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# AMERICAN SAMOA

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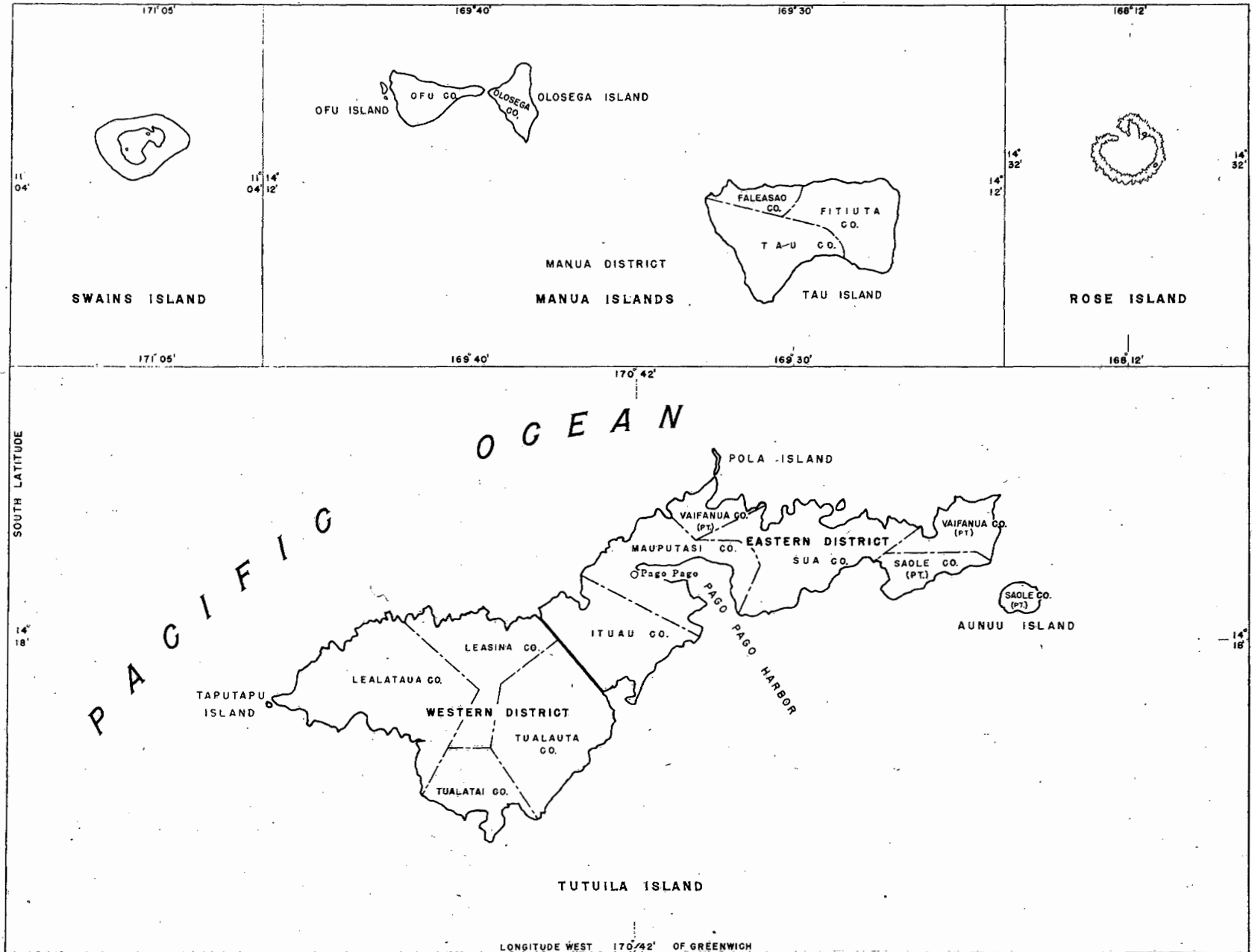
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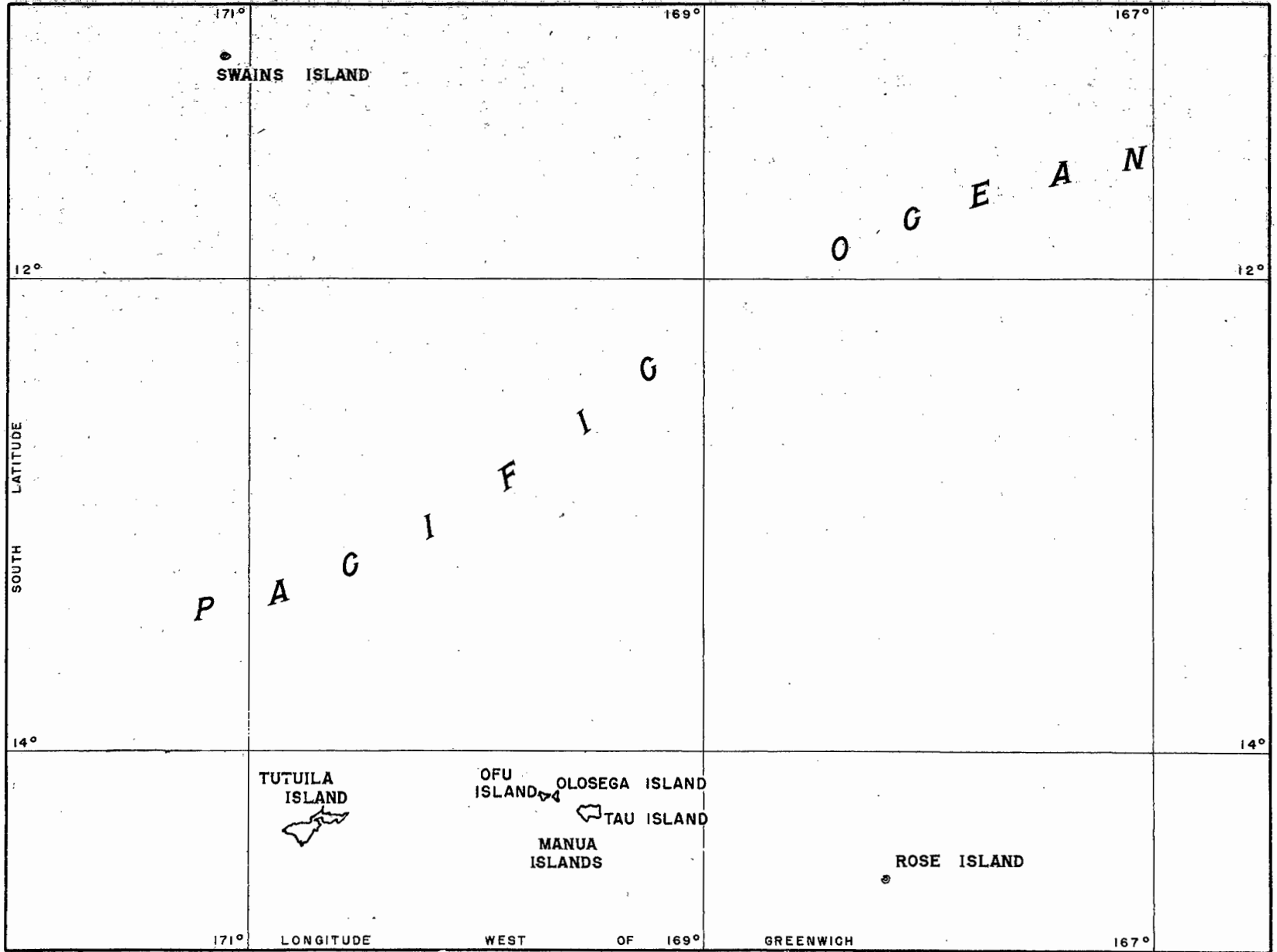
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# AMERICAN SAMOA

## ISLANDS, DISTRICTS, AND COUNTIES



# AMERICAN SAMOA



# CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE: 1940

**Introduction.**—This report presents, for American Samoa, the limited amount of statistics on agriculture which were collected in 1940 as a part of the Sixteenth Decennial Census of the United States. Comparative data on agriculture from the Fifteenth Decennial Census taken in 1930 and the Fourteenth Decennial Census taken in 1920 are presented when available.

These censuses of agriculture were taken in conjunction with the censuses of population which are the sources of the figures given herein for the number of inhabitants of these possessions. The 1920 Census of American Samoa was the first taken by the Federal Government of the United States. However, following the acquisition of these islands by the United States, the Naval Governors conducted local censuses of population in 1900 and 1912. The field work for the three latest censuses was performed under the supervision of the Naval Governor in accordance with plans prescribed by the Director of the Census.<sup>2</sup>

**Brief history, geography, and climate.**—For several years, the United States, Great Britain, and Germany exercised a joint protectorate over the Samoan Islands. Later, England in recognition of other claims withdrew and the islands were divided between the United States and Germany, the former taking the Island of Tutuila and all other islands of the group lying east of longitude 171° west of Greenwich. This adjustment was reached by a convention between the United States, Great Britain, and Germany, concluded December 2, 1899, and proclaimed by the President of the United States February 16, 1900. The natives of Samoa had no part in this convention. On April 17, 1900, the high chiefs of Tutuila, without any solicitation, ceded the islands of Tutuila and Aunu'u to the Government of the United States. This cession was acknowledged by the President under date of July 21, 1902. In July 1904, the Manua chiefs ceded their islands to the United States. The deed was signed July 14 and executed July 16. The President acknowledged the receipt of the deed of cession of the islands of Ofu, Olosega, Tau, and Rose. The sovereignty of the United States was extended to Swains Island, by joint resolution of Congress, approved March 4, 1925, which placed the island under the administrative control of, and made it a part of, American Samoa. The former German islands are now mandated to New Zealand.

The Samoan Islands group in the South Pacific is about 2,700 miles east of the northern tip of Australia and 2,200 miles south of the Hawaiian Islands. They were known as the Navigators' Islands for some years. American Samoa comprises the Island of Tutuila, the most westerly of these United States possessions with the exception of Swains Island; the Island of Aunu'u, embraced in the name "Tutuila"; the Manua group composed of the Islands of Ofu, Olosega, and Tau; Rose Island, an uninhabited atoll; and Swains Island.

The name "American Samoa" became the official title of all the Samoan Islands under the jurisdiction of the United States on October 24, 1912, when the President issued the Governor a new commission as "Governor of American Samoa."

The agricultural possibilities of American Samoa are indicated in part by the area, topography, and other geographic features and by the soil and climate of the islands. The total land area of these islands is 76 square miles. Tutuila Island

has an area of 52 square miles, a length of approximately 20 miles, and a breadth of about 6 miles. Its extreme elevation is 2,141 feet. Aunu'u Island, about a mile from the east end of Tutuila, has a length of 1 mile, a height of 275 feet, and an area of less than 1 square mile.

About 60 miles to the east are the 3 Manua Islands, the largest of which is Tau, 6 1/2 miles in length, 3,056 feet in extreme height, and 17 square miles in area. Olosega Island is 2 1/2 miles in length, 2,095 feet in maximum height, and covers an area of 2 square miles. Ofu Island is about 3 miles long; its highest point is 1,587 feet, and its area 3 square miles.

Rose Island is the name given an atoll about 3 miles in diameter, partly under water at high tide, 80 miles southeast of any of the other islands of the Samoan group. Sand Islet, the smaller of the 2 islets of the atoll, is about an acre in extent and its highest part is 5 feet above high tide. Rose Islet has an area of about 8 acres, and its highest part is 11 feet above high water. It is without fresh water and is uninhabited. This islet once had the distinction of being the southernmost land under the control of the United States,<sup>3</sup> being almost exactly 1,000 miles south of the equator.

Swains Island, also called Gente Hermosa and Quiros, lies in a northerly position to Tutuila, and is about 4 miles in circumference and not over 20 feet above sea level; its gross area, including a central lagoon of 1/3 square mile, is 1 1/3 square miles. It was discovered by Quiros in 1606 and named by him La Peregrina, but the position then given for it was so much in error as to lead an American whaling captain named Swain to assume the right of discovery upon landing there. It was examined in 1840 by a United States exploring expedition under Wilkes and renamed Swains Island.

The Islands of American Samoa, with the exception of Rose and Swains Islands, are of recent volcanic origin. There are several classes of soils, e.g., the mountain island of Tutuila is fringed by coral reefs and the narrow ribbon of more or less level land on which the villages of the natives are built consists very largely of disintegrated and decomposed coral residues. The coconut tree seems to flourish both on the volcanic mountain side of basaltic rocks and shales and on the narrow fringe of calcareous material bordering the island which is supplied part of the time, at least, with considerable saline material. This adaptability of Samoan crops to various types of soils, according to Coulter, seems to be a characteristic of banana plants, breadfruit trees, sugarcane, and other crops. The volcanic islands are drained by scores of short streams which descend from the mountains in valleys with very steep gradients.

The climate of Samoa is one of high temperature and heavy rainfall; the daily range of temperature is slight and there is little variation from day to day. The average annual rainfall at the United States Naval Station on Tutuila for the years 1900 to 1936, inclusive, was 196 inches. There is a great variation in the rainfall from year to year, from month to month, and from day to day. In 1905, the rainfall was 130.1 inches, but in 1908 it was 284.4 inches. Samoa suffers from hurricanes at irregular intervals.

<sup>1</sup>Most of the factual data on "Brief history, geography, and climate" taken from Geological Survey Bulletin 817 of the United States Department of the Interior, 1939; "Land Utilization in American Samoa," by John Wesley Coulter, Bernice P. Bishop, Museum Bulletin 170, Honolulu, Hawaii, 1941; and American Samoa, A General Report by the Governor, 1927, and United States Code, 1940 edition. Much of the information on "Government and people" and "Agricultural activities" is taken verbatim from John Wesley Coulter, op. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Capt. Edward W. Hansen, United States Navy, who was Governor-Commandant in April 1940, was in charge of the Sixteenth Census canvass of American Samoa.

<sup>3</sup>Claims based upon the Byrd Explorations and Discoveries in the Antarctic may have altered this distinction.

**Government and people.**—On February 19, 1900, an Executive Order was signed by the President reading as follows:

The island of Tutuila, of the Samoan group, and all other islands of the group east of longitude 171° west of Greenwich, are hereby placed under the control of the Department of the Navy for a naval station.

The Secretary of the Navy shall take such steps as are necessary to establish the authority of the United States and to give to the islands the necessary protection.

The Secretary of the Navy on the same date issued an order as follows:

The island of Tutuila, of the Samoan group, and all other islands of the group east of longitude 171° west of Greenwich, are hereby established into a naval station, to be known as the Naval Station, Tutuila, and to be under the command of a commandant.

At the present time, the head of the Naval Government of American Samoa is a naval officer appointed, as Governor, by the President of the United States. The same officer also has orders from the Secretary of the Navy as Commandant of the Naval Station, Tutuila. The seat of the government is Pago Pago, located on the bay bearing that name. The port of Pago Pago is the only port of entry to American Samoa.

American Samoa is divided into three administrative districts, viz, Eastern Tutuila, Western Tutuila and Manua. Each has a native district governor appointed by the Governor. The districts are divided into counties, each administered by a native chief also appointed by the Governor. The districts comprise the following counties:

Eastern District, Tutuila      Western District, Tutuila

Ituau County  
Mauputasi County  
Saole County (which includes Aunuu Island)  
Sua County  
Vaifanua County

Lealataua County  
Leasina County  
Tualatai County  
Tualauta County

Manua District

Ofu County (coextensive with Ofu Island)  
Olosega County (coextensive with Olosega Island)  
Faleasao County  
Fitiuta County } Tau Island  
Tau County

Swains Island is inhabited (147 persons in 1940) but is not a separate administrative district.

Rose Island is an uninhabited island and is placed under no administrative district.\*

The county and district councils may recommend laws, which they deem expedient and necessary for the county or district, for enactment of the Governor (of American Samoa), upon his approval.

The Samoans are, as a group, true Polynesians and are cousins of the Maoris of New Zealand and the Kanakas of the Territory of Hawaii. These people live in small villages situated, with a few exceptions on the "faga".<sup>†</sup> The largest village, Pago Pago, had only 934 inhabitants in 1940.

The Samoan family (*aiga*) is a social group of about 10 to 50 people living as a unit in a village. The head (*matai*) is the ruler of the family and directs its economic and political activities. The family usually consists of the "matai," his wife and children, relatives and their children, and adopted children. In some larger families there are two or three "small matai" under the direction of the head. Each family is a self-sustaining economic group, the members of which, including the head, cooperatively contribute the products of their labor to the family.

The lands owned and operated by a family under a "matai" are called plantations. A family generally owns from 5 to 10 plantations of various sizes from about 1/20 of an acre to 3 or 4 acres. These are in scattered locations, most of them being near the village in which the family lives. Some of the larger land holdings are controlled by family heads with titles of high chiefs and high talking chiefs.

There are from 5 to 25 families in a village. Their heads meet in village discussion groups (*fono*) where most matters of interfamily and village concern are discussed and decided, including land boundaries and other land matters. The "fono" is a directive for much cooperative economic effort, and has wide social and political powers.

There are no public lands in American Samoa. Nearly all the land is owned by the natives, but a few small tracts are owned by foreigners, the titles having been established before 1899. From the beginning of the occupation of the Islands of American Samoa by the United States Government, its policy in regard to the land has been "Samoan lands for Samoans." The laws of American Samoa accordingly provide that there shall be no alienation of land held by aboriginal natives of the islands to a nonnative. The lands of the natives may, however, be leased by nonnatives, with the sanction of the Governor, for a period not to exceed 40 years, for any purpose except for the extraction of minerals and the cutting of timber.

English is used as the medium of instruction in the school system of American Samoa. The regulations and orders are printed in both English and the Samoan language.

**Agricultural activities.**—The typical Samoan village consists of a group of native houses (*fale*) spaced about a village green (*malae*). It is situated on the beach at the mouth of a valley. A grove of coconut trees protects it from the ocean winds. At the back of the village, on the land side, are ovens (*umu*) one for each home. About the ovens are small irregular patches of the more important Samoan food crops—mostly bananas, breadfruit, and a few giant taro. The patches range in area from a few square feet to 100 square yards. Towering above them are more coconut trees. Trails lead from the village up the valley and mountain slopes. The slopes have heavy stands of coconut trees under which grow luxuriantly bananas and scattered breadfruit. Between the trees, there is a rank growth of shrubs, ferns, and weeds.

Above the coconut plantations is a dense natural forest, in which are clearings where taro is planted—the "ma'umaga" or main taro lands of the village. In the clearings are dead trees still standing, killed by girdling or by lighting fires around the bases of the trunks; there are stumps 2 feet high of those that have fallen, and rotting trunks and thick branches lying on the ground spread out in various directions. Among these forest remains taro grows in various stages of development from plants a few weeks old to mature plants 7 or 8 months old. Yams grow with taro in some clearings, their vines clinging to short poles or trailing on the ground. Near the taro plantations are older clearings formerly used for taro, now used for bananas. Giant taro is also found in them. Many old taro lands have reverted to second growth forest.

Minor variations in the landscape occur here and there. The small Island of Aunuu has almost no natural forest; the taro plantations there are in swamp lands. A few swamps, found along the coasts of other islands, have dense growths of mangroves.

The tree plantations in American Samoa range in area from 0.5 to about four acres, excluding the small patches of planted land in the immediate vicinity of the native houses. Taro lands are from 0.2 to 0.5 acre. Coconut plantations occupy the largest area; parts of them, as already indicated, include bananas and breadfruit.

Each village group owns the plantations in its vicinity. But people from another village may have lands there too—by permission, through marriage relationships, or by grants of plantations which have come down by heredity and which were originally given to a family chief as a reward for valor in battle.

Each plantation, of whatever kind, has a specific name by which it is identified by the family that owns it. Corners of plantations are identified by certain trees generally with marks on them, by large rocks, or by other natural features. The ownership of trees growing near the imaginary lines which form their boundaries is exclusive and should a member of one family take a coconut from a tree belonging to another, there is trouble.

\* Taken from file correspondence with Captain Hansen, Governor-Commandant.

† The beach and the crescent-shaped valley floor.

On most of the coconut lands, trees are of volunteer growth, sprung from nuts which have fallen. Bananas are planted in parts of the coconut plantations near the villages, but most families have plantations which are used mainly for bananas. There is no systematic planting of breadfruit, which grows for many years—Samoans do not know exactly how many—and which is seen everywhere. Besides furnishing one of the staple foods, it is extensively used in building native houses. Kava, a small shrub with large roots, is cultivated. The dried roots are used in preparing the important ceremonial drink. The alligator pear (avocado) grows half wild. Several species of citrus are found in the slands. The native Samoan orange grows on lowlands in forests. The fruit is sour and seldom eaten, but the juice is used by the Samoans as a shampoo. The citron and lime also grow wild.

Of the nontree crops on these islands, taro is the most important: it is second only to bananas as a food crop and is preferred to bananas when the supply is large. The higher plantations in Samoa are almost exclusively taro; many are at elevations of 700 to 1,000 feet. Taro plantations are farthest from the villages. They are usually grouped together, identified with the villages the families of which own and operate them. Giant taro (*taamu*) is cultivated mainly as an emergency crop for use after hurricanes. The corm of the *taamu* will remain several months in the ground without spoiling.

Cassava is commonly cultivated in little patches, mostly near the houses in the villages. Two forms are distinguished by the Samoans, "maniotia," which is made into starch, and "tapioka," which is made into pudding. Sugarcane, which is raised in patches near all the villages, is grown almost exclusively for house thatch. Tobacco came into Polynesia with the white man, and Samoans have developed strong varieties.

There are no farms in the islands which fulfill the definition of a farm as usually given by the Census. In view of the fact that the Samoans have no unit of area, it is impracticable at present to undertake the task of obtaining accurate figures for acreages and crops.

As to livestock in American Samoa, the natives are most interested in the production of pigs and poultry. Pigs enable a family to make a good showing at various ceremonial functions demanding pork. They are generally kept near the villages in enclosures and the animals are marked to show to which family they belong. The meat of the coconut is their principal food. At feasts for ordinary guests, fowl is an economical substitute for pork, thus many families raise chickens. On the small plain in the western part of Tutuila, horses are used to carry baskets of coconut meat. They cannot be used successfully on the rugged terrain of the rest of the islands. Cattle are kept on the plain by the Mormon mission on a coconut plantation, and by a few Samoans, to graze the ground between trees.

**The copra industry.**—Copra, the dried meat of the coconut, is the chief export from the islands. Ripe coconuts for copra generally lie under the trees for a month or two, until there are enough to make a cutting worth while. Nuts from plantations near the villages are gathered from time to time and strung around poles where they remain until it is decided to cut copra. The nuts are husked and are split open with the backs of bush knives, then the meat is cut out in strips. The fresh meat is dried on mats near the houses and is raked by hand at intervals to dry it evenly. In dry weather the meat dries in four days, but the average drying period is seven days. Approximately two and three-fourths nuts are required to make one pound of dried copra.

The copra is carried in baskets to the village weighing station, where a receipt chit, negotiable at face value anywhere in American Samoa, is issued, generally in the name of the family chief. The product is then stored in a copra shed to await transportation to Pago Pago. The Government markets the copra thereby saving the Samoan from trading with people whose ways he does not understand, and, by selling it on contract, gets a better average price over a period of years than could be gained by individuals. An American navigation company gives a special freight rate to San Francisco. The quantity produced is governed by the selling price and by the frequency and incidence of hurricanes.

Because of the importance of this product in the island economy and since it forms the largest part of the case income from agriculture, exports from 1931 to 1939 are shown in table 7.

**Authority for the censuses.**—Legal provision for the 1940 and 1930 censuses of American Samoa was made in the Act providing for the Fifteenth Decennial Census of the United States which was approved on June 18, 1929. In part, this Act provided:

That a census of population, agriculture, irrigation, drainage, distribution, unemployment, and mines shall be taken by the Director of the Census in the year 1930 and every ten years thereafter. The census herein provided for shall include each State, the District of Columbia, Alaska, Hawaii, and Porto Rico. A census of Guam, Samoa, and the Virgin Islands shall be taken in the same year by the respective governors of said islands and a census of the Panama Canal Zone by the Governor of the Canal Zone, all in accordance with plans prescribed or approved by the Director of the Census.

**Schedules and coverage.**—In taking the censuses of agriculture for American Samoa, several differences in the schedules and in the attempted coverage should be noted. In all cases, the number of subjects covered was limited. The schedules for 1940, 1930, and 1920, with instructions contained thereon and any additional instructions to the enumerators, are reproduced at the close of this report on American Samoa.

For 1940, as may be noted, the enumerator, after securing the information in respect to the inhabitants of each household, was to ascertain whether any member of the household raised any crops in 1939 or kept any livestock on April 1, 1940. If so, a report was to be made for such crops and/or livestock except that in the case where no crops were raised and no livestock other than poultry was kept, a report was not to be made if there were fewer than five chickens or other poultry. Thus, no attempt was made to define a farm for purposes of enumeration. As pointed out in the discussion under "Agricultural activities," the places reporting crops or livestock in the islands do not correspond closely to "farms" as ordinarily defined in the Census Reports. However, in the preliminary release of the 1940 Census data for American Samoa, the establishments which reported agricultural activities are all shown under the term "farms." The definition as given in that report is—

The term "farm" \*+ relates to any parcel or parcels of land—regardless of size and value of production—on which crops were grown by one person, either alone or with the aid of members of his household or of hired help.

Since all of the reports indicated crops had been grown, each of the agricultural establishments was classified as a farm in that report and, for consistency, are so shown in this report.

As pointed out in the discussion under "Government and people," the holdings of an "aiga" might consist of from 5 to 10 scattered plantations all under the direction of one "matai." According to section 79 of the Codification of the Regulations and Orders for the Government of American Samoa, issued in 1937, "Every matai in American Samoa shall register his title and designating name and the record of such registration shall be kept as a part of the records of the Attorney General." It would seem, therefore, that there should not be any duplication of "matai" names. The fact that no duplication was found on the schedules lends credence that all of the holdings of one "aiga" were reported on one schedule.

The Agriculture Schedule used in American Samoa in 1940 was designed to secure the name and age of the operator, the name of the owner if other than operator, the acres in the property, the acres or fractions thereof and production for individual field crops, the number of trees or plants and the production for individual fruits and nuts, and also the number of the different species of livestock of all ages on hand. It has also been pointed out that Samoans have no unit of area for land and that the crops are grown in very small and widely scattered plots. Governor-Commandant Hansen, in correspondence with the Bureau, advised that in the 1940 enumeration for agriculture no data were entered on the farm reports for the number of coconut trees as the natives could not answer this question with any degree of accuracy. He stated the same condition applied to the acreage of farms. He also stated that the



Samoans keep no records and they have no idea of the number, pounds, or bushels for recording the production of such crops as arrowroot, sugarcane, sweetpotatoes, tobacco, and yams.

At the direction of the supervisor, the enumerators reported the number of plants for the individual field crops rather than an acreage and the quantity produced. The number of plants is not particularly significant for such crops as sugarcane, sweetpotatoes, taro, and yams. The reports indicated a considerable amount of estimating which might vary widely from the actual conditions. For all of these reasons, it is thought best not to show the number of plants, as was carried in the preliminary release, but rather to show only the number of farms, or properties, reporting specified crops. Taamu, or giant taro, although not listed on the schedule, was reported by nearly every respondent. This crop, previously referred to as an emergency crop, is closely allied to the true taro, but it is very acrid to the taste and is eaten only in cases of necessity. The number of reports of taro, the number of reports of taamu, and the number of schedules showing either or both of these crops are given in table 5. Ti, a semicultivated shrub, has long tuberous roots which are full of starch and saccharine substance and are roasted for human food or fed to livestock. The young leaves of the plant are excellent fodder for animals and the older leaves yield a coarse fiber. Kava was reported on only two schedules. Numerous entries for this crop had been made on other schedules, but for some reason they had been intentionally erased by the enumerator. Particular attention is called to the figures shown in table 6 for bananas, breadfruit, and coconuts, and their accompanying footnotes which are reproduced from the preliminary report.

In 1930, 2 schedules were used to record agricultural activities. One was used to secure the acreage and production for field crops and the number of trees, plants, and production for fruits and nuts. An individual schedule of this type was required for every operator. The second schedule was for recording livestock and was a line type form on which the livestock for as many as 56 possessors, or owners, could be listed. The data for crops as shown in the reports for that year are given as representing "farms" as defined on the schedule, while the data for livestock as carried in the reports for that year are given for "places reporting" and not "farms reporting."

In 1920, two line type schedules were used, one to secure information for the cultivated crops, and the other to secure the number of specified kinds of livestock. However, the reports for that year do not carry any data for crops.

**Tenure of operator.**—Table 2 presents the number of operators classified into two groups, namely, "Owners" and "Other than owners." The classification was made on the following basis: If a name was given under Question 1 "Name of Operator" and a name did not appear under the (a) part of the question "Name of owner (if other than operator)," the operator was classified as an "Owner," whereas if a name appeared under the (a) part of the question, the operator was classified as "Other than owner." Whether this basis of classification is valid could not be ascertained satisfactorily from the schedules. In several counties all of the operators were classed as "Owners." For those counties, a comparison was made with the population schedules and it was found in each case that the name reported in the space for name of operator was given on the population schedule as a "matai" or "head" of a family which strengthens the belief that the classification shown herein has factual standing.