

Somerset Maugham, as a young writer, sailed from Pago Pago to Hawaii aboard the steamer Sonoma in 1916, when American Samoa was a recently acquired U.S. Territory under Navy rule. Heavy storms prevented the boat from leaving for Apia so the passengers stayed in Pago Pago, including, as the story goes, Sadie Thompson and a group of missionaries. The events that transpired inspired Maugham's short story Rain, or he was bored and made it up. Either way, it's a great story.

There is evidence though that his lead character Sadie Thompson, a woman who knew how to have a good time, traveled on the same boat. He described her boarding of the Sonoma as a "blond runaway from Iwelei running up the gangplank at the last moment before departure". Iwelei was the redlight district on the outskirts of Honolulu. Sadie stayed behind in Pago Pago and, as legend has it, set up shop to entertain sailors.

There is no deportation record for Sadie Thompson in Pago Pago, but she was mentioned in a letter to Samoan Affairs for running a house of prostitution that catered to U.S. sailors. It is said she called her place of business, our Sadie's Restaurant, the Sadie Thompson Inn.

Sadie possibly returned to Honolulu aboard the steamship Ventura when her romance with a Samoan man was discouraged. No records of Sadie have been found after her departure, but she left her legacy in American Samoa and we kept the name when we bought and upgraded the original building to include modern rooms and the new bar and restaurant.