

PARADISE LOCKED:
THE 1918 INFLUENZA PANDEMIC IN AMERICAN SAMOA

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ABSTRACT

The 1918 influenza pandemic killed roughly five percent of the global population. In Polynesia death rates were worse, reaching as high as a quarter of inhabitants in Western Samoa. Despite being less than 50 km from the disaster in Western Samoa, and despite the close cultural links with the New Zealand governed colony, American Samoa successfully excluded the infection for years; becoming the largest known state to avoid any deaths from the pandemic. This success was facilitated by isolation, limited trade, a colonial government with absolute power but little oversight, and a working relationship between the US Navy and the traditional Samoan elites. While the crisis would fracture relations with Western Samoa and further isolate American Samoa, the successful quarantine would be seen as a benevolent act by Samoans under American rule and would contribute directly to ongoing American control of the territory.

INTRODUCTION

In late 1918 American Samoa dwelt in isolation, far from the charnel house of Europe or the rationed and censored homefronts of the combatants in this final year of the First World War. Yet on the other side of the globe the influenza pandemic of 1918 spread, its second deadly visit that year. This second wave devastated Europe and North America then raced along intercontinental trade routes, following the tracks of commerce and Empire to the furthest territories of an increasingly interconnected planet. By the time it struck Auckland the world press had offered warnings via anecdotal horrors, even if the full scale of the pandemic was yet unclear. What was becoming increasingly clear was that the disease would reach the Pacific islands, and soon.

The 1918–1920 influenza pandemic killed somewhere between 50 and 100 million people. Three to five percent of the global population, these deaths mostly

occurred in the last six months of 1918. This was a ‘flu unlike any in recorded history, taking those between 18 and 45 years of age instead of the elderly and infants; killing many infected in hours or days instead of taking a small few after weeks of illness. In the era before the discovery of viruses the source of the outbreak was unknown, but its progression was incredibly rapid and deadly. In an era of confidence regarding the progress of medical science, the pandemic confused and terrified citizens and leaders alike.

The pandemic extended globally, and the Pacific did not escape. New Zealand demonstrated infection in October of 1918, and those islands served by Auckland-based vessels began to show disease soon thereafter. By early November Fiji, Tonga, and Western Samoa were all suffering horrifically from the ‘flu, each consecutively infected by the Union Steamship Company vessel *Talune* on its monthly supply run through the region.

Though served by the same vessels as her neighbors, American Samoa did not suffer directly from the 1918 influenza pandemic. In fact, it is held up as the largest polity on the globe to avoid infection with the pandemic strain of influenza between 1918 and 1920. American Samoa is a short 50 km from Western Samoa which suffered the highest known fatality rate from the 1918 ‘flu. On a clear day, they can be seen from each other’s shores. Strong social and familial ties bound the two colonies; travel between them was commonplace. The Samoans were, and are, great sailors. So how did American Samoa, despite such proximity, avoid infection while Western Samoa lost a quarter of her population?

American Samoa, out of all the Pacific states, was the only one that implemented a successful quarantine to block influenza throughout the years of the pandemic. A combination of political, economic, and social elements within the territory allowed for quarantine to be established and maintained when such efforts failed elsewhere. The absolute rule of the US Navy in the territory precluded political complications. The absence of significant trading activity prevented the rise of interest groups opposing quarantine efforts. Most significantly, the US military’s policy of benign neglect and rule through traditional elites allowed for a viable local power structure to survive colonization, one which eventually supported and maintained quarantine efforts. There were no particular physical, dietary, religious, climactic, or genetic elements protecting the Samoans in the eastern half of the archipelago to the exclusion of those in the west. The differences in the structure and nature of the administrations of the two colonies determined their fates.

SETTING AND HISTORY

American Samoa consists of the eastern portion of the Samoan archipelago. North of Tonga, it lies in the torrid zone of the tropics. The largest and most populous island in the territory is Tutuila, the site of the administrative capital Pago Pago. Further east lies the Manu'a group: Ofu, Olosega and Ta'u. Two minuscule islands complete the American Samoa group: to the east sits Rose Atoll, an uninhabited wildlife refuge, while far to the north is Swains Island. None of the outer islands possess a good anchorage or harbour.

Tutuila encompasses roughly fifty-two square miles, most of which is extremely rugged. The main geographical feature of note is Pago Pago Bay, one of the best harbours in the South Pacific. The desire to use this anchorage as a coaling station drove United States' interest in Samoa in the late nineteenth century and the eventual incorporation of American Samoa into the Pacific territories of the US (West, 1961:123).

To enter Pago Pago Bay by ship was to enter a seemingly untouched bit of paradise. Jagged cliffs of black volcanic stone rear sharply on either side, covered in overlapping layers of tropical greenery. Birds call in numbers large enough to drown out the sounds of the port. The heat seems to slow time.

Because of these cliffs less than fifteen percent of Tutuila's total land is flat enough to be considered arable (West, 1961:124). Tutuila's limited productive land kept population low, 6,185 out of a total population in American Samoa of 8,058 according to the 1920 census (Evans, 2009: 29). Historically Tutuila residents traveled to the larger and more populated islands to the west to engage in trading, mass meetings, and warfare.

By 1918 the population of Tutuila, and thus of American Samoa as a whole, had come to center about the Bay and the US Navy facilities there. Pago Pago was the required first stop for all foreign visitors and traders entering American Samoa and dominated the local economy. The town developed as an adjunct of the naval base, and pictures from the era show a community bearing the visual cues of a military town. Utilitarian buildings, dormitory housing, and mess halls formed the core of the main settlement (Evans, 2009: 12). Notably lacking were the traders and emporia which dotted the waterfront at Apia, the capital of Western Samoa.

Samoa in the late 1800s was a pitch for the colonial ambitions of the Germans, the British and the United States. After several decades of intermittent war

between chiefly factions backed by the potential colonialists, a direct conflict between US and German forces was avoided only by the timely intervention of a cyclone. Realizing how close war had come, the external parties met and settled their differences, with the German Empire receiving the largest and most populous western part of the archipelago consisting of the large islands of Upolu and Savai'i; the US securing the sparsely populated east, with the grand harbor of Pago Pago; and Great Britain achieving dominance in Tonga and the Solomon Islands. The Samoans were not consulted regarding this arrangement.

The convention dividing the Samoan islands was drafted in 1899 and ratified by the US Senate the next year. A brief document, it granted the United States control over all islands of the group east of longitude 171 W, and the German Empire all islands to the west of this line (Evans, 2009:10). Thus American Samoa joined a growing number of American military bases in the Pacific, alongside Guam, Hawaii, and the Philippines.

American Samoa was never a traditional colony, constituted instead as a military dependency. The political leader was a Commandant, not a Governor (though the title of Governor was added in 1905 to reflect his civilian duties). The islands were not a major source of commodities aside from a bit of copra, the dried meat of the coconut (Kunitz, 1996:56). American Samoa as an American administrative entity existed to extend the reach of the US Navy, and any infrastructure development or local political considerations were secondary to this goal.

The political status of American Samoa within the United States was somewhat ambiguous, but was described by the Commandants as follows:

1. It is not foreign but domestic territory
2. Samoans are not 'citizens of the United States' but owe allegiance to the flag.
3. Vessels owned by Samoans are not entitled to registry but are entitled to fly the flag.
4. Neither the Constitution nor the laws of the United States have been extended to them, and the only administrative authority existing in them is that derived mediately or immediately from the President as Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States (Evans, 2009:11).

American Samoans were thus under the direct control of the United States military. The Commandant held the same authority over them as he wielded

over troops under his remit. Any rights that arose in the place of sovereign authority were those granted by the Commandant, revocation of which could occur without recourse.

The Commandant of Tutuila was charged with the care of local inhabitants. The first Commandant's orders instructed 'you will at all times exercise care to conciliate and cultivate friendly relations with the natives.' This clause was repeated in the orders of each Commandant through 1918 (Evans, 2009:10). Outside supervision was minimal. In 1902 the Department of the Navy stopped reviewing regulations issued by the Commandant, instead accepting a right and role of amendment when needed (West, 1961:132).

Dr. Ian Campbell argues that despite this absolute power, or perhaps because of it, the Commandants acted more aggressively in protecting the welfare of the Samoans under their control than did the German and later New Zealand administration in the west. Efforts were made to improve agricultural yields. A government school began work in 1904 (Campbell, 2005:53). Land sales by Samoans to non-Samoans were immediately banned, as was the sale of liquor, except to foreigners with written permission from the administration. While paternalistic, these laws served to maintain traditional cultural forms and these, together with land generally ill-suited to agriculture, discouraged permanent foreign settlement (Meleisea, 1987).

Those serving the Commandant in positions of authority were mostly naval officers. An officer served as chief customs officer for the civil government. The station's executive officer became sheriff of the territory and supervised public safety while the station's public health officer directed all health efforts in the islands (Evans, 2009:13). These naval officers generally spent two years at the station, as did the Commandant. The short terms left significant room for traditional administration to continue at the local level.

Commandant Benjamin Tilley, taking power in 1900, developed a system of indirect rule to address civil needs (NARA, n.d.:1). The basic division was the county, fourteen political entities based roughly upon traditional high-chieftainships, and each governed by a county chief. This chief received appointment from the Commandant, but in most cases such authority remained vested in the traditional holder of the local high-chief's title under Samoan custom. From this group of county chiefs three district chiefs held sway, one over each of the traditional divisions within the group: Eastern Tutuila, Western Tutuila, and the Manu'a group. Below the level of the county sat the 52 village chiefs, or *pulenu'u*, chosen by the heads of family within the villages

(*matai*) and who faced confirmation by the civil authority (NARA, n.d.:1). Police and local magistrates were Samoan.

This decision to retain power in traditional structures was codified in Regulation #5 of 1900, the first organic law in American Samoa. This held that Samoan customs not in conflict with US law shall be preserved and that local (Samoan) officials retained responsibility for issues of local interest (Evans, 2009:14). The lack of a large foreign population and the negligible level of land alienation also facilitated this policy of rule through indigenous agents as there were minimal vested parties working against it (Campbell, 2005:49).

The political structure in Western Samoa followed a much more traditional colonial pattern. The German administration sought to make the colony self-sustaining economically and a magnet for German settlers. Seventeen percent of the land, generally the most fertile, was alienated into the hands of large European-owned plantations worked by imported labour. The traditional aristocracy was alternately ignored or subsumed by German officials. There was scant Samoan input into or power over local decisions. Plantation and trading interests dominated the political arena.

With the onset of hostilities in 1914 New Zealand, at British request, moved to seize Western Samoa and its communication hub from the German Empire. Following a non-violent capitulation, a skeletal New Zealand military administration was left behind. Soon the war in Europe would dominate resources and attention, and due to lack of assistance or guidance the Western Samoan occupation forces attempted to retain as much of the German structure as possible. By 1918 very little had changed for the average Western Samoan.

The differing colonial goals for the eastern portion of the archipelago, under American rule, and the islands in the west under first German then New Zealand domination produced administrations with quite divergent aims. Though the pandemic period saw both portions of Samoa under English-speaking military rule, the structures in place bore limited resemblance to each other. These differences stepped to the fore with the appearance of crisis.

In the early twentieth century, despite differences in governance, the two Samoas were unified religiously, culturally, and historically. Samoans travelled between the islands freely. Funerals, births, and rituals surrounding chieftaincy drew large parties across the nominal borders. Intermarriage was common as Samoan tradition required exogamy, which was difficult to achieve in the limited population of American Samoa (Schultz, 1912: 20). The borders defined

economic spaces, and were used by the colonial powers, but had little impact on the Samoan lifestyle. The foreign demarcations were just that, foreign.

It was fortunate these contacts were maintained in the colonial period for aside from Western Samoa, American Samoa was largely cut off from the outside world. In 1918 no cable communication reached American Samoa, unlike Fiji or Western Samoa. The nearest commercial station was at Suva, in Fiji. Radio communications via the naval service were available in 1918 but, due to the needs of wartime, private and commercial usage was severely restricted (Evans, 2009: 33). Commerce was minimal. Since the administration, at the request of the chiefs, handled the once-yearly auction of copra, traders did not need permanent facilities. The absence of significant trade made missionary efforts the major foreign influence outside of American military governance in the eastern Samoan islands (West, 1961: 130). Missionary groups served as the primary source of education and ancillary medical staff, particularly outside of Pago Pago.

The lack of outside contact facilitated the maintenance of traditional customs. For example, the 1921 report of Commandant Evans describes the people as 'generous and hospitable to a remarkable degree.' He attributed the survival of this 'admirable trait' to the lack of foreigners in the territory, whose presence might have stamped out such behavior through abuse of confidence (Evans, 2009: 24).

HEALTH

The territorial administration took great pride in the health and hygiene efforts within American Samoa. Between cession in 1900 and the 1920 census the population of the islands increased by 41 percent, an achievement attributed by Commandant Evans to local factors in conjunction with 'sanitary supervision, education, and ample facilities for free medical treatment' (Evans, 2009: 25). This improvement in public health standards was greater than that in Western Samoa. Campbell posits that this difference stemmed from the shorter term of American officials, the fundamentally liberal stance of the naval officers in charge, and the lack of any need for propaganda value from colonial achievements or room for colonists from the metropolitan center; unlike the German Samoan regime through to 1914.

Efforts toward the control of communicable disease and the general health of the population of American Samoa were the responsibility of the Senior Medical Officer at the naval station. In 1918 the naval medical personnel served as

care providers for the indigenous population, the few foreign civilians in place, and the military contingent. There were no private physicians (Evans, 2009: 15). As the naval medicine infrastructure grew, references to missionary medicine declined, and then ceased altogether.

Colonial health infrastructure centered on Pago Pago, with the station dispensary and the Samoan Hospital (Campbell, 2005: 53) both located on the grounds of the naval station. The Hospital followed the Samoan traditions of health care inasmuch as relatives provided food and most unskilled nursing care (Department of the Navy, 1952: 13). Beginning in 1914 the Hospital trained local women in nursing. Once qualified, these nurses would work the wards at the Hospital and visit the villages, providing direct care and education to the more remote portion of the territory. If needed, chief pharmacists' mates and naval petty officers also served both the military and Samoan population (Lambert, 1942: 221). Those Samoans living away from Pago Pago might have access to a physician in the village yearly, and a traveling nurse or orderly on a monthly basis.

Communicable diseases common to Polynesia were endemic within the territory. Filariasis, yaws, varied parasites, and dengue were common. The islands had faced ship-borne epidemics since European contact, most notably measles in 1893 and 1911. In late 1901 a mild influenza outbreak occurred. Early 1913 heralded influenza's return to the islands, in its traditional form of a disease of the old and very young. The infection came by ship, but no single vessel was identified as the source. The Health Officer issued a set of recommendations in connection with what turned out to be a mild visitation of the illness:

1. Do not allow well children or old people in the vicinity of those ill with a cold.
2. As the disease is transmitted from the sick to the well by the discharges from the mouth and nose they should not be scattered carelessly about. Old pieces of cloth should be used to receive them and afterwards burned.
3. Bring all cases of colds to the hospital at once in order that they may receive treatment early.
4. Very young children should not be allowed to run about scantily clad, especially in a cold wind or rain.
5. Careless spitting about the house should not be permitted (Health Officer, American Samoa, 1913: 2).

These instructions continued to serve as the baseline for influenza prevention

in the territory until after the 1918 pandemic passed. Vaccination for smallpox was compulsory from 1903 and seemingly effective, with no outbreaks noted after the advent of American administration. A potential measles epidemic was stymied in 1908 when a ship arrived in Pago Pago with a case onboard, triggering a rigid quarantine. The islands exhibited no malaria, cholera, yellow fever, dysentery, plague, or leprosy between 1900 and 1918 (Evans, 2009: 25). Clearly, the residents and colonial staff of the portion of the archipelago under US control had broad experience with ship-borne illnesses and quarantine measures necessary to stop them.

QUARANTINE

The need for a quarantine station for Pago Pago was recognised early, but funds remained elusive. In June 1901 a steamer from San Francisco arrived in American Samoa with a case of varicella (chicken pox) aboard, causing the first local quarantine (Blackwell, 1901). The Health Officer received orders in early 1902 to board all incoming ships and determine whether pratique (clearance to enter port due to the absence of infectious disease) would be granted, before any other individual could approach the vessel (Sebree, 1902). A year later the administration completed a miniscule quarantine station on Goat Island, in the midst of Pago Pago harbor (Minett, 1903). Use was limited. In 1913, for example, the station was used three times in conjunction with passengers trans-shipping from smallpox-infected ports (Senior Medical Officer, American Samoa, 1914: 4).

The measles outbreak of 1911 gave the territory a chance to refine its quarantine measures. Following cases in Tonga in November, 1910, the *Dawn* (a German vessel permanently based in Western Samoa) brought a case to Apia, where the ship was immediately quarantined. Leaving before quarantine was complete, the *Dawn* came to Pago Pago, where she again was quarantined. In the meantime Apia had been re-infected by the monthly freight ship out of Auckland, and once the *Dawn* began carrying passengers again between Tutuila and Upolu the infection quickly spread to Pago Pago. Rigid quarantine measures were again imposed, but to no avail. Eventual mortality from this outbreak was 24 per 1,000 residents of Tutuila and 27 per 1,000 in the Manu'a group (Croze, 1911b).

Shippers have traditionally seen quarantine as a hindrance to their trade, and despite the small commercial presence in the colony the administration in Pago Pago found itself under pressure to reduce quarantine rules. During the 1913 quarantine against smallpox that closed Apia and Pago Pago to passengers

and cargo, the Oceanic Steamship Company out of Sydney wrote to Commandant Stearns in protest. The managing agent suggested less rigid measures would be appropriate, such as fumigation in the departing port rather than the receiving. Failing this, the agent predicted 'all-round hardship if we are not able to take cargo for Samoa' (Managing Agent, Oceanic Steamship Company, 1913). The threat was clear.

During this same smallpox outbreak, a ship landed passengers in Apia before the requisite fourteen days had passed, a period considered necessary to clear for smallpox. Despite the assurances of both the vessel's captain and the Apia Port Officer that they saw no risk, the Health Officer for Pago Pago, Surgeon C.F. Ely USN, wrote to the Commandant asking that Apia be declared an infected port. In his words: 'There is only one safe rule to follow in quarantine work and that is, if there is any doubt give the dangerous disease the benefit' (Ely, 1913). This foreshadows the rigid quarantine set in place in 1918.

At the beginning of 1918 the quarantine facilities in American Samoa remained vestigial. The station on Goat Island could be converted into a quarantine facility within 2 hours, with a maximum capacity of ten individuals. The port could offer disinfection, fumigation, and rat-removal services to ships. Since most ships were only in the harbor a matter of hours, no isolation housing was available for crew or cargo handlers. Instead, crew of quarantined vessels would remain on the ship moored offshore surrounded by guards posted on boats to ensure no contact with land. Given the lack of establishments catering to visitors ashore, sailors had little to regret in missing landfall at Pago Pago.

Passengers originating from infected ports or ships for Pago Pago or transshipping elsewhere were placed in the quarantine facility, up to its capacity. No acutely ill passenger or their contacts were allowed to land unless they were residents of American Samoa, in which case they would be isolated in either the station dispensary (capacity 15) or the Samoan Hospital (capacity 120) depending on race (Poyer, 1917).

Pago Pago served as the only legal port of call in American Samoa. In this sense the town served the same role as Apia in the west, as the portal to the outside world. All passengers and freight were processed at the naval station, and any cargo bound for the United States had to depart from these facilities (Evans, 2009: 15). No landings of any kind by ships from outside the territory were allowed outside Pago Pago Bay. This policy stood since the beginning of American rule and no local opposition to it is noted in the records of the station.

Still, the number of ships to monitor was small. By 1918 regular freight and mail service came via ships on the San Francisco-Hawaii-Samoa-Australia run, averaging one ship per month in each direction (Evans, 2009:31). Ships bound for Apia, which had a much greater volume of freight in- and out-bound, would on occasion make a side trip to Pago Pago, and inter-island ships would pass frequently between American and Western Samoa. The total number of vessels from overseas ports which entered Pago Pago harbor was small: 55 in 1911, 62 in 1912, and 65 in 1913.

PANDEMIC

As 1918 closed Commandant John Poyer ruled in Pago Pago. Despite the vicious outbreaks in North America no orders came from Washington regarding quarantine or influenza response, but Poyer read the papers that came twice monthly by ship and reviewed the daily radio briefings. Acting upon his own initiative, at the end of October he ordered quarantine against all traffic from outside the colony (Crosby, 1976: 237). The Commandant of American Samoa had been a nearly autonomous dictator for eighteen years. Quarantine declarations over that time came from the naval station and had never been challenged or countermanded, although shippers might complain. Poyer found himself free to act proactively and without fetters.

Poyer received a warning before the arrival of the *Talune* in Apia heralded the catastrophe in the west. The regular mail/freight ship, the S.S. *Sonoma*, arrived at Pago Pago from San Francisco on November 3, 1918. Basic quarantine measures had already been ordered by the Commandant, and the *Sonoma* became the test case. Since leaving San Francisco fourteen influenza cases developed aboard, leading to one death. Upon arrival in Pago Pago two individuals still demonstrated pneumonia symptoms. These cases were taken ashore and placed in strict isolation at the base dispensary while passengers bound for Western Samoa were moved to a quarantine of five days. All possessions were fumigated and the passengers endured regular temperature checks and isolation. No other passengers or crew were allowed ashore or to have contact with residents of the territory. No infections occurred from this initial visitation (Crosby, 1976:237).

The *Talune* steamed into Apia harbour on November 7th, and the decimation of Upolu and Savai'i began. By the 14th a limited American Samoan quarantine was in place against Western Samoa, and any passenger for Western Samoa was warned that they would not be allowed back for an undetermined amount of time. Fumigated mail reaching Pago Pago recorded correspond-

ents' surprise at the speed of spread in Western Samoa, only a few days having passed between first mention of the infection and the beginning of mass deaths (Cartwright, 1918a). When the vessel *Dawn* approached Apia after a run to Pago Pago she was told not to enter, and a party of Europeans rowed to her outside the harbor. After informing the crew that they had buried 100 people in Apia alone that day they asked the ship to not land in Western Samoa.

By November 23rd conditions in the west reached a crisis. Following reports from the American Consul in Apia via radiograms, Poyer ordered a complete quarantine on all vessels from Western Samoa (Fig. 1). The order asked that people remain calm and explained what measures were to be taken. This included a ban on all travel to the colony. Even the simple transfer of mail and permission for a single resident of Apia to travel from the clean port of Pago Pago to Apia required several radiograms and the extensive intervention of the Consul (M. Mitchell, 1918b).

Several days after the quarantine order the regular bi-monthly mail steamer came through Pago Pago, and Governor Logan of Western Samoa sent his personal ship to the east with a parcel of mail bound for San Francisco. Poyer states he was astounded at this arrival, given the recent communications and clear quarantine order (Poyer, 1919a). Meeting the ship outside the harbor, the Governor communicated from two boat-lengths away, informing the master of the craft that any landing would incur a five day quarantine for both his crew and the mail in question. When the master asked if they could transfer the mail without coming ashore, the Governor replied in the negative, stating that as long as the steamer sat in Pago Pago harbor he (Poyer) was responsible for its well being and all quarantine rules would apply. The boat returned to Apia without delivering the mail. Logan broke radio communications with American Samoa soon after this incident (Crosby, 1976: 237).

December 7, 1918 brought a request from Poyer to Logan that Apia refuse departure clearance for any vessel headed to Pago Pago until ten days after the recovery of the last flu case in Western Samoa. Pago Pago also extended their complete quarantine to ships from any other island under the jurisdiction of the Western Pacific High Commission due to their infection status (McLeod, 2007: 13). At the same time all American Samoan medical officers, nurses, and corpsmen, despite the risk to themselves, offered to go to Western Samoa to assist the fight against the pandemic as the quarantine seemed to be holding in the east (Liuaana, 2004: 150). Their offer was never acknowledged or accepted by the Western Samoan administration. This refusal of assistance and loss of

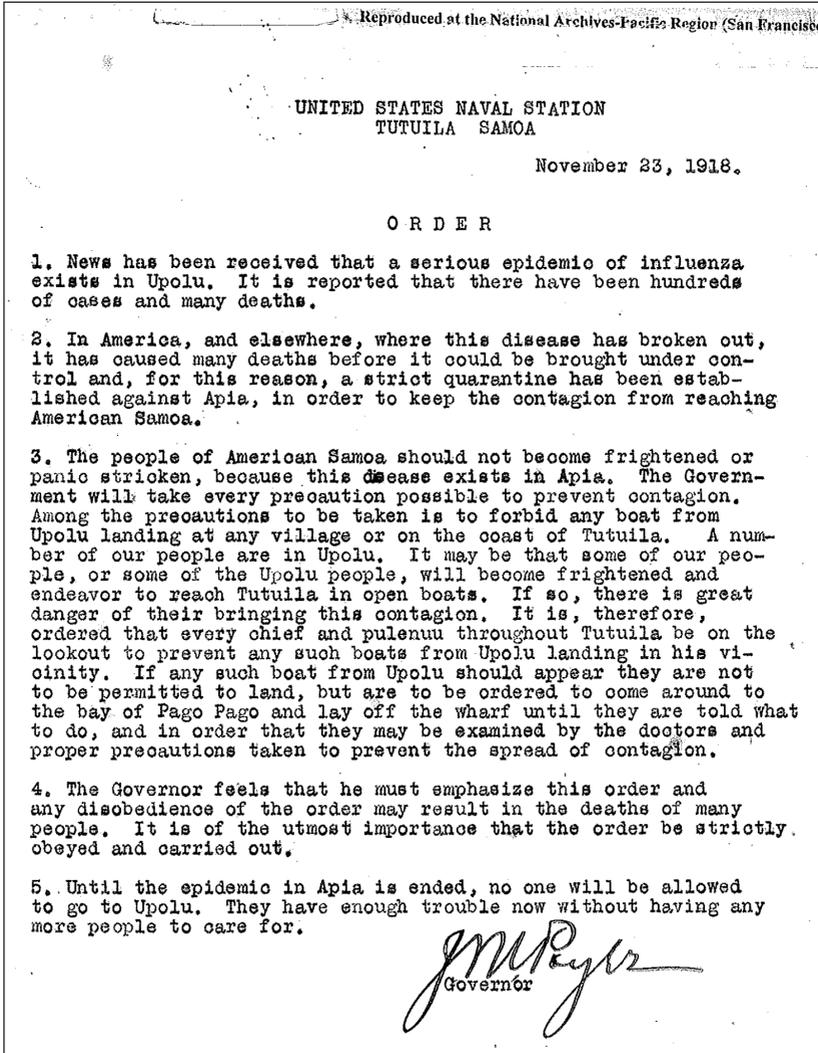


Figure 1. Governor Poyer's order announcing the quarantine against Western Samoa (Poyer, 1918)

communications meant that three doctors and almost thirty trained assistants of various medical backgrounds sat idle in Tutuila while the epidemic raged 50 km away.

Despite the absence of disease the pandemic's virulence in the west directly impacted American Samoa. A number of children from the territory who attended mission schools in Upolu died during the outbreak. The London Missionary Society (LMS) lost the majority of its senior leadership for Samoa, leaving the remaining elements in American Samoa without guidance. A significant number of teachers from Tutuila were stranded in Upolu by the quarantine, stopping schools for several months. But there was not a single influenza illness in American Samoa, not a single death (Samoan Epidemic Commission, 1919:1).

The indigenous community in American Samoa complained about certain elements of the quarantine. Following an argument that native passengers would flee to their villages and thus be out of reach of the medical officers, healthy Samoans coming off quarantined but not infected vessels were sent to the Native Hospital for five days of isolation and observation. White passengers who lived in Pago Pago could go home under the same circumstances, and spend their isolation there. Despite Samoan complaints, Commandant Terhune (Poyer's successor) retained the policy. He argued that while the basic quarantine restrictions were the same for whites and Samoans, whites came in voluntarily to the doctor in Pago Pago twice a day after the initial quarantine. He went on to say: 'Since the natives would scatter all over the island, it is necessary to retain them at the Samoan Hospital to allow the Health Officer to supervise them during the quarantine period'. He ends his discussion of the issue with a suggestion that they are showing ingratitude: 'Our methods have saved your lives from influenza, and are admired everywhere in the world' (Terhune, 1919b).

Poyer acknowledged concerns extending beyond official vessels travelling the Apia-Pago Pago route. American and Western Samoa, artificial constructs of colonial convenience, existed in the same cultural space. Samoans had been sailing between the islands for centuries before the Europeans arrived. If Samoans chose to sail between the islands without visiting the main ports, there would be little to stop them and no means of tracking their passage. Considering the scale of mortality in Western Samoa, a refugee flow to the American controlled islands in the east seemed likely, as were attempts of American Samoans caught in Western Samoa to return home to their families.

It is here that the survival of traditional chiefly power structures in American Samoa became critical. With the support of the district chiefs, who received official and unofficial reports of the carnage across the water, a patrol system for the entire colony developed. American Samoans patrolled the waters surrounding their islands, preventing landings and directing all boats toward Pago Pago and quarantine. The three district chiefs of American Samoa: Mau-

ga, Satele, and Tufele, were later recommended for Presidential medals in recognition of their efforts in enforcing the quarantine and these patrol measures (Terhune, 1919a). Without their support and authority, the quarantine could not have been maintained. Without their support and authority, American Samoa would likely have shared in the devastation of the west.

Over time the regulations regarding quarantine changed, but continued to reflect concerns about Samoan vulnerability to the disease and perceived hesitation to follow quarantine procedures. By January of 1919 any ships from Apia who wished to enter Pago Pago had to sail without Samoan or part-Samoan crew members, had to enter during daylight hours, and were asked not to enter if a ship was already under quarantine there. Mail satchels and non-Samoan passengers wishing to come ashore faced a five day quarantine. Samoans faced a nine day quarantine (C.M. Mitchell, 1919).

The quarantine was still in place in mid 1920, having increased in complexity. Passengers disembarking in Pago Pago faced a careful physical, five day home isolation, and daily visits with temperature monitoring by the medical staff. Ships hoping to enter Pago Pago Bay were required to present a document listing the temperature of all passengers and crew upon departure from San Francisco or Sydney, and such temperatures were taken daily while the ship was in American Samoa. Regardless of the health of all on board, or the recorded temperatures, all ships went into five day monitored quarantine. Any passengers transferring in Pago Pago for smaller boats to Apia also faced five day quarantine (Samoan Epidemic Commission, 1919).

With the end of the influenza pandemic in 1921 quarantine restrictions were relaxed but not eliminated. Many of the lessons learned quickly faded, unsurprising given the constant turnover in staff. Goat Island lost its quarantine station, which became additional housing for naval personnel. At the same time the number of ships coming to Tutuila increased significantly, to 85 over the course of 1921, and the construction of large capacity fuel tanks in 1922 encouraged yet more traffic, all in a port without a quarantine station (Senior Medical Officer American Samoa, 1922:12).

CONCLUSIONS

There is little dispute about the efficacy of the quarantine. Some argue that a variant of influenza penetrated into American Samoa in late 1920, but caused no deaths (McLeod, 2007:13). Without the ability to identify the viral strains present, it can never be known if an attenuated version did enter the colony.

What is known is that there were no deaths matching the pattern of the 1918 influenza, and no such significant illnesses through the end of 1921.

Quarantine protected the territory from the pandemic, and praise for its efficacy and minimal impact came from many sources. The territorial government claimed that the quarantine involved no interruption of freight or mail service for the territory (Evans, 2009: 26). Given the small amount of trade occurring at the time and the absence of the term 'delay' from this claim it might be justified. The Auckland *Evening Post* printed a letter from an American living in Apia who stated that 'no one here blames Governor Poyer (sp) for keeping the boat from Apia from infringing his regulations' (Auckland Evening Post, 1919). The Samoan Epidemic Commission visited American Samoa and the final report offered high praise to Poyer and the American administration for their conduct. The LMS sent a telegram thanking Poyer and his medical staff for the 'prompt and energetic methods adopted by them to prevent the spread of the Spanish Influenza in that part of Samoa' (Hough, 1919). Ironically, it was the LMS that first brought influenza (an earlier pandemic form) in 1830 to the Samoan islands upon their missionary ship *Messenger of Hope* (Crosby, 1976: 239).

Unlike the Western Samoan experience, the pandemic did not act as a touchstone for a movement towards independence. One anecdote stands out from the reports regarding Samoan views of the different fates of Western and American Samoa. A Mr. Boteler wrote to Commandant Poyer to report that he had heard the crew singing a Samoan version of the 'Star Spangled Banner'. Upon asking the Captain for a translation, he forwarded it the Commandant's office:

*There are two islands in the south Pacific, Tutuila and Upolu,
Tutuila under the American flag, Upolu that of New Zealand.
God has sent down a sickness on the world,
And all the lands are filled with suffering.
The two islands are forty miles apart,
In Upolu, the island of New Zealand, many are dead
In Tutuila, the American island, not a one is dead.
Why? In Tutuila they love the men of their villages;
In Upolu they are doomed to punishment and death
God in Heaven bless the American Governor and flag
(Boteler, 1919).*

So why did American Samoa prove to be the only polity in Polynesia to implement an effective quarantine? Scale was an issue, with a small land area, small

number of islands, and a small population helping to make such an effort manageable. A vestigial foreign population and minimal trading presence prevented the formation of a strong anti-quarantine bloc. The exposure of the Samoan Islands came late enough in the global pandemic that some warning was available. The Samoans themselves had a strong cultural memory of epidemic disease and thus an incentive to avoid its repetition.

Two factors proved to be the most important, however. By leaving in place a local administration based on traditional Samoan chiefly structures the Commandants had a functional set of allies to turn to. The small number of Americans in the territory precluded a US Navy patrol to enforce the quarantine outside of Pago Pago. The ability to turn to the local chiefs, and their willingness to build and man the patrol system, proved vital to controlling access between islands inhabited by a strongly seafaring culture. It is difficult to see how anyone in 1918 aside from Samoans could have prevented Samoans from making the journey between the colonies. One missed landing on a secluded beach would have negated all the quarantine efforts of Pago Pago.

Finally, the independent nature of the American Samoan administration allowed for rapid action as needed to protect the population. The absence of a professional colonial service, the technical status of Pago Pago as a naval base and the general neglect American Samoa received from Washington D.C. all served to allow Poyer to read the situation and act upon it as he saw fit, without waiting for instructions or permission from Washington. It is unlikely that an administrator in any of the other colonial structures in Polynesia could have behaved so. Much depended on the quality of the Commandant and his ability to read approaching risk, but that would have meant little had his actions been delayed by bureaucratic flows.

With a different administration, with less support from the local chiefs, or with a bit of ill-luck American Samoa could have shared Western Samoa's fate. The particular government and economic structure of the colony facilitated effective quarantine, but was not sufficient. A working relationship with the indigenous population and a Commandant able to act before a crisis struck prevented American Samoa from following the rest of Samoa in becoming another sad statistic of the pandemic years.

By 1926, influenza had again visited Tutuila. For three weeks in August and September travel between districts and villages were sharply curtailed, the residents of the station were forbidden to leave and government work reduced to a minimum. Church meetings and choir practices were forbidden. Schools

were closed. The medical officers toured constantly with food and drugs, but otherwise traffic stopped. The outbreak was not severe, but the reaction was. American Samoa had somehow dodged a bullet. At least for a while, they remembered how to dodge the next.

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