The Past Surrounds Us

Historic Preservation in American Samoa

John Enright and the Staff of the American Samoa Historic Preservation Office

Preface

This book is a collection of columns written originally for weekly publication in the Samoa News. Their purpose was to bring to the attention of my fellow citizens the preservation of the past which is part of their heritage. The Samoa News on Monday mornings, probably with a cup of coffee. Wake up and smell the coffee columns.

In The Grapes of Wrath John Steinbeck asked, "Without the past, how do we know who we are?" The intent of these columns was to bring that question home to my fellow citizens of Tutuila ma Manu`a.

I am a story teller, not an historian. Histories are comprehensive; this book is anecdotal. My impulse is to humanize the past, to try to feel how the people who lived it felt.

This is a travel book, but the trip is through time not space. The place never changes: Tutuila ma Manu`a, ... is here I have tried to get right. The facts are important. The facts are what we share, what we agree upon.

But the existence of different versions of the past, of what is important there, is the life sign of a people. These columns are a practice--the shared chorus and separate verses.

Tutuila ma Manu`a will flower as long as they tend those roots.

Teu le va.

John Enright

American Samoa Historic
Part 1: The Past Around Us

Anyone who has spent any time in American Samoa recognizes it as a special place, a place quite unlike any other place they have ever been. What is it that makes American Samoa unique?

There is its physical beauty, of course, its jungle-cushioned volcanic peaks andスターな世界の伝統と家族生活——それは同時に同じ時代に存在するものだ。

But an important part of American Samoa's special character is the scope of events that shaped what it is today, its special history.

In a very real way, place is history, especially for a place that has been occupied by the same people for three thousand years.

While part of American Samoa's rich legacy is preserved in its oral traditions, customs, and written records, the historic districts that nurtured and contained those traditions need to be maintained.

That is the purpose of historic preservation in American Samoa—to sustain the uniqueness and importance of their human history.

That history goes deep here. The historic resources left behind by three thousand years of human occupation, from the prehistoric construction in the limestone caves of Fatumafuti to World War II sites like the naval gun emplacements at Blunts Point and Breakers Point.
Some sites, such as Government House and the Atauloma Girls School, are visible and easily recognized. Other sites have vanished, and many of these have been destroyed. In recognition of the scientific and cultural importance of these tangible links to our islands' past, the United States government has developed a program to protect them.

In this series of articles we will take a look at the different types of historic resources that can be found in American Samoa. We will briefly discuss what has been done and can be done to protect them from unnecessary damage.

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Part 2: Ancestral Evidence

John Enright

The oldest instances of historic resources in American Samoa are archaeological. The dictionary defines archaeology as the study of ancient life and activities. These material remains are usually found in the earth and must be carefully retrieved.

Archaeology is a painstaking science that relies upon the patient accumulation and analysis of vast amounts of data. But enough pieces of information have been put in place that we can see part way into the past.

The most recent scientific estimate is that the first Samoans settled in these islands about 3,000 years ago. We know this from studying the pieces of a distinctive type of pottery they brought with them called Lapita pottery.

The archaeological evidence suggests that these pioneers settled in villages mainly along the prehistoric coastlines. There were a number of such villages, and they were the homes of extended families. As these families grew in size, some members of the group took up residence closer to the shore, while others moved farther inland. In this way, the ancestral evidence explains how the different villages came to be used by the different groups of people who lived in them.

Closer to the surface most of the prehistoric remains date to more recent periods.
When not at war in later prehistory Samoans lived in villages; in American Samoa these were mostly in American Samoa.

The late prehistoric sites at Maloata and Fagatele Bay, both on Tutuila, and Faga on Ta`u are village sites.

The final prominent site type from late prehistory are tia seu lupe, called star mounds.

This has been a very quick view of archaeology in American Samoa.

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**Part 3: Papalagi**

John Enright

The best current scientific guess is that after the first Polynesians arrived in Samoa, they still stayed in touch as best they could through voyaging.

Samoan legends and proverbs are rich with incidents of travel and contact between their own. The castaways were taken in, the visiting parties were also dealt with as was dictated by custom.

Then 28 centuries, one hundred ten generations, into their occupation of these islands, a strange breed of...
The first recorded European contact occurred in 1722, when Dutch navigator Jacob Roggeveen sighted several islands that were named after his ship, the Statendam. He named them the Samoan Islands in honor of the first European contact he made here.

On the north shore of Tutuila, in the now deserted village of A`asu, is a monument set up by the government in 1976 to commemorate the 1778 clash with the Americans under Captain James Cook, which resulted in the deaths of 39 Samoan warriors. There is no monument to the 39 Samoan warriors who also died in that first cultural clash.

The first European Christian missionary, Englishman John Williams of the London Missionary Society (LMS), arrived in 1832. Williams and his followers had a profound impact on Samoans and their culture. Other missions lead by the Catholic Church and the Church of Later Day Saints were later established. A white concrete cross on the shoreline in Leone memorializes the arrival of the Catholic Church on Tutuila.

Two of the oldest still standing architectural structures in the Territory--the Fagalele Boys School and the Sacred Heart College--were built in the late 19th century during the heyday of the missions. The Fagalele Boys School was founded in 1856, and the Sacred Heart College was founded in 1876. Both schools were run by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and the Society of Jesus, respectively.

From the 1850s on a slowly increasing number of European and American traders set up shop on Tutuila, while the Manu`a Islands remained largely untouched by these events. By the end of the 19th century, American and European traders had begun to establish small trading posts on Tutuila.

Historic structures associated with Euro-Americans, both military (to be discussed in Part 5) and otherwise, are scattered throughout the island. Many of these structures have been preserved and are open to the public.

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Part 4: The U.S. Navy Arrives

John Enright with Stan Sorensen
America's initial interest in Samoa was one of global balance of influence among competing continental powers, the farthest edge of their interests at the center of ours, had taken on a new and foreign significance. It had become a strategic location.

In that age, the Pacific islands were like outer space to European powers, the farthest edge of their interests at the center of ours, had taken on a new and foreign significance. It had become a strategic location.

In March 1889 warships of the German, English, and American navies faced off against each other in Apia for possession of these islands over which they had no earthly or heavenly claim.

An act of god, a late March hurricane, destroyed most of the ships where they were anchored or when they were sailing. The hurricane caused great destruction and loss of life among both sailors and Samoans, but it stopped the potential war.

Ten years later, in 1899, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States signed an agreement that without the British or the German claims to the Samoa Islands, the United States acquired the eastern island group of Tutuila, Aunu`u, and Manu`a. That same year a dock and coaling station were constructed by the U.S. Navy in Fagatogo, and Commander Benjamin Tilley, USN, became the first Officer in Charge of the U.S. Naval Station Tutuila.

Commander Tilley was responsible for the construction of Navy Building Number 1, Government House, on Tutuila, which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972, and was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1990. Other historic buildings completed during this period were Navy Building 21, the Administration Building of Tutuila Naval Station, and other Navy buildings.

Thirteen years later, as America drew closer to involvement in World War I, Congress appropriated $23,491 for the construction of a dock and coaling station in Fagatogo, Tutuila. The dock and coaling station in Fagatogo and Utulei comprise the “U.S. Naval Station Tutuila Historic District.”

A photographic exhibit of these and other historic sites on Tutuila is currently on display at the National Park Visitors Center in Pago Plaza.

Next week--World War II.

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Part 5: World War II Tutuila

John Enright with Stan Sorensen

Being on the farthest edge of the European world, Samoa felt only the distant shock waves of World War I. In American Samoa, the U.S. Naval Station Tutuila underwent some wartime expansion.

World War II, however, brought a different scenario for Samoa and a much more major role in the war in the Pacific.

At the beginning of the war, American Samoa was definitely a front line station. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, brought the United States into the war. The Japanese bombarded the harbor and the town of Pago Pago. One of the shells struck the house of Frank Shimasaki in Utulei.

During World War II, the U.S. Naval Station Tutuila was the headquarters of the Samoa Defense Group, which included American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands, some of the Cook Islands and French Polynesia. It was the largest of the Pacific defense groups.

The most prominent survivors of this period are the two 6-inch naval guns at Blunts Point and their siblings at Point Loma. All were emplaced in 1941. The lower Blunts Point gun is a National Historic Landmark.

Other historic structures of the World War II era include concrete fortifications, of which many survive. One of the best examples is a Marine Corps communications bunker in "Happy Valley," above Pago Pago village.

One of the largest military complexes on World War II Tutuila was the U.S. Navy's Mobile Hospital Number 3. The site of MOB 3 are a few scattered concrete foundations and a reservoir above the Apiolefaga Inn.

Located near the hospital, In Malaeimi Valley, was the Marine Corps' Advanced Jungle Warfare Training Center. It included a large concrete bunker with supporting barracks. The bunker and foundations to the barracks remain to this day.

Two airfields were built during the war. The Tafuna Air Base was completed in April 1942. It eventually evolved into the Pago Pago International Airport.
A Marine Corps fighter strip, located along the strip of land where Leone High School and Midkiff Elementary were once located, served as a northern gateway during the construction of the base. The islands were not safe until the Battles of the Coral Sea and Midway threw the Japanese back on the islands. Our remaining historic properties from this era serve as reminders of the important role that American Samoa played in history's greatest war.

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**Part 6: The Quarries of Tutuila**

John Enright with David J. Herdrich

In recent decades, archaeologists and historians have been able to assemble some of the pieces of a story. Metallurgy was not practiced by traditional Pacific island cultures. Until the arrival of metal implements brought by Euro-Americans, Pacific islanders fashioned what nature provided into tools and weapons. Archaeological research has provided evidence of shell, bone, obsidian, and stone implements, all carefully crafted from volcanic rock called basalt. A variety of adzes (matau), chisels, and scrapping tools were made from basalt.

Here and there on the ridges, ridge spurs, and steep mountain sides of Tutuila can be found outcrops of a volcanic rock that has been quarried for centuries. To the trained eye, these sites tell a story of hundreds of years of continuous use and millions of man-hours spent in the care of their quarry areas.
From the dense scatter of basalt "flakes," "cores," "blanks," "preforms," and pieces of tools that have been found at Tatagamatau, it is clear that the Samoans were skilled in the art of basalt toolmaking. These were special, export quality basalt tools that were produced exclusively for trade. Tatagamatau. Leone Bay is far below you when you can see it through the jungle canopy. The footing can be treacherous, but the view is well worth the effort.

Here is where it all begins, at a large basalt outcrop, where "blanks" were rock hammered out of a core and pecked or flakes removed at various steps of manufacture allows us to reconstruct the stages needed to make each type of tool. A sense of the social order of the manufacturers takes shape when we realize that tools were made in an area that had a strong ceremonial role. For many of Tutuila's prized adzes did leave the island as trade items. Thanks to recent developments in the study of the Stone Age, we already Tutuila has assumed an historic role at the center of a great regional trade in fine stone tools.

The exciting thing about this story from the past is that it is still unfolding before us as we explore it.

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Part 7: Star Mounds

John Enright with David J. Herdrich
It is pleasing when we discover something frivolous about our ancestors, as it humanizes them. We usually view our ancestors as serious people in the context of their sports. On Motu o fiafiaga we know they must have been doing something for fun.

As it happens we do know from Samoan oral history, early written European accounts, and archaeological evidence of a Samoan sport of chiefs from the time before missionaries—pigeon catching.

Deep in the steamy rainforest and along the nearly inaccessible volcanic ridgelines of Tutuila ma Manu`a can be found a remnant of the kind of leisure activity that could not have been part of any religious or ceremonial activity. The prevalence of tia seu lupe attest that these structures were once of some importance in Samoan culture.

Constructed of earth and stone and faced with rock or coral slabs, tia seu lupe are basically level-topped structures 10 to 15 feet in height. They are characterized by their distinctive projecting arms or rays. There are usually five to eight such projections.

On Tutuila alone more than 80 star mounds have been discovered.

The English translation of tia seu lupe is "platform for netting lupe." Lupe is the Pacific Pigeon (Ducula) and the method of catching them from atop a tia seu lupe was sustainable. The pigeon-catching sport was performed on these platforms, however, were probably of greater social significance than just locations for chiefly sport hunting.

From the journal of William B. Churchward, British Consul to Samoa, in 1887: "Pigeon catching is the oldest sport of the Samoans. It is a game of skill and requires a knowledge of the pigeons' flight and a training of the driver who, in a high degree, and whilst it lasted all sorts of irregularities could be indulged in without comment."

Presumably because of these accompanying indulgent "irregularities," the first Christian missionaries took an early and virulent dislike to the sport and suppressed it.

One of the more impressive star mounds is the centerpiece of American Samoa's Tiaseulupe Park on the Tafuna Ridge. The Tiaseulupe Park exists thanks to the generosity of the Haleck family, who spared the site from being developed for modern tourism.

The Tiaseulupe Park has a length of the two sections is 34 meters and it rises more than 3 meters above the surrounding rocky terrain.

The fate of other tia seu lupe has not been so kind. Many lowland tia have already been destroyed, and a few others are gone or reduced in size by encroaching development. In both cases, the public is being asked to save these sites once dedicated to the Samoan sport of kings.
Part 8: The National Register of Historic Places

John Enright

Occasionally in these articles we have referred to a building or a site as being a "National Historic Landmark" or as being included on the "National Register of Historic Places." What exactly does that mean?

Basically, these are official designations established by the federal government to recognize significant historic properties.

In this instance, Tutuila ma Manu`a are considered fully part of America, with the assistance of both Federal laws and funding.

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's cultural resources worthy of preservation and of consideration in making planning and development decisions.

The National Register is administered by the National Park Service under the Secretary of the Interior. These resources contribute to an understanding of the historic and cultural foundations of the Nation.

National Register properties are distinguished by having been documented and evaluated according to strict standards of significance.

The American Samoa Historic Preservation Office has been nominating local historic sites to the National Register. Four additional sites will soon be added, and nominations for another five have been prepared.
Two of our National Register sites--Government House (Mauga o Ali`i) and the World War II Blunts Point Gun Emplacement--were designated as National Historic Landmarks. What does it mean to have a site listed on the National Register aside from the official recognition of its historic and cultural importance? It means that the property’s significance must be taken into consideration in the planning for Federal or State projects. In the States it also means that the property owner is eligible for Federal tax benefits for money spent on maintenance of a listed property. However, the ASG tax code does not currently include such benefits. Perhaps it should. Perhaps even more can be done locally to protect these islands’ historic specialness. Why leave the oversight responsibility for our cultural continuance up to the Feds? History grows as time passes. Each generation has its own story to pass on along with those of the deeper ages. What story will we have left for them to read on the land we tended for them?

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Sites in American Samoa currently listed on The National Register of Historic Places:

The U.S. Naval Station Tutuila Historic District includes the following buildings in Fagatogo and Utulei (present uses are indicated in parentheses):

Navy Building 1. Government House (National Historic Landmark)

Navy Building 20. Duplex Officers' Quarters (District Court)
Navy Building 21. Administration Building (High Court)

Navy Building 26. Deuplex Officers' Quarters (Lt. Gov.'s residence)

Navy Building 31. Fitafita Barracks (Dept. of Public Safety)

Navy Building 38. Radio Station (territorial Register's Office)

Navy Building 43 & 24. Commissary (Jean P. Haydon Museum)

Navy Building 45. Bakery (Western Union)

Navy Building 67. (Customhouse)

Navy Building 72. Jail (Archives)

Navy Building 78. Ammunition Magazine (behind Public Safety, used for storage)

Navy Building 131C. Old Rainmaker Hotel (South Pacific Mini-Games)

Navy Building 133. Nurses' Quarters (Pago Pago Yacht Club)

Navy Building 140. Enlisted Men’s Club. (Triplex apartments, southeast of Public
Parade Grounds (Fagatogo malae)

Other sites:

Blunts Point Naval Gun Site, Gatavai (National Historic Landmark)

Fagalele Boys' School, Sogi

Atauloma Girls' School, Afao

Massacre Bay Historic Site, A`asu

Tatagamatau Fortified Adze Quarry Complex, Leone

A`a Prehistoric Village, Pa Cove

Additional sites that have been nominated for the Register:

Fagatele Bay Archaeological site
AS 31-72, Defensive Wall, Faleniu

Tulauta Historic Village, Tula

Maloata Historic Village, Maloata Valley

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Part 9: A Closer Look at Tutuila in WWII, It Begins

John Enright

Overheard on the ASCC campus:

"I don't know why I'm studying history, man;

that stuff has already happened."
For more than 50 years now Samoa has basked in an era of historic tranquility, the Pacific Pax Americana....

War is now something somewhere else, on CNN, involving smart bombs and red and green lights on computer... in places with strange names half the world away. "Stuff that has already happened," and to other people.

It wasn't always so. Once not so long ago, within living memory, the people of Tutuila ma Manu`a blacked out... invasion began. People just like us, living where we live, seeing the same sea, walking these same streets.

The following is from a document stamped "Secret" on every page by the U.S. Navy (declassified in 1972):

"The Japanese strike at Pearl Harbor came as a surprise to the people in American Samoa and the entire... supply lines which lead to Australia, New Zealand and later New Caledonia, the New Hebrides and Guadacanal.

"Some of the Naval personnel and contractors had their families with them who were immediately evacuated to... of the island armed with bush knives, volunteering to do anything necessary for the defense of Tutuila.

"There was no longer any time to worry about expense or approval in construction.

"All able bodied Samoans were called in to assist in building defenses. The women and children were... yards and docks to utilize all civilian personnel and equipment for any defense purposes that he desired.

The Second Marine Brigade, consisting of approximately 5600 officers and enlisted... The Historic Preservation Office is interested in hearing your story about life on Tutuila ma Manu`a during... tend your memories well. Don't let a proud legacy become just stuff that has already happened.

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Part 10: A Closer Look at Tutuila in WWII, The Impact

John Enright

Dates and numbers are the precision parts of history. Without them the understanding-the-past machine could not function. Chronology and statistics can help us flesh out our understanding of our foreparents' lives.

Although Tutuila ma Manu`a were saved in the end from the tremendous physical destruction that was the fate of the islands during World War II, the war effort's cumulative impact upon these islands changed them forever.

Before WWII, the American presence was primarily confined to the Naval Station in Fagatogo and Utulei. Navy personnel and their families lived out of sight of the Tutuila villagers. Those who worked for the station were not separate from their gafa, the village community. Most of the American personnel did not mingle with the local population. The American presence was a separate world from the Manu`a's, and the two worlds coexisted without much interaction. Only a handful of the Manu`a's had worked for the station, and for payment, and very few others interacted with station personnel.

In 1940, as the clouds of war began to gather on the horizon, 10,311 people lived on Tutuila, of whom 10,000 were Samoans and 300 were Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino islanders. Three hundred and twelve of the 300 were Americans, including 61 Palagi, 115 Japanese, and 135 Chinese islanders. A little more than three hundred people were station personnel from the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps.

By May 1942 there were 7,995 U.S. Navy and Marine Corps personnel on Tutuila, in addition to the 1,000 people on the Naval Station. Some 30,000 armed strangers passed through, as others continued to arrive weekly. Tens of thousands of armed strangers passed through.

Tutuila has always been a peaceful place. In 1941, in the middle of that year, there had been 17 arrests and all were related to the purchase of alcohol. But that year there was marital law, and all able-bodied Samoan men had been put to work building military installations. Over 500 of Tutuila's men had been drafted for work. In 1941, there had been 17 arrests, but in 1942, there had been over 500 arrests. Thirty (3) Japanese and German were taken into custody, then released but kept under observation.

As opposed to before, now all of Tutuila felt the impact of the military presence, as all 52 of the village men had been to work. More than two-thirds of those on the Tutuila station were Palagi, and of all those, 31 were Palagi, 4 Japanese, and 1 Chinese. Additional Naval Station personnel numbered 263.

But the major long-term historical impact was economic and social. Men were pulled from their plantations to the station, and much of the work on the station was done by the local people. By 1941, the station's payroll had increased the economic wellbeing of Tutuila. Labor was paid in dollars. The local participation in the military work put to work, and put dollars directly into the local economy. Over 700 children were born to Tutuila mothers and American fathers. Many women bore children for the first time.

In 1941 the Government of American Samoa's total revenues from all sources was $87,330; four years later at $540,175. That is an increase of 399.3 percent in the four years, but Westernization. A new die was cast; a new era of struggle for cultural survival had begun.
Part 11: Government House, Mauga O Ali`i

John Enright

Buildings make statements. Public buildings make public statements. Think of the Pentagon, for instance, or the cathedrals. They are proud statements. “I am power.” says the Pentagon. “I glorify God.” say the cathedrals.

The buildings speak for the people who built them, and the people who built them spoke from a particular time and space. It raises the questions: What was its builder proud of? What does that pride tell us of his thought and time?

Government House was built in a turn-of-the-century architectural style called Tropical Victorian Military. It was built to be the residence of Commandant of the U.S. Naval Station Tutuila (USNST). It is a proud house.

Even by turn-of-the-century mainland standards it was a rather grandiose residence. It was the proper establishment, with servants, etc., that should properly go with such a position. That’s proud.

Togotogo Ridge in Utulei (already renamed Observatory Point by the Navy) was leveled and graded from low-lying ground to a high point. It stood on low-lying ground near water level, this large, airy, white house stood high above the rest.

Commander Tilley never got to live in the house; his successor Commander E.B. Underwood was its first occupant. One of them, Commander W. J. Terhune, USN, committed suicide there (see sidebar).

Government House was entered on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972 and was designated as a National Historic Landmark. Recently the residence received an extensive interior and exterior face lift and paint job.
Although in recent times Government House was largely hidden from public view by thick tropical vegetation, in the 19th century it was the seat of governance, or, as a recent letter to the editor put it, “American Samoa has its own White House.”

* * *

(sidebar)

The Tragedy of Commander Terhune

Stan Sorensen

Commander Warren Jay Terhune, originally of New Jersey, was commissioned as American Samoa’s 13th Naval Governor in 1905. He was the second Governor of the territory appointed directly by the Navy. Terhune was appointed as a result of a past recommendation by Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels.

His ordeal was worsened by declining health, by his apparently puritanical nature, and by a disloyal Navy Department’s intrusion into local affairs. Terhune’s naval career reflected his politically ambiguous position as an American naval officer serving an independent island in the South Pacific of which there was no American military presence. When the Mau (a political movement in American Samoa) led by Matamua rallied in 1902 to demand self rule and restrictions on palagi-Samoan marriages, and demands by an emerging Mau (some reasonable and some not).

Hearing of these difficulties, Secretary of the Navy Joesphus Daniels appointed a court of inquiry, headed by Rear Admiral Charles Evans, to investigate the situation. Evans and his court found that Terhune was the victim of a political intrigue. Though Evans was designated as Terhune’s successor, his refusal to side with the Mau and with other dissidents and intriguers led Secretary Daniels to remove Terhune from the governorship. Terhune was replaced by Rear Admiral William A. Robards.
Part 12: Atauloma Girl's School, Origins

John Enright

This chapter of our historic preservation story is a painful one to relate. My family

Homes are like parents

who linger long after they're gone

filling a space that should

never be empty neither in dreams

nor in memory -- the wind

through her rooms is a voice
that narrates my life but

the stillness has also been mine.

But Atauloma's story is told not just by its final lament but by a chorus of voices stretching back to its inception almost a century ago.

Although the first palagi Christian missionary, John Williams, arrived on Tutuila in 1832, by 1892 the local ... communicants. Atauloma was one of the influences which contributed to the improvement of this situation.

In other words it helped revive the church which is today known as the CCCAS (Congregational Christian Church of American Samoa), which is the present owner of the condemned building.

Basically, what the Rev. Cooper did was get all his far-flung Samoan pastors and parishioners in Tutuila ma Manu`a to contribute to the structure and he did not have to spend any of the Church funds previously set aside for the purpose.

In 1855 the L.M.S. had established Fagalele Boys' School in Leone, the sole secondary school in Tutuila. This new school was modelled upon Papauta, and an English missionary administrator crossed a mile of choppy ocean, something so shoving-the-discipline-into-your-face about it.

Before the establishment of Atauloma in 1900, girls from Tutuila ma Manu`a chose to make such a sacrifice in order to themselves, and the Church realized that it must choose and train fiatua as well as faifeau.

This new school was modelled upon Papauta, and an English missionary administrator across a mile of choppy ocean, something so shoving-the-discipline-into-your-face about it.

The Historic Preservation Office welcomes your family's stories about Atauloma and other aspects of Samoan history. Call us at 633-2384. Next week, the rest of the Atauloma story.
Part 13: Atauloma Girls' School, The Place

John Enright

To the extent that ghosts represent the past, history is haunted. And indeed unattached spirits are most... from other places. Ghosts are cross-culturally universal, but they seem to congregate in special places. Like Atauloma, a most renowned haunted house.

After its completion in 1900, Atauloma assumed its intended role as a secondary school for girls. The young... and other islands. They came to a place unique in these islands, a building that deserved to be proud.

The building is massive, set on a concrete slab 70 by 116 feet laid into the face of a ridge 40 feet above...        and peaked-roof attic are a sturdy wood frame construction, with beams of California fir and redwood.

The first floor rooms have fourteen-foot ceilings; the second-floor ceilings are only slightly lower. There...        double doors leading out to wide verandas that completely surround the building on both floors.

An open interior courtyard is planted with bamboo and is also ringed by verandas. The slender, graceful... size and pleasing algebraic politeness hovering rather incongruously on the jungled ridge.

Atauloma continued to serve as a church girls' school until the early 1960s. Most of the many stories about... of the reported apparitional occurrences fall into the category of girlish tricks and revenant curiosity.

These aitua encounters could result in possession and subsequent strange behavior. A common theme in these... in its attempts to cure the effects of possession. Only traditional Samoan healers could be successful.
In the bush, a short distance up the ridge behind Atauloma, is an old overgrown cemetery with twenty-some native villages for burial. It is believed that their restless spirits still roam Atauloma.

In 1970, the then vacant building was leased and restored by the Government of American Samoa, who converted it to an eatery and (human) habitation. The CCCAS canceled the lease and took back Atauloma, but perhaps too late.

A rule of thumb for historic buildings is that proper maintenance is eight times less expensive than restoration.