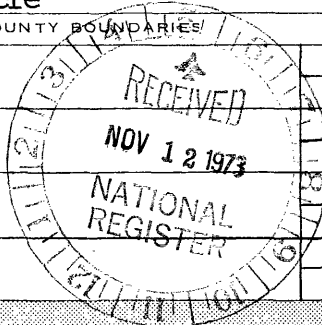
10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	° ' "	° ' "		°	'	"
NE	° ' "	° ' "		°	'	"
SE	° ' "	° ' "		145	16	30
SW	° ' "	° ' "		170	41	24

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Less than one acre

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES:

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
None			
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Donald F. Graf, State Historic Preservation Officer

ORGANIZATION: Governor's Office DATE: 12 June 1973

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Pago Pago STATE: American Samoa CODE:

12 STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Donald F. Graf  
 Name Donald F. Graf

Title State Historic Preservation Officer

Date June 12, 1973

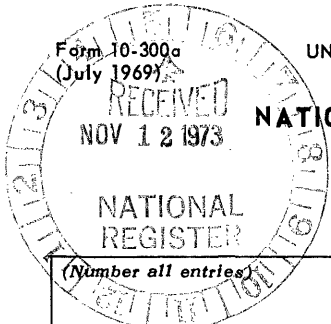
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

A. P. Winters  
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 2/12/74

ATTEST:  
Compton  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date 2-6-74



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(Number all entries)

in January 20, 1905, it would be a close estimation that the construction of the Courthouse began some time in 1900 and completed either on the last part of 1903 or early in 1904. In arriving at this time estimate, the Commission also considered the employment of Mr. Gurr as a judge in August, 1900. He presided on cases which were held in nowhere else but the Courthouse for the Commission found no records to show that early trials had been held elsewhere.

After the construction of the Courthouse, it was used during the administration of the U.S. Navy, to house the offices of the Commandant-Governor, Chaplain, Disbursing Officer, Library, Aide to the Governor, in the upper floor. In the ground floor, there were offices of the Judge (who was also the Secretary of Native Affairs), the Attorney General, the Prosecutor, the Head of the Police Department), the Court Clerk, the Tax and Passport Clerk, the captain of the yard, and one large Court Room.

During the 52 years of the U.S. Navy Administration, the Courthouse had endured numerous changes in connection with shifting of offices. Hundreds of court martials had been conducted in the Governor-Commandant's Office; hundreds of U.S. Army Generals and U.S. Navy Admirals and other distinguished officers of the U.S. Armed Forces had been received by Samoan chiefs and leaders in the Governor-Commandant's office or in the Court Room; many distinguished leaders from Western Samoa and other Pacific Islands sat and met with local chiefs in the Court Room.

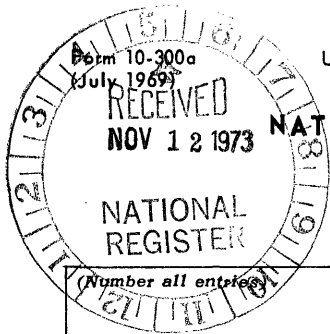
On November 5, 1920, an inquiry was held in the Court room to investigate and to resolve an unrest between some Samoan chiefs and the Government. In 1930, a hearing by the Bingham Commission was also held in the Court. Hundreds of marriages have been solemnized there.

In addition to the above, the Court room was used as an Assembly Hall or Meeting Place for the chiefs, leaders, and representatives from each village, county, and district of Tutuila and Manua, for their annual meetings called the FONONO. This continued until the Enlisted Men's barracks was assigned for the Legislature of American Samoa in 1954.

At present, the Courthouse is assigned to the exclusive use of the Court, or Judicial Department. It houses two papalagi Justice (Chief and Associate), and five Samoan judges. The building has two additional court rooms now, the old one is court room no. 1.

It is amazing that the Courthouse, one of the oldest buildings in American Samoa, has withstood the 20th Century in such good shape. It has been through two World Wars, dozens of hurricanes, thousands of inches of tropical torrential downpours, millions of ants and cockroaches, termites and bugs.

The architectural structure of the building is reminiscent of a Southern plantation with columned open verandas, high ceilings, large rooms on a two-story frame building. It was one of the first buildings the Navy constructed



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in Samoa and they designed it so that it faced the Pago harbor about 100 yards across the William McKinley Memorial highway.

In January of 1973, the Court hoped to experiment with some of the Interior woodwork to see how it would look. The plan was to bring a Troop of Boy Scouts in to use paint and to bring out the bare wood. Troop 293 of Nuuli Ward Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints came in on four weekends to do the task. It was hard work removing 7 coats of paint, from decades past, but when it was done, the bannister looked like a million dollars. It consists of 40, three foot dowels supporting a heavy wooden railing. The wood appears to be an oak or some other hard and heavy light colored tree. It absorbed an oil stain well, and will be easily kept up, should it ever get any nicks or scratches, since all it needs is a little sanding and some oil stain.

A similar thing was done with the steps of the staircase next to the bannister. Because of the poor condition of the linoleum, the Court had Maintenance come out and chip the old tile up and then sand it down to the bare wood. In the process we discovered that the step protectors (at the edge of each step) were made of solid brass. In the past, when the hall way was painted, these 5 foot long, 10 pound strips were just slopped over with paint. These would be very rare and expensive today. The Court plans to use brasso to return the brass to its gold gleam, and use them to hold down carpeting, instead of again ruining the finish of the indoor steps with glue and tile.

The second floor of the building has two sky lights built through the ceiling and roof. In the past these were not adequately cleaned or maintained, but they are a distinct addition to the hall way and offices which would otherwise be without natural daylight. Outside on the 10 foot wide porches, which run along three sides of the building on the ground floor and the second floor, are round, hanging, street lights. At night, they light up the building with a dramatic and romantic effect. A more effective lighting system for the outside would be impossible to imagine.

Without going on for pages describing every door handle, door, wall, or other fixture, I would like to emphasize that the interior of the building is wood. It was built long before sheet rock came on the market, and just by removing the old paint and staining the wood, the court rooms, offices, and hallway would have a paneled dignity and impressiveness to them which would fulfill its functional use.

The building is old, and many timbers have rotted and been replaced several times. The Courthouse is so attractive and worth noticing that one of its many pictures taken by tourists and government officials was made the front cover of the January, 1973, issue of the American Bar Association Journal.