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THE HERITAGE OF
NINETEENTH CENTURY
SAMOAN NEWSPAPERS
A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL DOCUMENTATION

BY
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INTRODUCTION

This document provides bibliographical information on the nineteenth century commercial newspapers issued in Apia, Samoa. These were the *Samoa Times* in its two incarnations (1877–1881 and 1888–1896) and the *Samoa Weekly Herald* (1892–1900). The report provides some historic information on the papers and their proprietors. The accessible information is overall very sparse, mainly because the documentary archival evidence in hand is limited and largely confined to more momentous events of colonial politics and skulduggery unfolding during that time.

In the late 1870s, just as much as in the late 1880s, Apia possessed only a small European community. Thus any newspaper was a risky financial venture. All three papers discussed here had frequent changes of ownership, with four years and eight months the longest period of ownership by one proprietor, and four months the shortest.

Each of the papers will be discussed in this report with a brief historical overview, a bibliographical entry including images of all mast heads, and a technical discussion of paper quality and other noteworthy matters.

OTHER PAPERS

Well before the first commercial paper was published in Apia, the London Missionary Society published a news sheet, *The Samoan Reporter* which appeared in the 1840s–1860s.1 Appearing biannually, the *Samoan Reporter* carried missionary news, some general news items, as well as a serialisation of ethnographic observations.

The expatriate population of Samoa also read newspapers coming out of Auckland, San Francisco and Sydney. The main regional newspaper was the *Fiji Times*, first published on 4 September 1869 by George Lyttleton Griffiths in Levuka and from 1887 onwards in Suva. There was also the Griffiths-owned *Suva Times* (1881–1886) and the *Fiji Argus* published in Levuka (1874–1883†).

1 *The Samoan Reporter* 1845–1860. In total twenty-one issues are extant. The paper was a four, and on occasion six page paper set out in three columns and printed locally at the London Missionary Society’s printery at Leulumoega on Upolu.—Printed by John Bettrige Stair: nº 1, March 1845; nº 2, September 1845; nº 3, March 1846.—Printed by James Povey Sutherland: nº 4, September 1846; nº 5, March 1847; nº 6, September 1847; nº 7, March 1848; nº 8, September 1848; nº 9, March 1849.—Printed by Samuel Ella: nº 10, November 1849 (6pp); nº 11, July 1850; nº 12, January 1851; nº 13, July 1851; nº 14, September 1852; nº 15, January 1854 (6pp); nº 16, December 1854 (6pp); nº 17, January 1856; nº 18, January 1857; nº 19, October 1857 (6pp); nº 21, March 1860 (6pp);
In addition to the commercial English language papers being published in Apia, the London Missionary Society published the Samoan Language paper *O Le Sulu o Samoa*, which was printed on the premises of the *Samoa Times*.

**ABOUT THE DATA**

The bibliographical information set out on the following pages has been compiled from the microfilm issue produced by Gosford Micrographics, Berkle Vale, N.S.W which is based on the holdings of the Mitchell Library, Sydney, as well as from a physical inspection of the originals held by that library.

The paper types and sheet size tables set out the change over time for the newsprint types (sizes) and the duration for which this paper was in use. While the paper for the first incarnation of the *Samoa Times* was largely the same, presumably supplied from G.L. Griffiths in Fiji who himself seems to have been able to rely on a stable paper supply, the second incarnation of the *Samoa Times* and in particular the *Samoa Weekly Herald* have heavily fluctuating types of paper, oscillating between acid and acid-free paper. The paper qualities have been assessed with cursory macroscopic observation only. Until detailed examinations are carried out by a specialist in nineteenth century newsprint, no firm conclusions can be drawn. It is, however, quite likely that these variations represent paper stock from different suppliers, and possibly even different countries, with Apia having access to Californian, New Zealand and Australian paper manufacturers.
The weekly Apia newspaper was published from 6 October 1877 to 27 August 1881. George Lyttleton Griffiths had successfully started the *Fiji Times* newspaper in Levuka, Fiji, in September 1869, and turned it into a profitable enterprise.¹ Expanding to Samoa was a logical step. Griffiths’ *Samoa Times* enterprise, like his enterprise in Levuka, Fiji, comprised of a newspaper, a job printery, and a stationery and book shop (‘Samoa Stationery Emporium’) (*Samoa Times* 1877a). This combination was the rule for most country newspapers in Australia and New Zealand. Unusual was that G.L. Griffiths also operated a postal service in Samoa, similar to the service he maintained in Levuka (Fiji) (Spennemann 2003b, c), issuing postage stamps (figures 1-2). This meant that he not only produced the paper, but also had the means to distribute it beyond Samoa. Griffiths’ editor and postal agent in Apia was William Edgar Agar.

Agar, accompanied by his wife, left for Samoa on the 300t barque *Bhering*, commanded by Captain T. Brown in mid-August 1877 (*Fiji Times* 1877a). The vessel that took them there also carried a complete print shop, it seems, for on G.L. Griffith’s account are listed “5572 feet timber, 100 b'dls [bundles] shingles, 1 case and 18 pks [packages] printing material” (*Fiji Times* 1877b). Upon arrival Agar must have erected the printery, and set up shop for some six weeks later, on 6 October 1877, he produced the first paper. This was publicised in the *Fiji Times* by the end of the month: “We have to acknowledge the receipt of the first issue of the Samoa Times, an infant journal published by Mr. Agar for the firm Griffiths & Co.” (*Fiji Times* 1877c). Despite a promise of a more detailed report on the matter, this did not eventuate. For his motto, doubtlessly directed by Griffith, Agar chose “Sworn to no master and of no sect am I”, which was not only the motto of the *Fiji Times*, but also of countless other Australian and New Zealand papers (Kirkpatrick 1994; 2000).

William Edgar Agar, born in Essex in 1851, emigrated with his parents to New South Wales where he took up a apprenticeship as a printer. After becoming a journeyman he took up a position as typographer with the *Fiji Times* in Levuka. G. L. Griffiths, proprietor of the *Fiji Times*, chose Agar to set up his Samoa operations in 1877 (*Samoa Times* 1880a). Agar suffered from tuberculosis, however even the Apia climate did not seem to suit him. During Agar’s absence from Samoa for health reasons, and later after Agar’s death on 23 October 1880, the erstwhile assistant, Andrew Speirs, became editor of the paper and manager of the Post Office. On 10 May 1880 Andrew Speirs was appointed Acting Manager and editor of the *Samoa Times* (*Samoa Times* 1880e).

¹ *Fiji Times* vol. 1 n° 1, 4 September 1869, 4 pp; six-pence per issue.—By 1877 the paper had expanded to a larger paper size and a 7-column lay-out.
Figure 1. Postage Stamps issued by George Lyttleton Griffiths as part of his Samoa Times newspaper operations (Reprints from original litho stones)

Figure 2. Examples of stamps on Samoa Times papers with cancels of Apia and Levuka (cancelled after arrival in Fiji) (Spennemann 2003c)

On the same day Agar and his wife left Apia on board the schooner Gael for Fiji and then to New Zealand, seeking treatment for tuberculosis (Samoa Times 1880b). Little improvement could be effected, however. The Agars, now with a small child, returned to Samoa on 28 September 1880 on board the barque Vaettan from Fiji (Samoa Times 1880c). The Samoa Times welcomed Agar back and hoped that although he was not fully restored in his health, he would soon be able to take over the editorial chair (Samoa Times 1880c). Rather than improve, however, Agar’s health declined. He died on 23 October, aged 29 years (Samoa Times 1880a). Mrs Agar left Apia on 23 November 1880 for Sydney (Samoa Times 1880f). A week af-
ter Agar's death Andrew Speirs name appears as the editor of the *Samoa Times* and as the manager of the Samoa Post Office.

Agar set out the objectives of the *Samoa Times* in its first editorial:

“In sending out this, our first number of the SAMOA TIMES, we do so feeling that we have undertaken a great and worthy work, and one that will need the cordial co-operation of all those persons who have the good of the country at heart. Newspapers are usually like Gentlemen seeking a seat in Parliament, full of promises. We give no promise, and attempt no lengthy and wordy leaders, but prefer to take the mere modest plan of saying little, and doing what we can. The only promise that we do make is, that as far as circumstances will permit, we will make our paper of interest to our readers, and try to make it an organ of public good; a useful medium for the support of honor, truth and right. We shall maintain the liberty of the Press and the rights of all men. To perform this well we are conscious of many difficulties—the paucity of local information; the want of regular communication with the colonies, as well as the variety and clashing interests, both commercially and politically, of this small country, made up as it is of men of so many different nationalities and opinions….Our desire is to try and learn wisdom from the wise who teach us that it is possible for others to be right and ourselves wrong.” (Samoa Times 1877b).

In its first issue the *Samoa Times* advertised its circulation as being ‘throughout the Navigator Islands as well as the Australian Colonies, Fiji, New Zealand and Europe.’ (Samoa Times 1877a).

The *Samoa Times* was a purely commercial speculation. Like many other newspaper proprietors, Griffiths assumed that the mix of newspaper, job-printing and stationary-cum-book store would be economically viable. Although Apia was smaller than Levuka and much smaller than other Australian colonial towns that could sustain a newspaper, Apia could rely, to a certain degree, on the regular inter-island business as well as passing business by visiting ships. Compared to other papers, the *Samoa Times* also had a virtual monopoly on the mail service. The business seems to have been satisfactory, for on 11 October 1878 the *Samoa Times* moved printing and post offices to new premises next to Mr. Kennison’s store (Samoa Times 1878).

Yet, on the occasion of the commencement of the second year of publication, the editor commented:

“The proprietors will not be able to run the TIMES much longer at a loss, therefore it behoves all our friends to use every effort to furnish us with the “sinews of war” or we will have to seek a fresh field for our labours.” (Samoa Times 1878b).

It would appear that the total number of subscribers did not exceed much beyond a hundred. As many businesses took standing quarterly and thus comparatively cheap advertisements, the income stream of the *Samoa Times* must have been stable, but meagre. Government printing contracts or Government advertising were virtually non-existent. The editorial on the occasion of the commencement of the
second year of publication again commented on the fact that the paper had operated at a loss (Samoa Times 1879). Little had changed a year later (Samoa Times 1880g).

The early issues of the Samoa Times were set out in the standard format for a single-sheet, four-page colonial paper. Only on 2 and 9 July 1881 the Samoa Times was reduced to two pages as the then editor, Andrew Speirs, was taking a holiday (Samoa Times 1881). We do not know who filled in as acting editor. In a standard four-page issue advertisements made up page 1. The editorial, and local news made up page 2, with shipping and other commercial news invariably placed in columns 1 and 2. Intercolonial news, newsworthy extracts from other papers as well as extended narratives of local affairs, including some advertisements in columns 5 and 6, were placed on page 3. A half-column of poetry, other fiction or interesting educational items usually gleaned from other papers, as well as advertisements, and notices placed in the right hand column of page 4 completed the paper. From the second issue onwards the poetry was moved to the right hand part of page 3 (columns 4 or 5), where it was to remain—if and when it appeared.

Initially the price for an issue of the Samoa Times was set out in US dollars (25¢). With the sixtieth issue on 30 November 1878 the price was designated as 1 shilling. While the cost was nominally the same, the move signalled the shift to the stronger English currency. It is likely that the large importation of cheap Bolivian and Chilean ‘iron’ dollars by the German trading company J.C. Godeffroy & Sons, which had devalued the Dollar to about 90% of its face value, was the underlying cause for the move. Unless the proprietors were willing to incur a continual loss of income of 10%, the move to the more stable currency was necessary. After all, materials for the paper had to be sourced and imported from off island—and paid for in British Pounds or ‘real’, ie US Dollars. That issue certainly came to a head in late 1880. From 27 November 1880 onwards the Samoa Express Post Office, part of the same company, required that all letters be prepaid in English money. Payment in other currencies incurred a 10% surcharge (Samoa Times 1880h; 1880j).

The economic situation of the Samoa Times failed to improve. Acting on a directive by Griffiths, Speirs advertised in his own pages on 20 August 1881 that the proprietor was retiring from business and that the freehold land and buildings, all stock of the stationery shop, as well as the plant and goodwill of the Samoa Times were for sale at public auction (Samoa Times 1881b). A week later, the Samoa Times issued its 212th and last issue. The issue carries no formal farewell and appears like any other issue. As no buyer could be found, Griffiths closed up shop and had the printing plant removed from the island (Samoa Times 1888a), presumably to Fiji.

Overall the reporting of Samoan newspaper events in Fiji was limited. Even though owned by the same proprietor, the Fiji Times makes no firm mention of the demise of its stable mate, the Samoa Times (Fiji Times 1881). It could have been expected that should Griffith be unable to sell the press and goodwill, or just the press, in Samoa, he would advertise the sale of the printing equipment in his Fiji paper. In terms of technology and quality, by 1881 the press located in Apia was most certainly surplus to his needs. Indeed, it is likely that the press used for the Samoa Times originally came from the Fiji Times as surplus equipment when the Fiji Times moved to a larger paper format. Yet it may not be coincidence that soon after
the demise of the *Samoa Times* Griffiths started up the *Suva Times* in the new Fijian capital. Even if the Samoan printing plant was not used for the Suva enterprise, the closure of the Samoa Times meant that Griffith had capital to invest or divert.

The *Suva Times* was scheduled to commence in early October 1881 (Fiji Times 1881a), and produced its first issue on 29 October 1881. At the time, a number of businesses saw the writing on the wall and relocated to Suva (Fiji Times 1881b). The *Fiji Times* followed in 1886, closing down the *Suva Times* in the process.
Bibliographical data

Issues: Vol. 1 n° 1, 6 October 1877 –Vol. 4 n° 212, 27 August 1881.
Mastheads: The Samoa Times | Navigator’s Islands
Vol. 1 n° 1, 6 October 1877 –Vol. 2 n° 73, 29 March 1879.
The Samoa Times | and South Sea Gazette
Vol. 2 n° 74, 5 April 1879–Vol. 4 n° 212, 27 August 1881.
Motto: “Sworn to no Master, of no Sect am I”
Running head: The Samoa Times.
Proprietor: George Lyttleton Griffiths & Co. (Levuka, Fiji).
6 October 1877–27 August 1881.
Published at: Apia, Upolu, Samoa.
Editors: William Edward Agar
6 October 1877–23 October 1880.
Andrew Speirs
17 May 1880 (acting); 23 October 1880 (permanent)–27 August 1881.
Frequency: weekly, Saturday.
Length: 4 pages.
2 pages on 2 and 9 July 1881.
Dimensions: 6 columns
Paper size: see separate table below
Supplements: 7 February 1880, 1 page single-sided
Price / issue: US¢ 25; 1/-
Subscriptions: US$ 2.50 per quarter (paid in advance)
US$ 3.00 per quarter (on credit)
Subscribers: ~100–110
Advertising rates: Advertisements single (column inch): US$ 1.00; continued: US¢ 60
notices (20 words): US¢ 62.5
Births, Death and Marriages:
US$ 1.00
Holdings: ANL Coin drawer vol. 1 n° 1, Oct. 6, 1877
NSL:M BN429 vol. 1 n° 1 Oct. 6, 1877–vol. 4, n° 212, Aug. 27, 1881
**Technical Observations**

The paper was professionally run and there are only few variations worth noting, mainly with respect to the paper supply.

**Paper Types and Sheet Sizes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Page size (mm)</th>
<th>Weeks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 nº 1</td>
<td>6 Oct 1877</td>
<td>grey</td>
<td>570 x 440</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 nº 112</td>
<td>22 Nov 1879</td>
<td>grey green</td>
<td>565 x 435</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 nº 187</td>
<td>26 Feb 1881</td>
<td>white-yellow</td>
<td>555 x 430</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 nº 188</td>
<td>12 Mar 1881</td>
<td>white-yellow</td>
<td>565 x 440</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 nº 193</td>
<td>16 Apr 1881</td>
<td>white-yellow</td>
<td>565 x 440</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 nº 212</td>
<td>27 Aug 1881</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mastheads**

Figures 4 and 5 show the two mastheads used during the life of the paper.

*Figure 3. Impressum of the Samoa Times 1877–1881*
Figure 4. Masthead of the Samoa Times of 1877

Figure 5. Masthead of the Samoa Times of 1879
Samoa Times
1888–1896

From August 1881 until September 1888 Samoa was without a local newspaper. In mid-1888 Stephen J. Cusack founded the second incarnation of the Samoa Times. He had to ship in a full newspaper and job printing plant as the old plant had been removed from the island.

Cusack tried to make the paper pay, but when he commenced his operation in 1888 the situation in Samoa was much more politicised than when the first Samoa Times folded. Both German and British interests competed for influence over the Apia Municipal Council run by the expatriates, as well as over the native Samoan Government (in charge of all Samoa outside Apia), with German interests in the ascendancy in the late 1880s and early 1890s. Cusack was a British citizen and thus clearly and fully identified with British interests. By necessity, this created a perception that German interests could not be served well in the newspaper, regardless of actual content and editorial commentary. While some German businesses advertised in the Samoa Times, advertising revenue and subscriptions from that segment of the Apia society (about one third) must have been low. Some income came from job printing for the Municipal Government, and, as little as it was, from print orders by the Samoan (‘Native’) Government.

Cusack seems to have taken a rigorous approach to publishing, true to the paper’s far from unique motto: “Sworn to no master, of no Sect am I.” His stance and actions even led the German consul to force a temporary closure of his printing operations. Robert Louis Stevenson wrote of Cusack and the Samoa Times:

“On the 22nd [of February 1889] the Samoa Times and South Sea Advertiser was suppressed by order of Fritze. I have hitherto refrained from mentioning the single paper of our islands, that I might deal with it once and for all. It is of course a tiny sheet; but I have often had occasion to wonder at the ability of its articles, and almost always at the decency of its tone. Officials may at times be a little roughly, and at times a little captiously, criticised; private persons are habitually respected; and there are many papers in England, and still more in the States, even of leading organs in chief cities, that might envy, and would do well to imitate, the courtesy and discretion of the Samoa Times. Yet the editor, Cusack, is only an amateur in journalism, and a carpenter by trade. His chief fault is one perhaps inevitable in so small a place — that he seems a little in the leading of a clique; but his interest in the public weal is genuine and generous. One man’s meat is another man’s poison: Anglo–Saxons and Germans have been differently brought up. To our galled experience the paper appears moderate; to their untried sensations it seems violent. We think a public man fair game; we think it a part of his duty, and I am

1 And until late 1885 also without systematic postal services, as with the closure of the Samoa Times the Samoa Express post office also shut down. A private post started up in 1885 (Spennemann 2002)
told he finds it a part of his reward, to be continually canvassed by the press. For the Germans, on the other hand, an official wears a certain sacredness; when he is called over the coals, they are shocked, and (if the official be a German) feel that Germany itself has been insulted. The Samoa Times had been long a mountain of offence. Brandeis had imported from the colonies another printer of the name of Jones, to deprive Cusack of the government printing. German sailors had come ashore one day, wild with offended patriotism, to punish the editor with stripes, and the result was delightfully amusing. The champions asked for the English printer. They were shown the wrong man, and the blows intended for Cusack had hailed on the shoulders of his rival Jones (Stevenson 1924, pp. 194-195).

By 1890 Cusack’s paper was still in the firing line, but much of the debate was carried out in the pages of the paper. Stevenson wrote of the Samoa Times in a letter to his friend E.L. Burlingame on 13 July 1890:

“The paper, of which I must really send you a copy - if yours were really a live magazine, you would have an exchange with the editor: I assure you, it has of late contained a great deal of matter about one of your contributors - rejoices in the name of SAMOA TIMES AND SOUTH SEA ADVERTISER. The advertisements in the ADVERTISER are permanent, being simply subsidies for its existence. A dashing warfare of newspaper correspondence goes on between the various residents, who are rather fond of recurring to one another's antecedents. But when all is said, there are a lot of very nice, pleasant people, and I don't know that Apia is very much worse than half a hundred towns that I could name.” (Stevenson 1890).

Cusack could not make the paper pay and in March 1891 was forced to offer the goodwill and plant for sale by tender (Samoa Times 1891a). It seems that no buyer could be found, and Cusack was forced to continue operating. On 21 November 1891 Cusack was taken ill, and Thomas Meredith temporarily took over the editorship of the paper until further notice (Samoa Times 1891b). This added to the strain. Cusack seemed to have resumed his editorship by January or February 1892, with renewed and sustained attacks on the Samoan Government. Even though he no longer advertised the paper as being for sale, Cusack continued to look for buyers.

Cusack formally retired from the business on 9 April 1892 having sold it for £600 to Robert T. Chatfield (Samoa Times 1892). That the Samoa Times suddenly sold—even though it had been on the market for over a year—immediately following a series of sustained editorial attacks on the Samoan Municipal Government aroused suspicions among the British community. The legitimacy of the purchase by the new proprietor was doubted by British interests. Even though Chatfield was a British citizen, which could have allayed fears, Chatfield was not known to be able to afford such an investment (Stevenson 1924, pp. 264-265), as he was ‘notoriously impecunious’ (Cusack-Smith 1892). In a deposition in an unrelated court case heard before the British consul, the President of the Apia Municipality, the German Baron Senfft von Pilsach, admitted to having bought the
paper with Municipal Samoan Government funds (Cusack-Smith 1892). The freedom of the press had been curtailed.

As was intended by Senfft, the change of ownership brought about a major change in editorial attitudes, with the Samoan government, and the German interests, no longer as vigorously criticised. In a simultaneous move, in response to the German influence, the indigenous Samoan Government, started up a Samoan Government Gazette (the Municipal Gazette), and withdrew all government advertising from the Samoa Times. This led to an immediate drop in value of the Samoa Times to as little as £200 (Cusack-Smith 1892).

When Chatfield took over the paper he could rely on about 120 subscribers (Samoan Times 1892b) Despite the emergence of a rival paper in November 1892 (the Samoa Weekly Herald, see below), Chatfield was set on expansion, first advertising for a printing apprentice (Samoan Times 1893a), and a year later buying another job printing machine (Samoan Times 1894a). In late September 1895 he moved to the larger premises of the defunct trading house of Frings & Co. (Samoan Times 1895a). These were, by coincidence, the premises in which the first incarnation of the Samoa Times had been printed. Either he, or his financial backers, were prepared to suffer any losses and keep the paper going. In a parallel move he launched the Samoan-language paper O Le Le (‘The Sun’) that catered for all Samoans outside Apia.

On 7 March 1896, four years after his ‘purchase,’ Chatfield placed the plant and goodwill of the Samoa Times, as well as the goodwill of the paper O Le on the market. He did so for reasons of ill health in his family. In his advertisement Chatfield lists his equipment as:

“1 Albion Lever Press 36 x 26 complete; 1 California Reliable Jobber Complete; 1 Arab Jobber Complete; Rule and Lead Cutter, Stapler, Office furniture, Complete Assortment of News and Jobbing type…full stock of paper, cards and stationery” (Samoan Times 1896a).

He changed his advertisement in April, calling for tenders until 31 May. Should the newspaper not be sold by that date, he would withdraw it from the open market (Samoan Times 1896b). Alas, no buyer could be found. That was not very surprising, given that realistically there was only room for one commercial newspaper in Apia. By October Chatfield had decided to send his family back to New Zealand during November (Samoan Times 1896c), and to sell up all his property in Apia (Samoan Times 1896d). He made public, however, that he would keep the Samoa Times until a buyer was found at a reasonable price (Samoan Times 1896e). Again, no one was prepared to take the risk.

In December 1896 J.H. Denvers, the proprietor of the rival Samoa Weekly Herald (see below) acquired the Samoa Times operation and terminated its publication (Samoan Times 1896f). We do not know how much Chatfield could realise for the plant. In line with nineteenth century practice, Denvers carried on the masthead of the Samoa Times as a subtitle to his Samoa Weekly Herald.
In his farewell editorial, Chatfield opined:

“In Samoa newspapers cannot adopt a hard and fast political line. The affairs of this country do not admit of the press being either ultra liberal or conservative. Admitted that party politics have existed here yet the local papers could not take one side to the exclusion of the other. In the community itself the bias is either German or anti-German. For local papers to adopt this course in sympathy with public opinion would be absurd and injudicious. In our conduct of the Samoa Times we have striven to steer a middle course as far as circumstances would admit” (Samoa Times 1896f).
**Bibliographical data**

**Issues:**
vol. 1 nº 1, 29 September 1888–vol. 9 nº 13, 26 December 1896
issue numbering erratic.

**Mastheads:**
Samoa Times | and South Sea Advertiser
vol. 1 nº 1, 29 September 1888–vol. 3 nº 131, 25 April 1891.
The Samoa Times | and South Sea Advertiser
vol. 3 nº 132, 2 May 1891–vol. 9 nº 211, 26 December 1896.

**Motto:**
“Sworn to no master, of no Sect am I”

**Running head:**
none (until 8 June 1889)
Samoa Times (15 June 1889–26 December 1896).

**Proprietor:**
Stephen J. Cusack (Apia)
29 September 1888–9 April 1892.
Robert T. Chatfield (Apia)
9 April 1892–26 December 1896.

**Published at:**
Apia, Upolu, Samoa.

**Editors:**
Stephen J. Cusack
29 September 1888–9 April 1892.
Thomas Meredith (Acting)
21 November 1891 to January 1892.
Robert T. Chatfield (Apia)
9 April 1892–26 December 1896.

**Frequency:**
weekly, Saturday.

**Length:**
4 pages.

**Dimensions:**
5 columns
29 September 1888–5 January 1889.
6 columns
12 January 1889–25 April 1891.
double-demi, 7 columns
2 May 1891–26 December 1896.

**Paper size:**
see separate table below

**Supplements:**
Samoa Times | Extra (n.d. [3 December 1894])
on the death of Robert Louis Stevenson (not on microfilm)
305 x 241 mm (3 cols, 240 x 170mm)

**Price / issue:**
US¢ 20; 6d (as of 9 April 1892).

**Subscriptions:**
1893: £1 4s per year (in advance); 6s 6d per quarter (in advance).

**Subscribers:**
~100–110.
Advertising rates: 1888: casual: 3s / inch for 2-4 insertions.—standing advertisements US$ 6 per quarter up to 4 inches, ‘reset from time to time, advertisements must be submitted by 10am on Friday’
1893: 3s English / inch for 1-4 insertions.—standing advertisements £ 1 4s per quarter up to 5 inches, ‘reset from time to time.’

Holdings: NSL:M X079.9613/2
(listing is not comprehensive)
Apr. 1891-1893; 1896

**Technical Observations**

The *Samoa Times* has a chequered history as far as its technical production quality is concerned. The changes in paper type used nicely illustrate the changes in paper stock, but also demonstrate the invaguries of a reliable supply. Particularly in early 1896 the paper seems to have been printed on anything that was available. Given the short-term variations at that time, one is left wondering whether the same kind of paper was used for the entire issue or whether variation also existed between copies of the same issue. That question can only be answered by comparison of another physical run of the *Samoa Times*.

**Paper Types and Sheet Sizes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Page size (mm)</th>
<th>Weeks</th>
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</thead>
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<td>3 nº 131</td>
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<td>non-acid</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>585 x 455 tr?</td>
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</tr>
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<td>8 nº 43</td>
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<td>585 x 455 tr?</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
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<td>9 nº 12</td>
<td>26 Dec 1896</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments: tr?—trimmed?; trv?—trimmed on vertical only?
Mastheads

The impressum of the Samoa Times changed from a sand serif font to a serif font some six months after the commencement of the paper (figures 6 and 7).

On a formal bibliographic level the masthead changed only once: on 2 May 1891 the word ‘The’ was added to the title. The mastheads were made either of wood blocks or electrotypes to ensure standardisation and ease of use. Care must be taken not to overinterpret the similarities between the mastheads as they would have been made by only a few companies. Yet, when comparing the lettering of the mastheads of the first incarnation of the Samoa Times (figures 3 and 4) with the mastheads of the second incarnation (cf. Figures 8 and 9) one cannot but conclude that Cusack acquired the original blocks from Griffiths. As the early issues were printed on smaller paper, only ‘Samoa Times’ could be used, with the ‘The’ omitted. The shift to double-demi paper in May 1891 allowed the whole name to be used on the masthead.

![Figure 6 Impressum of the Samoa Times](image)

![Figure 7 Impressum of the Samoa Times](image)

But there is more to the story than that. The mastheads were made up of the main title inserted as three blocks and a subtitle which was set in type. Even though standing type was used, it is apparent that it was reset on a semi-regular basis. This can be demonstrated by the changes in the spacing of the type, as well as some typesetting errors.
Barely a year after the change of the masthead to ‘The Samoa Times,’ the subtitle was reset in a bold sans serif font (on 19 March 1892, figure 10). That type was reset again in 14 May 1892 and a typesetting error (‘DAVETISER’) was introduced (figure 11). A comparison of the word alignment and spacing shows that this was not an accidental drop of two letters from an unlocked form. The problem was rectified in the following issue. On 9 July 1892 the subtitle was once more reset, as evidenced by the different alignment of the words and the omitted full stop at the end of the title (figure 12). By 11 February 1893 the subtitle was again reset, this time using a bold and squat Antiqua serif font (figure 13). The full stop at the end of the title was reinstated.

There followed a period when any resetting of type was carried out in a professional fashion that is not so easily discernible.

The year 1896 brought about much change. Not only is the paper quality very variable (see above), but the masthead was subject to a large array of changes. On 15 August 1896 the masthead was reset and the full stop at the end of the title dropped once again (figure 14). By 26 September it was reset once more with the dropping of the ‘a’ in ‘sea’ the give away (figure 15). On 10 October the masthead was again reset, now introducing the spelling ‘see’ for ‘sea’ (figure 16). While this was corrected on 14 November, the form was locked up with ‘Samoa’ lacking the ‘o’ (figure 17). This was corrected on 28 November and that masthead remained in use unchanged until the termination of publication of the Samoa Times end of December of that year (figure 18).

The chaotic appearance of the masthead and the inept handling of the corrections are indicative of a lack of professionalism and close supervision. Indeed, the period of frequent mistakes, ir September to December 1896, coincides with the time when Chatfield was no longer prepared to carry a paper that he could not sell, and a time when his family was relocating to New Zealand.

In its standing advertisement in its own matter, the Samoa Times of 15 August 1896 set out both publication frequency and subscription cost. That reset advertisement carries two spelling errors (‘evry’, ‘subsription’). On 26 September 1896 the advertisement was partly reset and but yet another error (‘Sturday’) was introduced. While this was corrected on 14 November 1896, the spelling of ‘subsription’ was not corrected.

It seems that during the second part of 1896 Chatfield took a much more distant role in the paper. The compositor or subeditor did not have either the interest or the capability to ensure that the quality of the paper was maintained. In essence, this is a good example of the shallow skill base available in Samoa in the 1890s.
Figure 8. Masthead of the Samoa Times of 6 October 1888

Figure 9. Masthead of the Samoa Times of 16 May 1891
Figure 10. Masthead of the Samoa Times of 19 March 1892

Figure 11. Masthead of the Samoa Times of 14 May 1892
Figure 12. Masthead of the Samoa Times of 9 July 1892

Figure 13. Masthead of the Samoa Times of 11 February 1893
Figure 14. Masthead of the Samoa Times of 16 August 1896

Figure 15. Masthead of the Samoa Times of 26 September 1896
Figure 16. Masthead of the Samoa Times of 10 October 1896

Figure 17. Masthead of the Samoa Times of 14 November 1896
Figure 18. Masthead of the Samoa Times of 5 December 1896
Ever since Germany took a more proactive stance in Samoan politics, German political and trading interests were determined to establish a pro-German voice in Apia. Four years after the commencement of the the Samoa Times, the New Zealander James Rattray MacFarlane founded a weekly paper in the four-page format. The Samoa Weekly Herald commenced publication on 26 November 1892. He seems to have been supported by German interests, even though the exact financial arrangements are unclear.

As was custom, the existing Samoa Times welcomed the new arrival in its editorial (Samoa Times 1892c). The Samoa Times also tried to give credit where credit was due, but over the next few months it became clear that the Samoa Weekly Herald was not going to return the niceties and acknowledge the Samoa Times as a source, when it drew on Samoa Times reporting and material.

MacFarlane apparently was not very well versed in running a paper. On 15 February 1893 two additional staff, originally from the Auckland Herald, arrived in Samoa: H. Carrick, to take over the editorship and a D. MacFarlane as compositor (Samoa Times 1893b). Intriguingly, this event was not mentioned in the Samoa Weekly Herald, but was ‘exposed’ in the Samoa Times. The family relationship between the two MacFarlanes, if any, is unclear.

The expatriate community of Apia was too small to make one paper become an economic success, let alone sustain two newspapers. Not surprisingly, then, James MacFarlane could not maintain the running of the paper and some six months after commencing operations could no longer service his debts and went into bankruptcy. Clearly, hiring professional staff had added to the cost of running the paper without enhancing the paper’s profitability and impact. On 22 April 1893 the Trustees E.A. Grevsmühl and Thomas Meredith offered the plant, stock-in-trade and goodwill of the Samoa Weekly Herald for sale (Samoa Weekly Herald 1893a). James R. MacFarlane, ‘late proprietor of the Samoa Weekly Herald’ left on 27 April 1894 on the Monowai for Honolulu. (Samoa Weekly Herald 1893b; Samoa Times 1893c). The ‘plant, book debts and goodwill’ were auctioned on 1 May 1893. Due to lack of interest in the community, Grevsmühl ended up purchasing the lot for as little a £55. The net loss of the initial investment was close to $1000 (£500) (Samoa Times 1893d).

Publication continued, with the two hired New Zealand staff staying on, and H. Carrick remaining editor. However, Grevsmühl, a very influential German trader, seems to have bitten off more than he could intellectually handle. The paper was again on the market in August 1893, when H. Denvers bought the paper for £75 (Samoa Weekly Herald 1893c; 1893d). While Grevsmühl seems to have been able to extricate himself from the venture with a handsome profit, Denvers in turn found the paper to be a drain on his business, even though at the end of 1896 he could
cheaply buy his competitor, the *Samoa Times*—and thus silence the competition. On 14 November 1898 Denvers was forced to place his entire business, his store, as well as the printing plant and goodwill of the paper, up for auction, as he found himself unable to repay the mortgage to Moses David (Samoa Weekly Herald 1898).

The *Samoa Weekly Herald* was bought by W.A. King for an undisclosed sum. King continued to run the paper until the early days of the German colonial period. The *Samoa Weekly Herald* was sold to German interests at the end of March 1901, a year after Germany had officially acquired Western Samoa as a colony. King went to Levuka to start the *Polynesian Gazette*, while the operation was bought by the German Emil Lübke and renamed *Samoanische Zeitung* (Spennemann 2004).
**Bibliographical data**

Issues: vol. 1 n° 1, 26 November 1892– > vol. 6, n° 30, 28 August 1900
volume 5 (1899) issue numbering erratic (see below).

Mastheads: *Samoa Weekly Herald*
vol. 1 n° 1, 26 November 1892–>vol. 4 n° 52, 30 December 1896
*Samoa Weekly Herald with which is incorporated the Samoa Times and South Sea Advertiser*
2 January 1897– > vol. 6, n° 30, 28 August 1900

Motto: “For the cause that lacks assistance
For the wrong that needs resistance,
For the future in the distance
And the good that we can do”
26 November 1892–3 June 1893
No motto 10 June 1893–23 February 1895
“I am in the place where I am demanded of conscience to speak the truth; therefore the truth will I speak, impugn it whoso list”
2 March 1895–29 July 1899
No motto 5 August 1899–30 December 1899
“I am in the place where I am demanded of conscience to speak the truth; therefore the truth will I speak, impugn it whoso list”
10 June 1893–30 December 1899

Running head: Samoa Weekly Herald
Subtitle (on p.2) Samoa Weekly Herald and Municipal Gazette (from vol. 1 n° 43, 7 October 1893)

Proprietor: James Rattray MacFarlane
26 November 1892–1 May 1893.
E.A. Grevsmühl & Co.
1 May 1893–22 August 1893.
J.H. Denvers
22 August 1893–14 November 1898.
W.A. King
14 November 1898–>28 August 1900

Published at: Apia, Upolu, Samoa

Editors: James Rattray MacFarlane
26 November 1892–18 February 1893
H. Carrick
18 February 1893–28 August 1900 (?)

Frequency: weekly, Saturday.
Length: 4 pages
Columns: 7 columns

Supplements:
- 26 June 1897 *Samoa Weekly Herald* Supplement, 4 column, 4pp.
- 30 April 1898 Supplement *Samoa Weekly Herald* 4 column, 2pp.
- 7 January 1899 went into second edition.
- 2 September 1899 *Supplement to the Samoa Weekly Herald* 5 columns, single sided.

Price / issue: 6d. / US$ 12 1/2 (delivered)

Subscriptions:
- US$ 1.50 per quarter (in advance)
- US$ 1.62 1/2 per quarter (booked)

Subscribers: July 1892: 120

Advertising rates:
- Casual advertisements US$ 75 /inch
- Special columns: US$ 1 /inch, multiple insertions at reduced rates
- Standing advertisements: US$ 5 per quarter for 4-5 inches.

Holdings: NSL:M X079.9613/1

(listing is not comprehensive) Nov. 26, 1892-Jul. 28, 1900

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**Technical Observations**

**Issue numbering of volume 5 (1899)**

In 1899 the volume, and to a degree the issue numbering of the *Samoa Weekly Herald* becomes highly erratic, almost whimsical. Although nominally volume 5, beginning with issue 17, the volume number is increased alongside the issue number. The last issue of the year reverts back to the correct numbering. The details are set out below.

<table>
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<th>n°</th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7 Jan 1899</td>
<td>correct until</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22 Apr 1899</td>
<td>then:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>29 Apr 1899</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6 May 1899</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13 May 1899</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27 May 1899</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
The numbering of the issues of the 1899 volume is truly and uniquely bizarre. One wonders how that could have come about. The answer may well rest in the fact that in 1899 the paper’s owner was a businessman with absolutely no experience in newspaper management. Unfortunately we do not have in hand many issues dating to 1900, even though the paper carried on after the commencement of the German colonial administration.

**Paper types and sheet sizes**

The paper sizes show much variation and like the paper used for the *Samoa Times* (see above) are a good example of the supply problems faced by proprietors in Samoa. A comparison with the *Samoa Times* shows that these supply problems were specific to each paper and affected each paper at different times. They were not systemic but a matter of individual cash flow and supply/stock management. Given that for most of the time the papers tended to teeter at the brink of insolvency, coupled with the problems posed by a tropical climate, it is understandable that proprietors may have been loath to maintain too much of paper stock.
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<td>19</td>
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<td>540 x 435 tr?</td>
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</tr>
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<td>acid</td>
<td>540 x 435 tr?</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td>27</td>
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<td>557 x 430</td>
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<td>acid</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 nº 30</td>
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<td>acid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments: tr?—trimmed?; trv?—trimmed on vertical only?

**Mastheads**

The masthead seems to have been obtained as a block, either an electrotype or a hardened wood block, and the handling of that block seems to have been on occasion rather cavalier. Just two weeks after the commencement of the paper, between 3 and 10 December 1892 the block suffered its first damage, with the upper serif of the ‘S’ of ‘Samoa’ missing a piece (figure 19). Between 19 and 26 October 1895 the ‘d’ of ‘Herald’ was also damaged. This flaw comprises of a large rectangular chuck missing at the right margin of the letter (figure 20). It would
appear that in both instances the block was dropped on an edge. Both flaws were carried through on all issues until the end of publication in 1900, demonstrating that the block for the masthead was never replaced. The January 1897 change of the title to *Samoa Weekly Herald* with which is incorporated the *Samoa Times* and *South Sea Advertiser* could be accommodated with type. Indeed, the font used for the additional title had been sourced from the newly acquired *Samoa Times*.

**Figure 19** The first occurrence of the damaged ‘S’ on 10 December 1892

**Figure 20** The first occurrence of the damaged ‘d’ on 26 October 1895

**Figure 21** Impressum of the *Samoa Times* of 26 November 1892

**Figure 22** Impressum of the *Samoa Times* of 10 June 1893
Impressum of the Samoa Times of 2 March 1895

Impressum of the Samoa Times of 23 March 1895

Impressum of the Samoa Times of 14 January 1898
Figure 26 Impressum of the Samoa Times of 5 August 1899
Figure 27. Masthead of the Samoa Times of 10 December 1892

Figure 28. Masthead of the Samoa Times of 9 January 1987
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Samoa Times (1880g) ‘Ourselves.’ *Samoa Times* vol. 4 nº 167, 2 October 1880, p. 2 cols 2.
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