

Satala Cemetery restoration underway

By Teri Hunkin reporters@samoanews.com

[Enlarge This Image](#)



Martin Johnson (left) and Karl Munsum (right) of Monument Conservation Collaborative, a restoration company from Connecticut, seen here working to restore one of 60 grave monuments damaged by the September 29, 2009 tsunami. (Courtesy Photo)

The Satala Cemetery, one of the few public cemeteries in the territory, was badly damaged during the tsunami of September 29, 2009. Sitting along the coast as it does, it took a formidable hit from the destructive waters, which had the power to throw boats ashore, rip homes apart and lodge trucks in the branches of trees.

The severe damage to head stones and grave monuments in the small cemetery, along with broken and cracked graves being knocked off their foundations, has been a cause for concern among families and members of the village and community since that fateful day.

- Font | Size:
- Print this article
- E-mail this article
- Share this article
- Comments (2)

The cemetery, according to Historic Preservation Officer David Herdrich, originally served as a naval cemetery, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Local Park and Recreation Department and American Samoa's Historic Preservation Office (ASHPO) both administer funds which care for the cemetery, and the LDS Church, Pago Pago stake has taken it upon themselves to clean and tidy the spot as an ongoing community service project.

ASHPO enlisted the aid of a company which has worked in the territory before, completing a restoration project in Aasu at Massacre Bay. Called the Monument Conservation Collaborative, the company's headquarters are in Connecticut and they have sent three restoration experts to work on the tsunami damaged cemetery.

The five week restoration project is being coordinated by the Department of Parks and Recreation with assistance from ASHPO.

Parks and Recreation is using FEMA funding for the restoration work, which is designed to return the cemetery to its pre-tsunami condition. The American Samoa Historic Preservation Office is paying for the restoration of grave monuments that had been damaged or deteriorated prior to the tsunami.

A total of sixty grave monuments will be restored using FEMA funds and seven grave monuments will be restored with ASHPO funding.

The conservators will collect the broken and displaced pieces of the various damaged grave markers and reassemble them in such a way that they will retain their historic character. The conservators, who are here for the second time, will use photographs from a 2005 ASHPO-funded survey and assessment of the cemetery to ensure that their restoration is historically accurate.

Historic Preservation Officer David Herdrich said, "I am grateful that the project has begun, because ASHPO has received a large number of calls from families concerned about the damaged state of the cemetery and their loved one's graves.

We would like to thank the public, especially the affected families, for being patient. We would also like to thank the LDS Pago Pago Samoa Stake for keeping the cemetery clean through their ongoing monthly service project."

SATALA CEMETERY RESTORATION TREATMENT REPORT June/July 2010
Monument Conservation Collaborative LLC, Norfolk, CT 06058



Oct 1, 2009, Two days after the Tsunami



Restored July 2010

SATALA CEMETERY RESTORATION TREATMENT REPORT June/July 2010
Monument Conservation Collaborative LLC, Norfolk, CT 06058



Monuments and fragments were found to be scattered over the entire cemetery site.

These pieces were sorted and identified and then moved into location by hand.

Larger fragments were moved with rollers on planks, sometimes assisted with a mechanical advantage such as a come-along or hydraulic jacks.



SATALA CEMETERY RESTORATION TREATMENT REPORT June/July 2010
Monument Conservation Collaborative LLC, Norfolk, CT 06058



Leveling a large fragment from #15 onto a bed of stone



#15 Before and after (before final painting)

SATALA CEMETERY RESTORATION TREATMENT REPORT June/July 2010
Monument Conservation Collaborative LLC, Norfolk, CT 06058



#18 As found



#18 Sorting loose stones

Typical rebuilding details of some of the loose dry laid stone foundations that were dislocated. We found that a great number of stones were required for proper resetting, usually much more than what the contract descriptions indicated. These extra stones were required for necessary foundations and footings for the exposed stones.



#18 Completed

SATALA CEMETERY RESTORATION TREATMENT REPORT June/July 2010
Monument Conservation Collaborative LLC, Norfolk, CT 06058



#135 As found (top slab missing)

With the exception of small missing pieces, which may be buried or have shattered, fragments were eventually located for almost all losses.



#135 with loose fragments



#135 With fragments attached



#135 Completed. As is the custom, markers are painted white.

SATALA CEMETERY RESTORATION TREATMENT REPORT June/July 2010
Monument Conservation Collaborative LLC, Norfolk, CT 06058



#97A As found



#97A Restored

Many large missing fragments were discovered a distance away under rubble and other fragments. The slippery wet mud, the slope of the site, and rubble made moving the larger fragments precarious. As in a giant jig-saw, all of the fragments were eventually reset in place.

SATALA CEMETERY RESTORATION TREATMENT REPORT June/July 2010
Monument Conservation Collaborative LLC, Norfolk, CT 06058



Loose layers of old paint were scraped or peeled off before applying D/2 Biological Solution.



#15 After removing loose layers of paint