

A PARK PROGRAM
FOR
AMERICAN SAMOA
PROPOSED BY

AMERICAN SAMOA STUDY TEAM
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

April - May 1965

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I. INTRODUCTION

In response to a request by Governor H. Rex Lee of American Samoa and. the Director of the Office of Territories, the Director of the National Park Service designated, a team of four National Park employees to assist and. advise the Territorial Government of American Samoa regarding the potential for parks and. development of prospective park lands in the islands. Governor Lee's request arose from a report made by Myron D, Sutton, Assistant Chief, Division of International Affairs of the National Park Service after a short visit to American Samoa in 1964.

In requesting assistance the Acting Director of the Office of Territories indicated that the islands would need a zoning plan for identification and protection of existing scenic and recreational resources. It was also felt that a museum was needed to provide protection and interpretation of artifacts and relics of native origin. Advice as to facilities for promoting public understanding of the local scenes as well as customs, traditions and history of the Samoan people was solicited. Governor Lee reviewed these criteria and related matters with the team shortly after their arrival. Members of his staff supplemented and elaborated on these details from time to time.

The team arrived in Pago Pago on April 18. All of the islands were visited except Rose and Swains Islands, which are believed to be relatively insignificant so far as park possibilities are concerned. Due to time limitations the team was unable to get into the remoter parts of Tutuila and. the south and east portions of Ta'u. Three team members left the islands on May 10 while the fourth remained through May 16. The team was made up of the following park people: John S. McLaughlin, Superintendent, Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming, who was the team's Chairman; Russell Apple, Superintendent, City of Refuge National Historical Park, Hawaii; Merrick Smith, Supervisory Landscape Architect, Western Office of Design and Construction, San Francisco; and Raymond Price, Staff Curator, Western Museum Laboratories, San Francisco.

II. AMERICAN SAMOA, THE SETTING

American Samoa consists of the eastern islands of the Samoan group in the South Pacific located approximately 2300 miles southwest of Hawaii and 1600 miles northeast of the northern tip of New Zealand. The islands, situated in the heart of Polynesia,

140 south of the equator, are seven in number: Tutuila; Aunu'u; the three islands of the Manu'a group, Ta'u, Olosega and Ofu; and two coral atolls. Rose and Swains.

The islands are an unincorporated territory of the United States, administered by the Department of the Interior. The capital and Government administrative offices are on Tutuila at Pago Pago. The total area of the territory is 76.1 square miles. The people of American Samoa are American nationals and represent one of the few remaining groups of Polynesians retaining the major part of their traditions and. culture. The population has increased from about 5,700 in 1900 to nearly 21,000 today.

The climate of American Samoa is pleasantly tropical. The coolest months are from May to November when moderate southeast trade winds blow. Temperatures range during the year from 70° to 90° F. Humidity is almost constantly at about 80°. Heaviest rainfall occurs from December through March and averages 200 Inches per year. Of volcanic origin, the main islands are a series of ridges interspersed with craters rising abruptly from the sea. The largest, Tutuila, has an irregular shape and is approximately 18 miles long and 7 miles across at the widest point. A mountain range extends the length of Tutuila, which is nearly bisected by Pago Pago Bay, one of the finest and most beautiful harbors in the South Pacific. Mountains on the islands attain considerable elevation with Olomatimu on Ta'u reaching 3056 feet, Matafao on Tutuila, 2141 feet, Piumafua on Ofu, 1587 feet. These island peaks in their ocean-blue setting, clothed in verdant green tropical vegetation offer spectacular scenic views. The islands of Olosega and Ofu, with small areas of approximately 1500 and 2000 acres respectively reaching relatively high elevations, are particularly attractive with their steep green slopes and grey Cliffs. Coral reefs off the coasts make the ocean swells break in great white waves that are a wonder to behold. The islands of American Samoa have varying and beautiful scenic qualities and a particular charm which combine to give visitors the feeling that they are discovering and experiencing the true, unspoiled South Pacific. The thatched villages lend enchantment to the scene and an altogether peaceful, pleasing and unusual impression greets the traveler.

The people of American Samoa are Polynesian and closely akin to other islanders of the central and eastern Pacific from the Hawaiians in the north to the Maoris of New Zealand. Seafaring ancestors of present day Polynesians were settled in Samoa by

1500 B.C. About 700 B.C., some Samoans sailed eastward, peopled other island groups and are ancestors of Polynesians now found in the Marquesas Islands, Easter Islands, Society Islands (Tahiti), Cook Islands, Hawaii, New Zealand and other Pacific isles. Samoa's basic economic and political unit, the Matai system, is an extended family organization, a clan, composed of related kin tracing their origins back through generations to mythological ancestors. Within their extended group, which is administered by a Matai - the family head - a collective family economy prevails. The Matai is responsible for control of family lands and property and represents the family in political affairs. He is responsible for the family's protection and well-being. The Matai title is not hereditary although heredity is one of the factors considered by the family in choosing its Matai. Samoans are a friendly and generous people, well known for their splendid physique and love of ceremony.

In accordance with the provisions of the Instrument of Cession of 1900 and 1904, land ownership is retained by the Samoan people, under the Matai system, to preserve their rights and property according to their customs. The Government owns land in the Pago Pago harbor and airport areas and leases a relatively small acreage for experimental farm purposes; otherwise the land is owned by the Samoans.

The principal local industry centers around fish canning plants in Pago Pago. Copra (dried coconut) is exported in varying amounts. Another source of income stems from native handcrafts such as laufala floor mats, tapa cloth, woodcraft, shell and basket articles. Basic foods for local consumption include taro, yams, breadfruit, fish, bananas, papayas, pineapple, limes and coconuts.

Tourism is of importance, but lack of facilities and accommodations for care of visitors has been a drawback to development of the full tourist travel potential. With the Pago Pago International Airport in operation and scheduled completion of the 100 room hotel in September, 1965, travel to American Samoa is bound to increase, Tourism will undoubtedly provide the base for the greatest source of income to American Samoa if facilities are made available and the islands' outdoor recreational resources are properly promoted, conserved and developed.

III. A RECOMMENDED PARK PROGRAM

A. Proposed Samoa National Historical Park.

There is a need, a situation and an opportunity to create, conserve and interpret an important aspect of the civilization of a Pacific people in a native and highly scenic sea island, location in American Samoa. The elements that make the proposed park significant and the objectives in perpetuating this scene are set forth below:

1. Statement of Significance. The islands of Ofu and Olosega in the Manu'a Islands of American Samoa support one of the few remaining examples of comparatively pure Polynesian culture in a setting of splendid natural beauty. The magnificent scenic attributes alone of these Manuan islands make them worthy of National Park status.

These islands lie apart from the mainstream of Pacific commerce and travel. Protected from commercial exploitation and other acculturating influences attendant with extensive contact with European, American and Asian enterprises in the South Pacific, these Samoan inhabitants have retained their native culture and traditional ways in a comparatively unmodified state. Life patterns, social customs and the round of village affairs remain essentially as they have for centuries. Most food still comes from native groves and gardens of taro, bananas, breadfruit, yams and coconuts, and from fishing along the exquisite coral reefs or in open seas from dugout outrigger canoes.

Today in all the vast range of the Pacific once dominated by Polynesians, a remnant of Samoan Polynesian culture survives in surroundings of outstanding scenic quality.

The vanishing way of life and idyllic natural setting combine to form a scene of international significance which merits preservation and recognition by inclusion in the National Park System of the United States of America.

2. Objectives. Perpetuate the scene as it exists on the islands of Ofu and Olosega along with the native Samoan life, customs and traditions of the people and provide for an authentic living Samoan village, accommodation of visitors to facilitate public appreciation, and enjoyment of the locale, as well as Samoan history and culture.

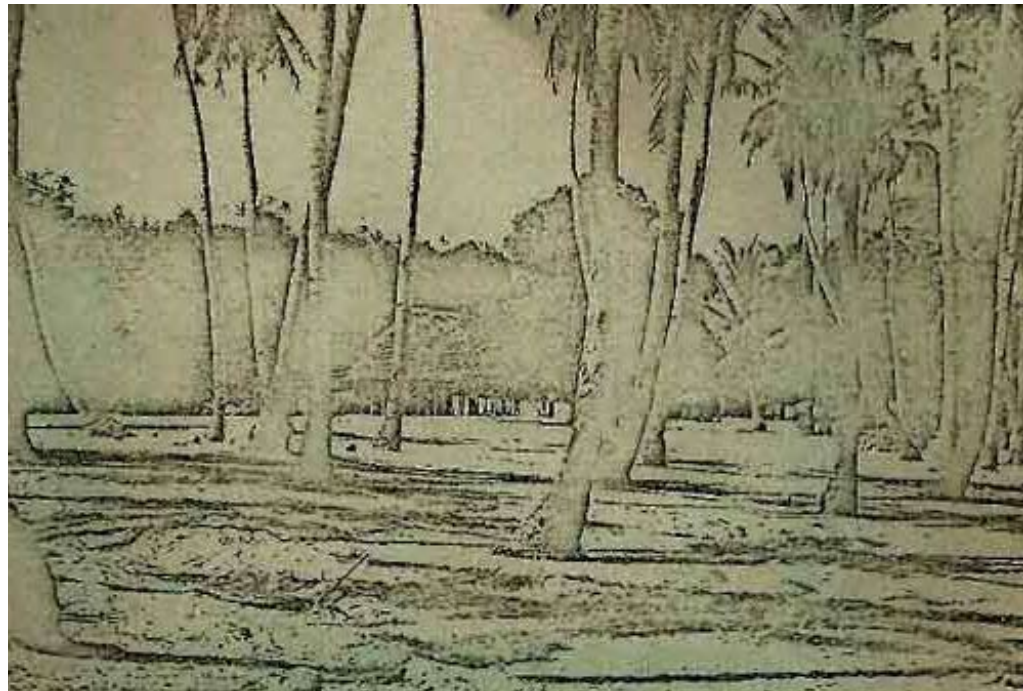
- a. Keep the islands, their coasts and adjacent waters as nearly as possible in their existing and relatively undisturbed state.
- b. Maintain a plant cover on the islands similar to that in existence. The scene may be modified to the extent of planting crops or plants that are typical of native Samoan agriculture.
- c. Encourage the maintenance of production by Samoans of agricultural crops in accordance with b. above, and assist if necessary in continued maintenance of native agricultural practices.
- d. Build an authentic living Samoan village representing a period prior to the introduction of foreign building materials.
- e. Zone the existing villages to encourage their continuance in the Samoan tradition. Exclude erection of multi-story buildings or structures not compatible with Park objectives. Establish suitable and proper health and sanitary standards.
- f. Perpetuate to the fullest extent arts and crafts typical of American Samoa.
- g. Retain, and enlarge if required, basic health, educational and welfare facilities in existing villages.

3. Implementation. The establishment of the proposed park would require an Act of Congress and approval by the President. Upon establishment the park would be administered by the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior. Conservation and perpetuation of the life and natural scene requires control of the land and development thereon. To accomplish this end it is envisioned that about 750 acres of land for the Samoan Village and its surroundings would be acquired in fee simple with the remainder of both islands, about 2,800 acres, controlled under scenic easements. It is estimated \$2,500,000.00 would be needed for facilities to accommodate visitors, interpret the park and to provide administrative buildings and staff housing. No estimate is now available on land acquisition costs. A staff of 18 to 20 people would be necessary to administer, protect, interpret and maintain the park and its facilities. The majority, if not

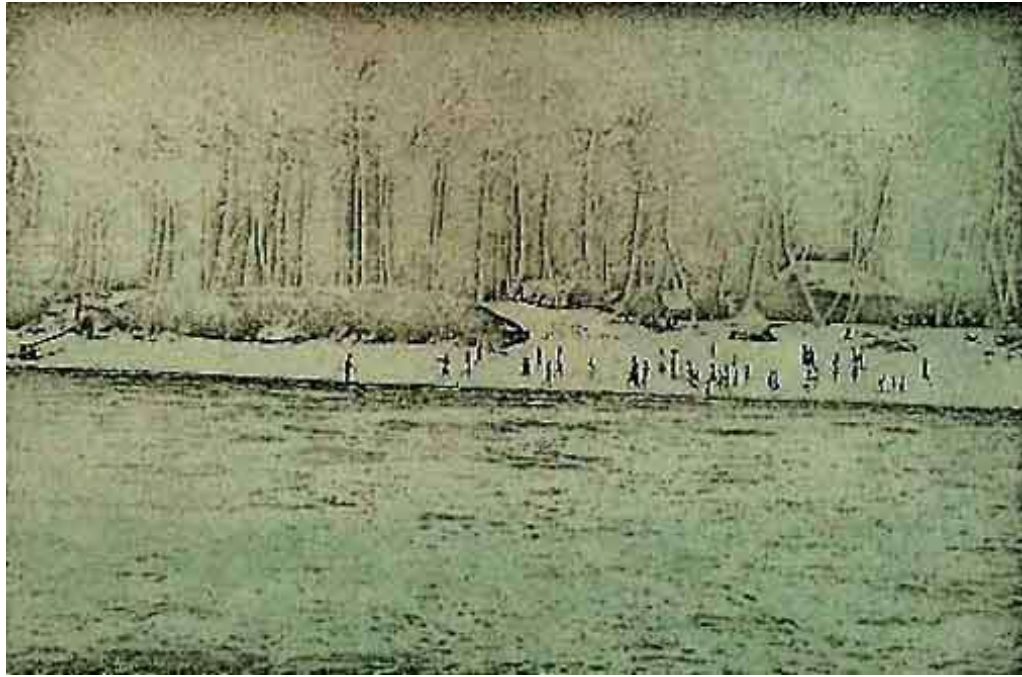
all, of these people should be Samoan. Staffing and operational costs would run in the vicinity of \$180,000.00 per year. The overnight facilities and food operations should be operated under a concession system within structures built by the Government.



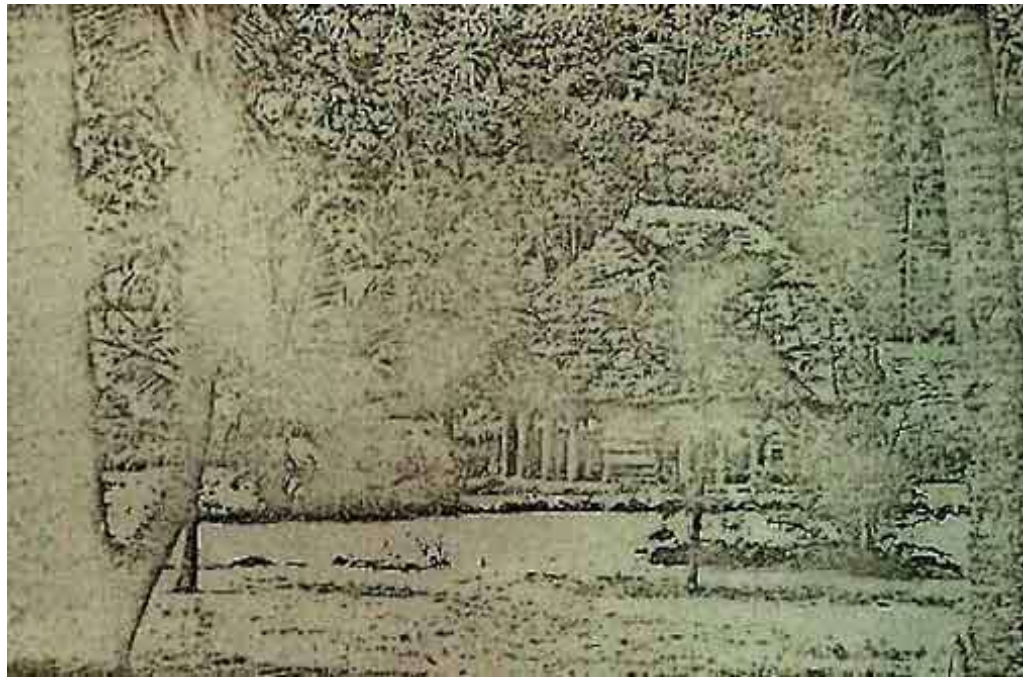
1. Seen from Ta'u, the Manuan Islands of Ofu and Olosega, blended together by distance, float invitingly amid sea, sky and cloud.



2. Coral sand, coconut palms, and thatch roofed Samoan fale still characterize Manuan villages.



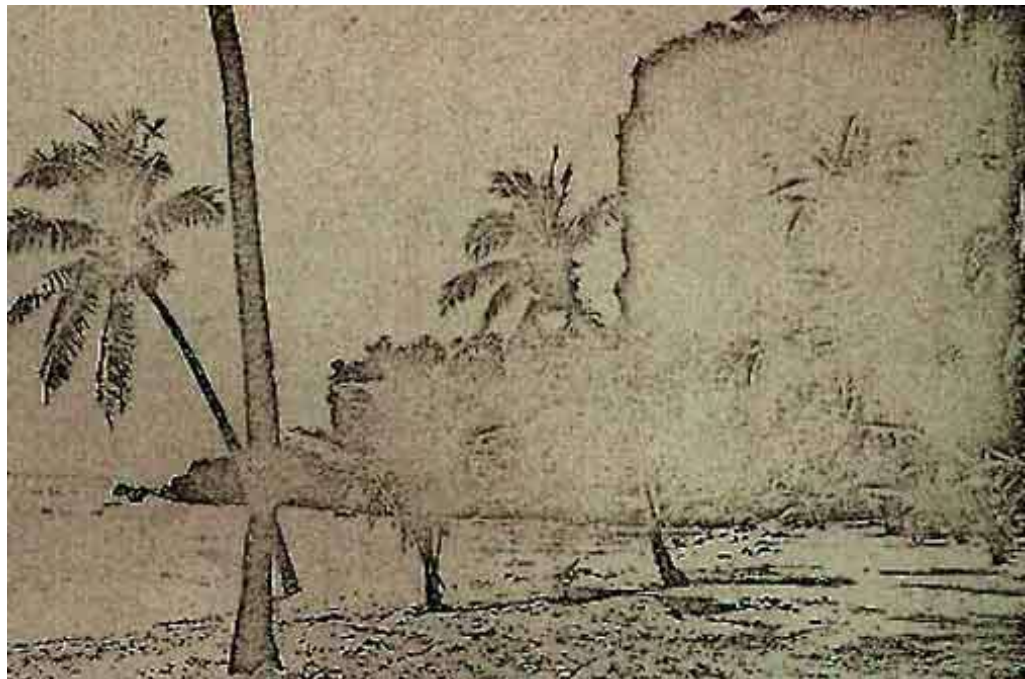
3. A vessel arriving offshore stirs excitement along the beach in front of Olosega Village, Olosega Island.



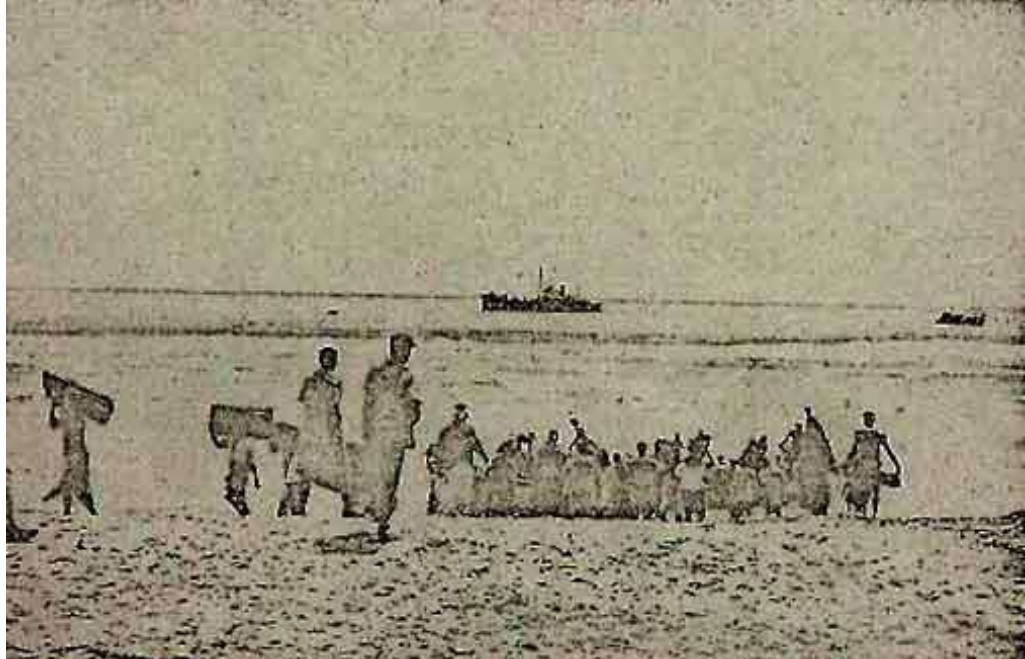
4. Most Samoans of Manu'a still inhabit traditional fales in garden settings of taro, breadfruit, and banana.



5. A recently built guest fale in parklike Fitiuta Village, Ta'u Island.



6. Beauty abounds in Manu'a, but truck tracks on Faleasao beach indicate the need for quick action to control scenic impairment.



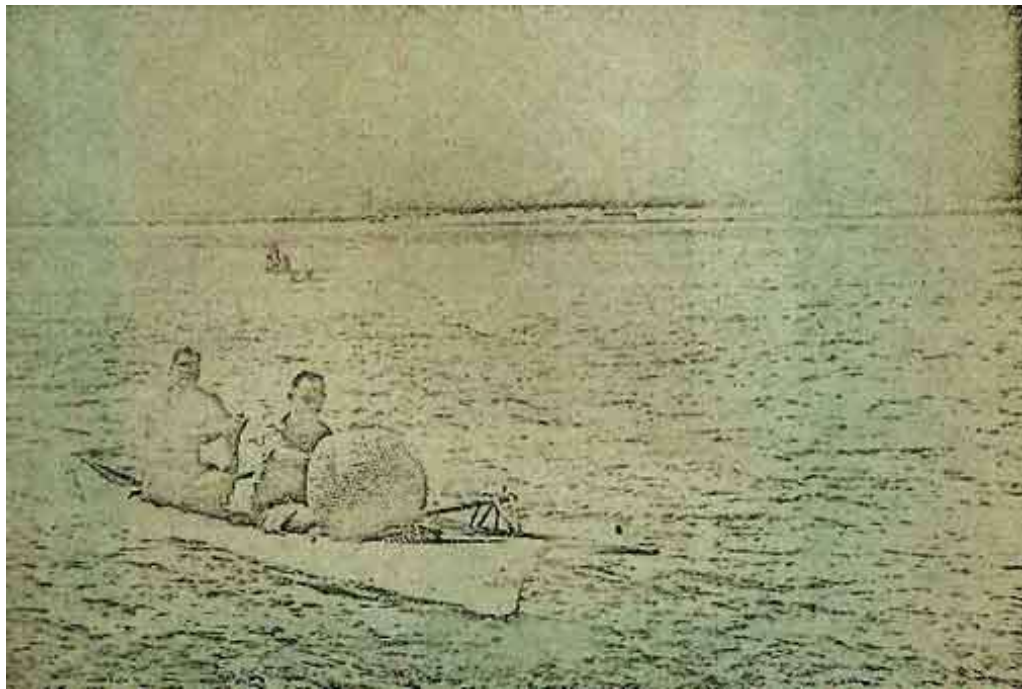
7. At Faleasau, Ta'u, husky Samoans carry ashore a long-boat load of dynamite to be used in blasting a boat passage through the reef.



8. To'aga Beach provides an idyllic setting for the proposed Samoa National Historical Park.



9. Looking west along To'aga Beach, site of the village to be created in the proposed park.



10. Handsome Samoan men use centuries-old methods to catch reef fish in basketry traps at Asaga Straight, in the proposed park.

B. Proposed System of Territorial Parks.

In the face of the need to care for a greater tourist trade and the requirements of the resident population for places and facilities for outdoor recreation, it is urgently necessary that action be taken immediately to establish and develop a suitable territorial park and recreation program in American Samoa. With this in mind, areas and suggested developments are proposed herein as units of a system of territorial parks:

1. Shore and Mountain Parks - Tutuila

a. Matautuloa Point Park. Two small beaches, a highly scenic rocky ledge protruding into the sea and thundering surf are the chief attractions of this area. Proposed developments: road to point and parking; reasonable access to beaches; scenic overlook on point; bath house, picnic area and comfort stations.

b. Taputapu Park. The westernmost point on Tutuila. Spectacular offshore rocks, blow-holes, two small beaches in pleasing scenic settings. Proposed developments: parking area, trails and picnic sites.

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c. Vaiava Strait Park. The most spectacular scene on the island of Tutuila; the "Cockscomb" and mountains rising sharply from the pounding seas combine to make an unforgettable landscape. A wilderness park -- no development should be undertaken.

d. O'a Park. Peaceful and pleasing beach. Boat access and picnicking facilities proposed for development.

e. Cape Matatula Park. A rocky seascape at the northeast tip of Tutuila. Provides a distant view of the Cockscomb, a feature of the proposed Vaiava Strait Park. The area has a small beach. Proposed developments to include parking, trail and overlook, beach and bath house as well as picnic area.

f. Matuli Point Park. A small rocky promontory on the southeast tip of Tutuila. It provides a fine overlook of the sea from which one can view the island of Aunu'u and on a

clear day the Manu'a Islands, 50 miles to the east, may be seen. Development - trail and overlook, parking, small beach.g. Aunu'u Park. On Aunu'u Island, the park would include a small crater which holds a swamp of scenic and scientific importance. Access to this island park should be by longboat in order that visitors would have an opportunity to participate in this thrilling type of boat travel so typical of the South Pacific, The park should be a scientific reserve with a viewing trail along the crater rim.

g. Aunu'u Park. On Aunu'u Island, the park would include a small crater which holds a swamp of scenic and scientific importance. Access to this island park should be by longboat in order that visitors would have an opportunity to participate in this thrilling type of boat travel so typical of the South Pacific, The park should be a scientific reserve with a viewing trail along the crater rim.

h. Matafao Peak. Matafao Peak is the highest mountain on Tutuila and it is believed the higher slopes of the peak hold specimens of the virgin forests of the upper elevations of the island. This is proposed as a wilderness park to conserve these forests. Proposed developments should be held to trails and overlooks.

i. Nu'uuli Park. This area around Tafuna lagoon and adjacent to Pago Pago, government housing and the International Airport have excellent space for facilities to provide for intensive use and spectator sports. Development of an Olympic size swimming pool, athletic field with stadium seats, play fields, court games as well as individual and group picnic areas are suggested here. Although well located, the site appears too restricted to permit installation of a golf course and the character of the soil and terrain is not suitable for such an installation except at heavy cost.

j. Aoloau Fou Park. At an elevation over 1,000-feet above sea level, the relatively open rounded ridges in this part of the island of Tutuila provide opportunity for varied types of outdoor recreation in a cooler environment. An 18 hole golf course could be developed here with less expense than any other site available on the island. The character of the country is such that foot and horse trails could be constructed to provide for hikes or rides to Taputapu

Park or Fagamalo Village. Tennis courts would be highly acceptable in this area of higher and cooler elevations.

C. Pago Pago Bay Parks. There is a critical need now for outdoor recreation space and facilities for the expanding residential population of Pago Pago. The opening of the new hotel in the city will make these needs much more urgent. Even now securing land to meet these requirements is almost out of the question; hence it is necessary to make the most out of such space as may be reasonably available. These parks should be managed by the Territorial Parks Board although they will be municipal parks for all practical purposes. Opportunities to establish four parks are in prospect, as set forth below:

1. Upper Bay Park. By taking advantage of reef area at the upper end of the Bay, a section of several acres may be obtained by dredging and filling. A building now exists (formerly a school), in the vicinity -which could be converted to a community buildings An athletic field, children's playground, outdoor stage and seating, comfort station and parking should be provided in this area. The guest fale now there should be maintained and possibly another added. In the study team's opinion, this park should not be traversed by any through road or street. Through traffic should be kept on the perimeter of the area.

2. Bay Front Promenade. The frontage now occupied by residences west of the hotel site should be cleared and converted to an open park with paths, rest benches, several rest fales and a small boat and yacht anchorage provided.
3. Site for the American Samoa Center. East and south of the hotel site is a section of bay front occupied by residences and the obsolescent Rainmaker Hotel. This area should be cleared to provide a promenade and a site for the American Samoa Center as well as parking for visitors to this facility. A small beach for swimming should be maintained at the far end of this area.

4. Breakers Point Beach Park. Across the Bay from the hotel, there is a fine opportunity to develop in unpolluted and clear waters a beach park between Breakers Point and the small point now being filled with local material. This section could be made into a fine beach. Parking, bathhouse, picnic sites, comfort station and a trail