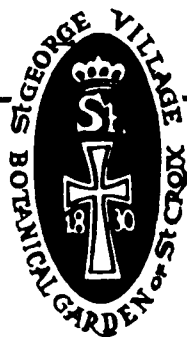


MASTER
GARDEN N.S.

PRICELESS HERITAGE



history and Lore of estate st. george
home of the st. george village botanical
garden of st. croix, u.s. virgin islands

F2096
.K47
1980

BY BEN KESLER



*"God owns all the land and we are only responsible
for taking care of it. This is a priceless heritage."
... Robert W. Moon*

F2096
.K47
1980

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Ben R. Kesler
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Preface

The area which in Danish times became known as St. George was first cultivated by Arawak Indians. Using fragile tools of bone and stone they slashed and burned the virgin forests, planted crops, and made shelters from sun, wind, and rain. The Spanish in Puerto Rico forced the Indians living on St. Croix to leave the homes they had built, the trees they had planted, and the crops they were cultivating.

As Spanish strength in the Caribbean gradually waned in the 17th Century, the English gained control of St. Croix. They were followed by the Dutch, the French, the Knights of Malta, the Danes, and finally, by the Americans. Each new group cleared the land, planted crops and trees, and constructed buildings.

When the St. Croix Garden Club decided to sponsor a botanical garden several sites were offered. The selection committee, like the Indians and Europeans, chose St. George. As enthusiastic Botanical Garden members started a new cycle of blisters and sore backs, the spirits of the departed Arawaks probably whispered to each other: "Here we go again!"

The late Robert W. Moon and Mary Moon of the Lakeside Manufacturing Company in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, made donations at different times totaling thirteen and one-half acres, including the St. George Village, to all of the people of St. Croix for the development of a botanical garden. A prominent St. Croix family, the deChaberts, donated an additional three and one-third acres.

The St. George Village Botanical Garden of St. Croix was incorporated as a nonprofit organization. At its first annual meeting in September 1973, Robert Moon presenting a deed to the Garden said: "God owns all of the land and we are only responsible for taking care of it. This is a priceless heritage."

The documentation of this priceless heritage is the purpose of this monograph. It is concerned with the people, plants and animals who lived in the area; the structures and underground artifacts they left behind; and at the end, what happened to all of them.

*Benjamin R. Kesler
January 15, 1980*

Acknowledgements

Priceless Heritage contains much archaeological, anthropological, botanical, zoological, and historical information obtained in consultation with specialists in these disciplines. Researchers provided information taken from documents located in archives and libraries in the United States and in Europe. Personal information was contributed by those familiar with St. George people, plants and animals. *Priceless Heritage* is, therefore, deeply indebted to many scholars and individuals, some of whom are listed below:

- Archaeology Linda Robinson
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Contemporary plant cultivation
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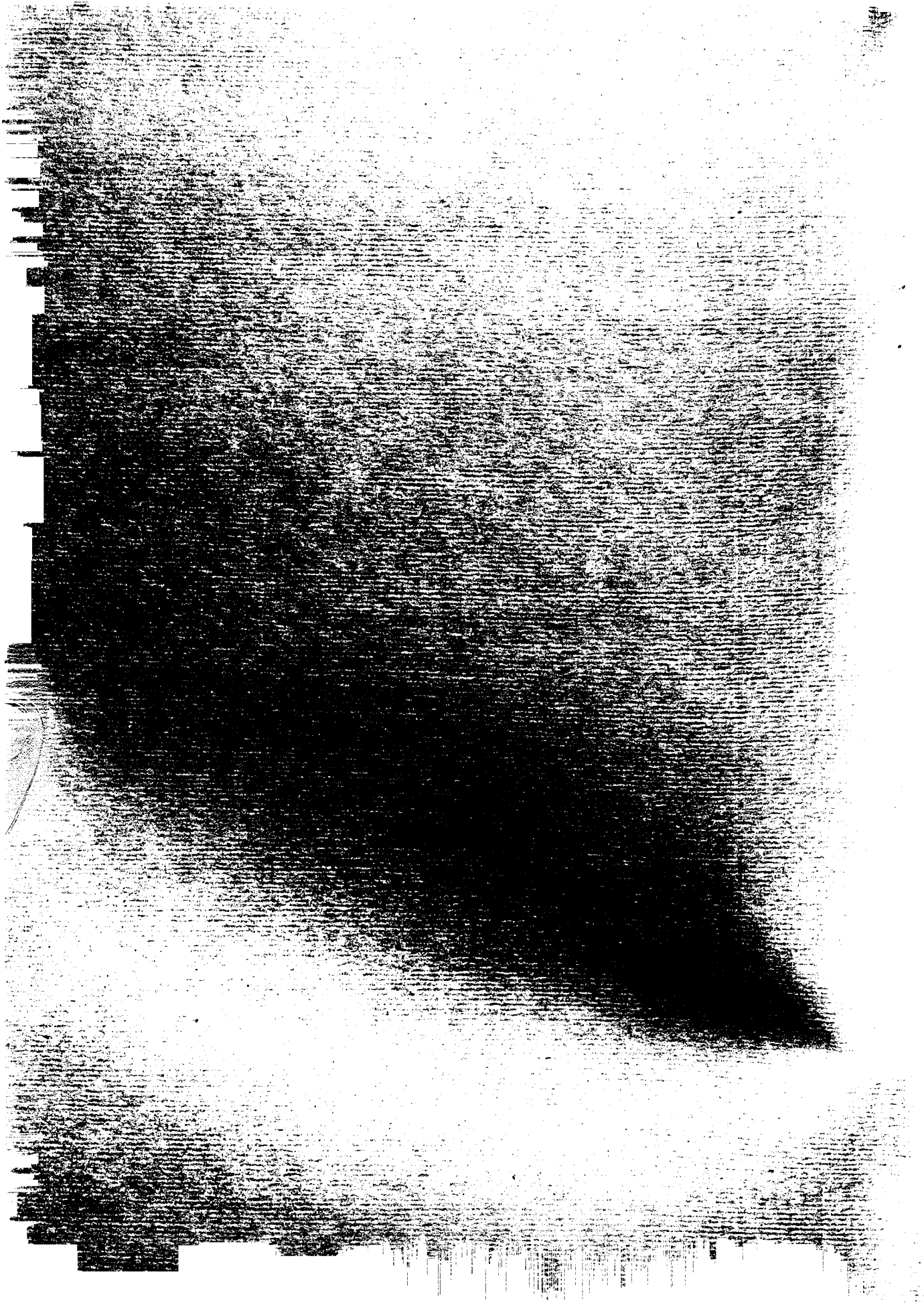
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Introduction

I came to know Ben Kesler first in the early 1970s. He had recently moved to St. Croix, Frederiksted to be more exact, and in a short while he became a friend of my brother, Terry, another Frederikstedite. The two of them spent many happy hours together spearfishing and, in general, exploring the many undersea wonders in the crystal-clear waters off the west end. I was first of all deeply impressed by Ben's ability to keep up with a man half his age in the rigors of diving, and secondly by his obvious persistence. Never a fairweather sportsman—he goes even today to the sea regularly—rain or shine. And he seems to draw health and vigor from it.

After a while I got to know Ben myself. Two things stand out in my mind regarding our early meeting; one was his almost insatiable desire for knowledge about the West Indies in general and St. Croix in particular. And second, his marvelous garden. Both of these have had, I believe, a strong influence on Ben's decision to write this book. And I suppose that ultimately both of these interests stem from the same vital love of living things which is so much a part of Ben Kesler.

I confess, before he began writing this book I did not know a great deal about his background prior to coming to St. Croix. In the past several months, however, I have made up for that by talking with him at some length in order to learn as much about him as possible. A few words about his interesting background will, I think, be useful.

Many years ago, before the New Deal, the New Frontier, the Great Society and other programs designed to blunt the effects of economic hard times, the Keslers and many other American families were almost self-sufficient in food. They kept one or more "milk cows," a pig or two and a flock of chickens. The cows helped to fertilize a large vegetable garden whose excess vegetables were canned. One of Ben Kesler's boyhood disappointments was the inability to have a supply of fruits. His father, a Methodist minister, always moved before the fruit trees reached the bearing stage.

This interest in food plants continued after Ben entered college. A Virginia plantation, in fact, was the topic of his Masters Thesis at the University of Virginia in 1938.

Ben's first garden in the tropics was planted in a Navy housing

project in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Between and after stints in the Navy during World War II and the Korean War, Ben spent five years in the Marshall Islands administering educational and economic development programs. There he learned with amazement how the coconut palm and the sea had, from time immemorial, supplied food to the islands' people. The palm also supplied shelter and the sole cash crop (copra). There were a few breadfruit, banana, lime and pandanus trees, but the palm was the sole food-producing plant on most of the narrow, saltspray-swept islands lying like a string of pearls between the ocean and the lagoon.

Ben recently related to me how he has lost all interest in returning to the Marshall Islands after reading a *New York Times* article which described how the funds collected in the United States by Government and sent to the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands have increased to one hundred million a year. This amount was five million a year when Ben was in the Marshalls. As might be expected, the Marshallese in their affluence (according to the *Times* article) now consider copra collection to be menial labor, rather than as their link to a bountiful nature.

When Ben felt the time had come to leave the gleaming atolls of the Pacific, his experience in underdeveloped tropical areas was welcomed by those in Washington, D.C. administering the technical assistance programs known under successive Presidents from Truman to Kennedy as Point IV, Foreign Operations Administration (FOA), International Cooperation Administration (ICA), and the Agency for International Development (AID). Ben was soon on his way to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) as an advisor to an Agricultural Industrial Training School whose graduates were sent to the many villages dotting the countryside. The villagers had been petitioning their Government to perform work for them that they could do themselves if motivated, organized and taught basic skills.

After Bangladesh and thirteen consecutive years in the tropics, Ben transferred to AID Headquarters in Washington, D.C. He planted a garden and began espaliering fruit trees. He remained at AID Headquarters for nine years, serving as liaison between technicians and students sent from underdeveloped countries signing technical cooperation agreements with the U.S. and U.S. colleges, universities and technical training facilities which provided the training deemed necessary to achieve development goals. His staff included another overseas specialist—Vera—who resigned from AID after marrying the boss.

Ben's last assignment before retiring was in Nigeria. Afterwards Ben and Vera came to St. Croix and rented for three years before deciding to build. Ben had decided to try commercial gardening so the house was designed with this objective in mind. A dual plumbing system was installed which made the maximum amount of water available for plants—a key factor on St. Croix, one of the drier tropical islands.

The water piped in from the St. Croix water system passed through the bath room to the septic tank where the effluents were digested. The nutrient-packed water was deposited in the

soil by means of a series of perforated pipes—two feet underground—in a drainage field. The roots of papaya, banana and other fruit trees planted in the drainage field easily penetrated to the nutrient-rich water. The water caught by the roof—after serving the washing machine, tub, shower and wash basins—ended up in a grey water tank where it was siphoned off when needed to irrigate vegetables or fruits.

After a period of concentrating on such dependable produce as sweet potatoes and pigeon peas, Ben's interest shifted to native plants. The late Mrs. Rachel Derrick, a very knowledgeable "market woman," pointed out to him from among the many new plants that sprung up in the uncultivated vegetable beds, those plants that had medicinal or food value. She showed Ben her Whim Gardens home which had native plants growing in every available inch of soil surrounding her apartment, and in pots which crowded her back porch. Dried plants hung from pegs in the walls while the kitchen was packed with pickled wild cucumbers, pickled peppers and with bottles of sorrel, guava-berry and other juices. Those seeking ingredients for Mauby, a native beverage, always headed to the Derrick house.

I first learned of Ben's interest in history when he and Vera enrolled in Caribbean History at the College of the Virgin Islands. Some years later, Ben told me he had volunteered to do a natural history of Estate St. George, the location of the recently incorporated St. George Village Botanical Garden of St. Croix. I agreed that this was an important work and indicated that it has always been my policy to encourage anyone interested in adding to the historical or cultural store of knowledge of St. Croix and its people. Since little work has been done on individual plantations in the Virgin Islands, Ben's proposed monograph offered an opportunity to begin work in that important area on St. Croix.

Ben has been for some time now a tireless worker at the now completed St. George Village Botanical Garden. Having labored through all phases of its planning and construction, he is convinced now more than ever that the Garden can fulfill a number of important missions in the Crucian community.

His contribution to that mission has gone beyond physical labor. In the *Priceless Heritage* we now have the results of Ben's long and arduous years of study. It aims at providing the general reader with an overview of the history of St. Croix with particular emphasis on botany and horticulture. The real significance of this work is, however, to be found in the chapters which deal specifically with Estate St. George. For that plantation and its people, he has done a good deal of original research and interpretation. Through his efforts, we are able to view the development of Estate St. George from its beginnings during Indian time right down to the present. The important thing about this little work is that it was written with a big purpose in mind.

Many times Ben has spoken to me of his hope that some day the Garden will become a resource center for island history, culture, botany, agriculture, architecture and so on.

Local science teachers, he feels, may make full use of the Garden by planning field trips there with their classes and hopefully, as well, using this present book, *Priceless Heritage*, for developing course material on Virgin Islands History. It is to date the only available historical study we have dedicated exclusively to the development and growth of a plantation on St. Croix. And, as I have already suggested, there is much to be learned from that section of this book.

Moreover, the appearance of the book at this time has an added benefit. Ben feels, and rightly so, that visitors to our island might learn a great deal about St. Croix, its history and people, by making a visit to St. George Village Botanical Garden. That visit can be made all the more profitable for the visitor if he reads *Priceless Heritage* in connection with his tour, however brief it might be.

Finally, even though Ben and I have had our friendly disagreements from time to time both on matters of content and interpretation in regard to local history, I am, nevertheless, convinced that he has made a valuable contribution to the growth of local historical knowledge. I have seen him nurture this work along from its conception several years ago to this, the final product. It has been a labor of love. In it we witness at once the man's deep concern and reverence, not only for the people of this lovely island, but for the environment in which they live as well.

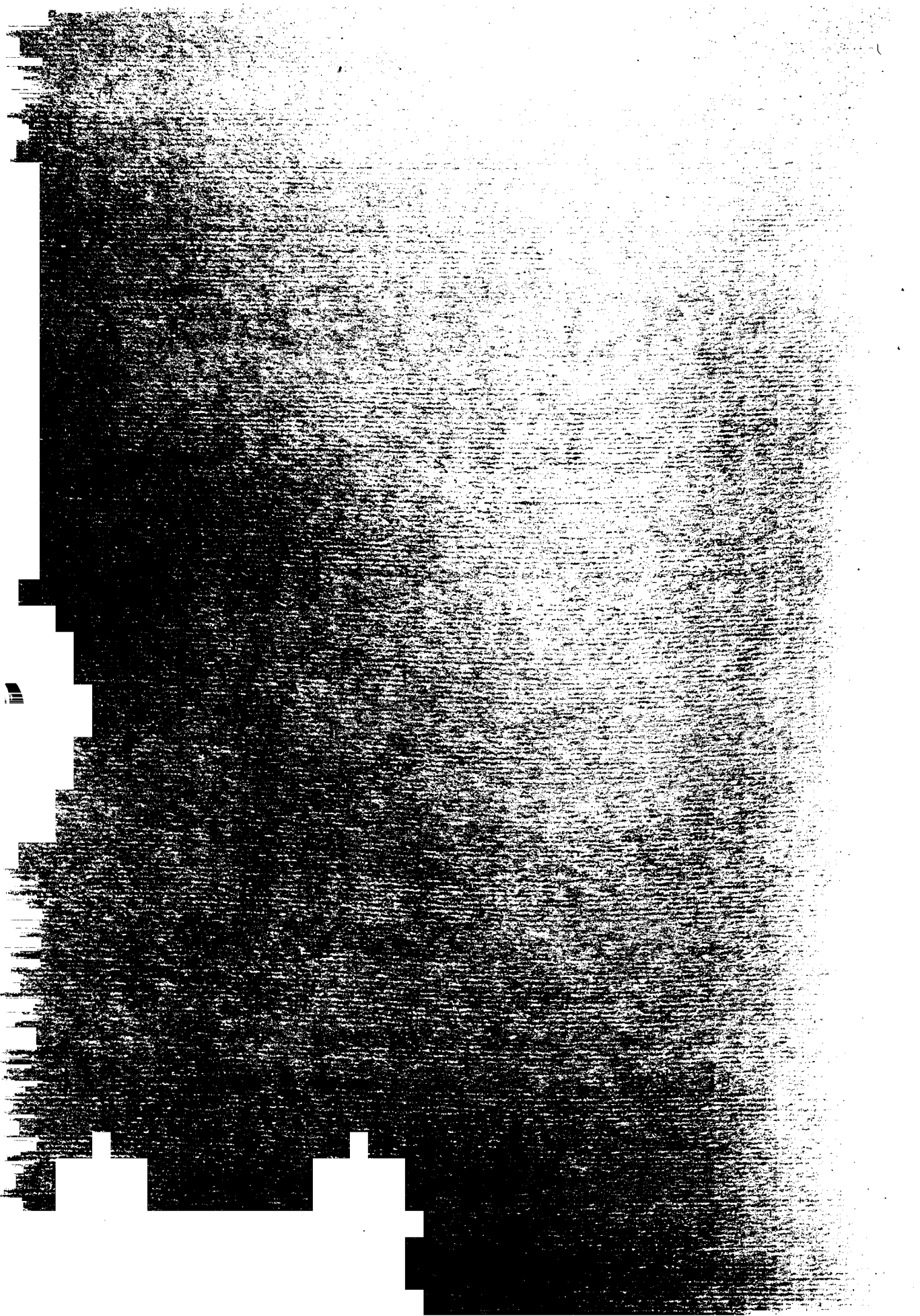
Arnold R. Highfield

La Grande Princesse
St. Croix
1980

PRICELESS HERITAGE

history and lore of estate st. george
home of the st. george village botanical
garden of st. croix, u.s. virgin islands

BY BEN KESLER



Indians and Spaniards, 250-1640

Artifacts found in the area now occupied by the St. George Village Botanical Garden indicate that Arawak Indians chose this site for one of their first settlements on St. Croix. With the entire island available for settlement, why was the St. George site chosen?

Let us picture an Arawak leader exploring St. Croix seeking a settlement location. Perhaps he travelled along the South Shore, rounded Grassy Point, and reached the area now known as Grapetree Bay where, looking up the hillside to the left, he was greeted by a view of the arid plant-life that would remind a modern-day visitor of Arizona. Looking to the right, he would have seen a spectacular ocean view—a portrait of many colors formed by the different coral species and varying ocean depths.

But the Arawak would not have been impressed by this Arizona-by-the-sea. The kind of vegetation growing there would have warned him that there was insufficient moisture for growing food crops.

Exploring farther, he would have found his way to the Rain Forest area which, although an oasis of luxuriant plants and trees by comparison with other sections of this relatively dry island, does not begin to compare with the rich vegetation of the El Yunque Rain Forest of Puerto Rico. Yet, that early Arawak would have been favorably impressed by the size of the sand-box, almond, and kapok trees above what is today called Creque Dam, the Spanish moss ringing the dam, the many air plants and the termite nests. Below the dam he would have seen three kapok trees, with buttresses protruding some distance to a place where a future road would be cut, papaya and banana plants, a royal palm in its native habitat, and a giant maumee—his favorite fruit. Continuing downhill, he saw trees much larger than the same species growing in areas of less rainfall.

Perhaps he took the route we now call the backroad around Frederiksted, passing the locations that became, much later, the La Grange Great House and the Rum Factory, and he may have spotted an interesting contrast: a pipe organ cactus nestling under two rain trees.

That an early Arawak Village was established at the site of today's St. George Village is not hard to understand—if we look at the scene through the eyes of our imaginary adventurous

Arawak. He came upon Mint Gut, one of the largest of the St. Croix streams that once flowed throughout the year, and he found it filled with clear water. Looking to the right he sees a hill sloping to flat areas on both sides of the stream and knew that soil washed down a hillside is deep and fertile. To his left he sees a level plain extending to the ocean. The site was far enough inland to make surprise attacks difficult, yet close enough to the ocean to bring heavy turtles, conch, and fish to the village by canoe¹. Proceeding upstream he finds an excellent spring west of the present Botanical Garden boundary. He waited until after sunset to check on mosquitoes and other insects before rejoining his friends who had arrived prepared to settle on St. Croix.

The Arawaks had arrived in large canoes towing smaller canoes loaded with cassava bread (which could remain edible for a year), seeds and seedlings, cooking utensils, sleeping hammocks, tools and fish hooks of shell and bone, and traps for fish and birds.

The seeds and seedlings had been protected from rain and salt-spray by moisture proof baskets made by placing water repellent leaves between inner and outer weaves. They included many species of trees; several varieties of squash, and beans; corn, tobacco, cotton, and the root crops cassava, yam, sweet potato and tannia.

Leaving pounding ocean waves, they anchored their canoes in quiet water inside the mouth of Mint Gut (also known as Diamond Gut). Since the Indians had no horses nor other beasts of burden, supplies were loaded on backpacks from the big canoes. The small canoes were alternately paddled and carried to St. George.

Temporary shelter was made from tree branches and grass tied together with the lianas swinging from the trees. Hammocks were slung well above ground to protect the sleeper from centipedes and other harmful crawlers. Although St. George was comparatively free of mosquitoes, to repel insects the Arawaks covered themselves with annatto paste (which left the skin red) and genipa juice which dyed the skin a blue/black color.

The only large four-footed animal the Arawak found in St. George was the iguana. The Arawak brought with him the agouti, the hutia, and the barkless dog. It would be interesting to know if the dog was barkless because there were no large animals for him to chase.

Mint Gut contained mud fish, gobies, eels, three species of crayfish, tarpon, mullet, and haddock which swam in from the ocean. The nearby ocean teemed with fish which were caught with hooks of bone and shell, traps, nets, or by stunning with poison. Waders and divers caught turtles, conch, lobsters, clams, and ocean crabs. The gray (kallalo) and blue/red (manchineel) pond crabs were another major source of protein.

The Arawaks used the slash and burn technique to open a new area for cultivation. Trees were killed by slashing, allowed to dry, and then burned². The soil was loosened with digging sticks and formed into low mounds.

At the onset of the rainy season, corn (maize), cassava, and

1. Elementary school children pausing at the Garden entrance see, as did the first Arawak, the hills to the right sloping down to Mint Gut and the level plains extending on the left to the ocean, and picturing Mint Gut filled with fish, mentally prepare themselves for an exciting Garden visit. It was, in fact, a group of elementary school children who first discovered crayfish and gobies in Mint Gut following heavy rains early in 1978. In the 1977 drought, Mint Gut had dried up completely. Elementary school children have also proved to be more adept in finding deer footprints, Indian artifacts, and other interesting things in the Garden than adults. (Archaeologists and bird watchers excepted.)

2. The slash and burn technique is still being used by tribes practicing communal agriculture in Africa and South America. Myriad columns of smoke are seen by travellers in planes flying over Nigeria during the time new areas of land are being prepared for cultivation. Tobacco farmers in Virginia still burn the area set aside for growing tobacco seedlings. The seedlings are transplanted in mounded rows similar in some respects to the mounds used by the Arawaks.

3. *Cassava proved to be the most dependable tropical food plant. It has grown when rainfall is as low as twenty inches a year or as high as 200 inches a year. The climate in St. Croix and many other tropical areas frequently alternates between drought and downpour—one of the factors that has made it difficult for the St. Croix corn or tobacco farmer to compete with the Virginia corn or tobacco farmer.*

4. *The Arawaks knew the art of pottery making. Indians who did not know how to make pottery are called pre-Ceramic, or pre-Arawak. Indian history on St. Croix will be rewritten if an Indian Village is found which, like Krum Bay, contains no pottery. One was recently found on St. Kitts.*

sweet potatoes were planted together. Corn and sweet potatoes required more water and had a shorter growing season than cassava. The corn and sweet potatoes were harvested, leaving the cassava to mature during the dry season³. Cotton, tobacco, beans and squash were usually planted in individual plots.

While the St. George Arawak in no way resembled the movie version of a tropical resident swinging all day in a hammock fanned by tropical breezes and plucking ripe bananas from a conveniently located tree, with intelligent subsistence farming he met all of his needs.

A spate of research in musty files, and in St. Croix Indian Village sites, is unearthing a wealth of new information on the Indians who lived in St. George and in other Indian Villages scattered throughout St. Croix. These new discoveries (some yet to be published) have caused the story of the St. George Indians to be revised twice.

It is currently believed that the first Indians to arrive in the Virgin Islands came to Krum Bay, St. Thomas, perhaps from Florida, as a string of Indian Village sites without pottery⁴ can be traced from Florida to Krum Bay. Indian history still holds that the first Indians on St. Croix came from South America centuries later even though St. Croix is easily seen from Krum Bay on a clear day.

It was believed that the St. George Indian Village was one of the first three Arawak settlements made on St. Croix until recent research in the Prosperity Indian Village, North of Frederiksted, uncovered pottery that antedates the pottery found in St. George.

Differences in pottery found in other St. Croix Indian Villages indicate to the archaeologist that perhaps several waves of Indians came to St. Croix before the last wave, the Caribs, arrived. Full blood Arawaks and Caribs are still found in South America. A few full blood Caribs may be among the Caribs living on a reservation in Dominica.

While it is recorded that Ponce de Leon "pacified" the Indians on St. Croix for a short period in 1509, the Spanish did not settle St. Croix. The fate of the St. Croix Indians, however, was determined by the Spanish. It is necessary, therefore, to trace the early history of the Spanish in the Caribbean.

On his famous first voyage Columbus and his three ships passed St. Croix before sighting land. He lost his flagship and the captain of a second ship wandered away seeking gold. Columbus was forced to leave thirty-nine of his men behind in Northern Hispaniola (present day Dominican Republic and Haiti). Those who wrote about the Indians encountered on the voyage failed to mention that any of the Indians ate human flesh.

On Columbus' second voyage in 1493, the seventeen vessel fleet first hit land at Dominica. Sailors who went ashore saw cooked human bones. The fleet next anchored off Salt River, St. Croix and sailors were sent ashore to obtain fresh water. When the sailors entered the Salt River Indian Village some of the Indians fled into the bush—others, including castrated youths, begged to be taken away. Cooked human bones were found in

the Village. Columbus named these Indians "Caribs"—meaning cannibals or eaters of human flesh. The first of many paleface and redskin deaths in the New World occurred when a boat loaded with sailors challenged a boat loaded with Indians.

Traditional Indian history holds that Arawaks were superior farmers—Caribs superior warriors. Carib youths at an early age received training designed to produce a hardened fighter. Carib fighting strategy concentrated on night attacks on unsuspecting villages. Carib warriors travelled in darkness in huge war canoes to the target area. The target was overrun, men were killed, and women and children captured as the Caribs struck suddenly with overwhelming force. After the target island was weakened by frequent raids the Caribs occupied the island.

Women did all of the work not requiring considerable strength. The captured woman became a working mate of the warrior who captured her. Older women were often preferred as they made better workers. It is frequently recorded that the male offspring of Carib warriors and captured mates were castrated, fattened and eaten⁵.

When Columbus returned to Spain with gold and silver ornaments and Indian stories of much more gold and silver, Spaniards from every walk of life scrambled for a place in one of the seventeen ships assembled for the second voyage. Hidalgos (lesser nobles) and others with political influence; relatives and friends of Columbus; priests, farmers, soldiers, doctors, artisans, and laborers were selected. Highest priority was probably given to farmers skilled in grape, wheat, and olive culture as these were the Spanish food staples. However, Spaniards who did not learn to eat foods cultivated by the Indians starved as wheat, grapes, and olives refused to flourish. Later, priests were often heard complaining they did not have biscuits and wine for communion.

Also loaded aboard the ships were horses, cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, chickens, ducks, geese, dogs, and cats. None of these, with the possible exception of the duck and dog, were known to the Indian. As the fleet passed the Canary Islands, citrus, bananas, figs, sugar cane, and other plants were added.

When the plants and animals brought by the Arawaks to the site of St. George are compared with the plants and animals brought by Columbus it is evident that, except for the turkey, all of the animals consumed in St. George today were brought to the New World by Columbus.

What the New World gained in animals the Old World gained in plants. It is estimated that 80% of the vegetables consumed today throughout the world were originally cultivated by the Indians.

Wheat, rice, corn and barley, and the roots—sweet potato, white potato and cassava—lead today's list of major food-producing plants. White potatoes, sweet potatoes, cassava, and corn were unknown in Europe before Columbus.

Columbus sailed from Salt River to the spot where he had left thirty-nine men behind on his first voyage and found all of them dead. Continuing westward to Hispaniola Columbus found a

5. There is considerable conjecture concerning the Salt River Indians who begged Columbus to take them away. Some believe that the Caribs arrived in St. Croix many years before the Spanish fleet anchored off Salt River in 1493. They were unable to proceed farther than St. Croix because the large Taino population on Puerto Rico held them in check. The Indians who begged Columbus to take them away had been captured on Puerto Rico, or other nearby islands, during intermittent periods of open warfare and peaceful trade.

Others believe that the Caribs and Columbus reached St. Croix at approximately the same time. Those who begged to be taken away were captured on St. Croix. Strangely enough, no artifacts attributed to Carib women have been found on St. Croix. This supports those who believe that the Caribs and Columbus arrived together.

Isabella, the Spanish Queen sponsoring Columbus, decreed that all Caribbean Indians were subjects of the Spanish Crown—human beings who must not be mistreated. This ruling caused the Spanish in the Caribbean who wished to make slaves of the Indians to classify those they wished to enslave as Caribs. Then, contending that flesh eaters could not be considered human beings, thousands of Indians were enslaved or annihilated throughout the Caribbean.

Present day Indian historians are finding it difficult to determine who were and who were not Caribs as evidence is accumulating that Indian tribes in the Caribbean, other than the tribe known as Caribs, may have eaten parts of the human body on special occasions.

spot with a good anchorage, fresh water, and rich soil. Columbus named the spot Isabella in honor of his Queen. After unloading people, plants, and animals Columbus sailed westward in an unsuccessful search for a sea route to India.

Returning to Isabella several months later Columbus found the provisions brought from Spain almost exhausted and his laborers ill or dying. The "native products" brought in by friendly Indians could not be swallowed by the sick workers. This is understandable as the chief Indian food was a pepper pot soup similar to the kallalo served on special occasions on St. Croix. The difference is that the Indian kallalo was made with agouti, hutia, or iguana. The hutia and agouti are members of the rodent family and the iguana a big lizard. A stew made with these animals would not be appetizing even to a healthy worker unaccustomed to such a diet.

Columbus felt forced to issue orders that no one could eat the remaining provisions if he did not work. This was a sentence worse than death to the *Hidalgos* (lesser nobles) who had never worked with their hands. It is not recorded that any *Hidalgos* died rather than work but it is known that they never forgave Columbus. They hounded him until he had to retire in disgrace.

To save his colony, Columbus ordered the local Indian leader to supply, without compensation, things that had previously been exchanged—gold, silver, and female companionship. In addition, he ordered the chief to supply workers for mines and farms. These workers would not be paid nor would they be supplied with food or shelter. The Indian was to supply everything—the Spaniard nothing. Even African slaves brought in later were fed, housed, clothed, and given medical attention.

When the Indian leader refused to comply with these impossible terms, Columbus had him beheaded as an example to others. Indians then killed some Spaniards but found entire villages wiped out in reprisal. Thus was set in motion the enslavement/reprisal cycle that probably, in time, caused the St. George Indian Village to be abandoned.

Puerto Rico, the home of the Taino Indians, was soon settled by Spaniards who came over from Hispaniola. There is an early account of a group of Caribs who went to Puerto Rico to make canoes probably as the result of a visit to St. Croix by Spanish Missionaries. The Caribs were murdered. The account of the murders does not specify whether they were slain by Tainos or Spaniards. A big reprisal attack on Puerto Rico followed.

The Spanish priest most famous for his defense of the Indians was Father Las Casas. He sent letter after letter to the Spanish King describing atrocities being committed against Indians and pleading that no more licenses to enslave Indians be issued. His accounts were disputed by those who wished to enslave Indians. They wrote the King that the Indians deserved to be enslaved as they were Caribs who killed and ate defenseless women and children.

Licenses were sometimes granted, sometimes refused. Finally, in 1547, the Spanish King "notwithstanding his laws to the contrary, gave permission to the inhabitants of San Juan to make

war on the Caribs as devourers of human flesh." St. Croix was one of the chief offending Carib islands.

When was the St. George Indian Village abandoned and why? If the St. George Indian Village was inhabited when the Spanish King gave permission for the "flesh eaters" to be wiped out, they probably lost no time in fleeing to Guadeloupe, Dominica, or another island. The Caribs, deadly when able to stage night attacks, were no match for Spanish guns and dogs in daylight.

In the slash and burn agriculture used by the Indians, when the soil is exhausted it is abandoned until it is again covered with trees. Then the cycle starts again. The St. George Indian Village may have been in the abandonment stage of the cycle when St. Croix was abandoned.

Still another possibility exists. A story has been told that the St. George area was littered with skeletons of unburied Indians. Since this was completely foreign to Indian burial custom, the story was originally discounted. Recent studies, however, tell how an Indian, returning to his village after being infected with smallpox, could cause an epidemic that wiped out over half of the population. It is barely possible that such an epidemic struck the St. George Indian Village and those surviving fled without burying the dead.

A few Indians were seen on St. Croix in 1587 by Captain John White as he was en route to Roanoke Island, North Carolina transporting settlers for a new colony. He saw a few Indians on St. Croix again in 1590 when he was returning to check on the progress made by the new colony.⁶

6. The fate of the Roanoke Colony is one of the enigmas of history. When Captain White reached Roanoke Island he found that the settlers he had left there three years earlier had vanished. A historical play "The Lost Colony" attracts thousands of tourists annually to Roanoke Island. In the play Captain White remained at Roanoke Island and was lost with the other settlers.

English, Dutch and French, 1640-1650

Hordes of "little men" suddenly swarmed on the Caribbean stage around the turn of the 17th Century as a century of Spanish monopoly in the Caribbean was being broken.

English, French, and Dutch ships frequently took on water, made emergency repairs, or for other reasons called at St. Croix as they stalked Spanish ships returning to Spain loaded with products from mines, fields, and forests. The Dutch hit the jackpot by capturing a convoy en route to Spain taking the products of a whole year of Spanish effort. The ships were loaded with gold, silver, pearls, spices, logwood, cochineal, indigo, sugar, cocoa⁷, hides, and tallow. The riches of the New World led European nations to try to establish their own colonies.

One of the English advocates of colonies was Sir Walter Raleigh, a favorite of Queen Elizabeth. After sponsoring the tragic settlement of Roanoke Island, he explored the unsettled area of South America lying between Spanish settlements on the Orinoco River and Portuguese settlements along the Amazon⁸.

Raleigh's glowing accounts of the Guiana Coast caused so much interest in England that between 1604 and 1621 four unsuccessful attempts were made to establish a colony. After the last failure some of those returning to England visited other islands—Thomas Warner at St. Kitts and John Powell at Barbados.

Warner and his companions, tropically conditioned by their stay on the Guiana Coast where they survived the tropical diseases that killed so many of their companions, were impressed by the lushness of St. Kitts and went ashore. They were welcomed by the Caribs living there. Since the Guiana experience had taught that they should live for awhile on a tropical island before making plans to settle permanently, the Englishmen decided to test St. Kitts.

The test was highly successful. Disease did not strike and food was adequate. One of the men wrote that "they lived upon cassado bread, potatoes, plantains, pines, turtles and fish aplenty" and that they drank "knicknobby." The tobacco they planted produced bountifully and was sold for a fancy price when they reached England.

We can picture the reaction of the Caribs when Warner, their former guest, returned to St. Kitts to take over the island. They

7. It has been recorded that the Spanish nobility kept chocolate (made from cocoa) unavailable to the Spanish masses for a century. The nobility believed that chocolate was much too good to be wasted on the peon.

8. Sir Walter Raleigh brought tobacco with him when he returned to England. It is recorded that a servant doused him with water when he first saw smoke pouring from his nostrils. The tobacco habit spread so rapidly that tobacco became the chief cash crop for early St. Croix farmers.

expressed their displeasure so strongly that Warner, for self-protection, readily agreed to share St. Kitts with a band of fleeing Frenchmen.

Early historians had St. Croix permanently settled in 1625 by the Dutch and English. Recent research indicates that the settlements made by the English, Dutch or French before 1640 were wiped out by the Spanish.

Records of the first crops grown by Europeans on St. Croix are somewhat scanty. An interesting early record shows that in 1616, the Edwin brought "figs⁹, pines, (pineapples), papanes (papayas), sugar cane, plantains, and divers other plants" to Bermuda.

Some of the plants used by the first Barbados farmers have been recorded. They were in such a hurry to get food crops planted before the food supplies they brought with them were exhausted, that they did not take time to lop off the boughs from the tree trunks that had been felled. They climbed among the boughs planting bonavist, maize, and sweet potatoes.

It was not long until some of the Barbados farmers came to St. Croix. It is possible that they cleared an area inland from the mouth of Mint Gut and began farming before they were expelled by Spanish soldiers.

It is believed that another group of English farmers arrived a few years later and began farming an area inland from the mouth of Mint Gut. In time, the area farmed extended north across the St. Croix plains to St. George where the plains end and low hills begin. This belief is based on a study of early St. Croix maps (many of which are in the Estate Whim map exhibit) and from information provided by known changes in Mint Gut topography.

None of the early Spanish or French maps are completely reliable as accurate maps are based on surveys. St. Croix was not surveyed until after it was purchased by the Danes. All of the early maps, however, have a reliable reference point. They show a peninsula jutting out from the south shore. Mint Gut drains the area of St. Croix that lies east of the peninsula.

The peninsula is not named on the Spanish map prepared, it is believed, before the Spanish launched the 1650 attack that brought St. Croix under Spanish control for the last time. French maps refer to P. Espagnole (*Spanish Point*) and Danish maps to Long Point—the name that is used today.

The Spanish map was a crude drawing listing fortified points and other data. It described a stream flowing east of the peninsula as a "sweet water stream." If Columbus had anchored off Mint Gut instead of off Salt River he could have filled his casks with sweet water. He would have encountered Indians, as he did at Salt River, as an Indian Village was located at the mouth of Mint Gut.

If one visits the mouth of Mint Gut, it is easy to picture English farmers aided by their indentured servants and African slaves loading sugar and tobacco into lighters a considerable distance inland from the mouth of Mint Gut. The lighters used rollers to cross the narrow reef separating the quiet inland water

9. *In the Caribbean the fig is the name of the plant that is known in the United States as the banana. Many Garden visitors are surprised to learn that the plant known in the United States as a fig is not the same plant. Examples of both figs exist in the Botanical Garden fruit orchard.*

from crashing ocean waves. The heavy cargo was then taken aboard the ocean going sailing ships that are known to have anchored off Long Point through lost anchors that divers are finding scattered around Long Point.

The 1671 map of St. Croix, prepared by Lapointe, is considered by most scholars to be the best of the early maps. Although the Lapointe map does not show St. Croix streams, it is still very helpful as it shows three ponds in the western half of St. Croix, one of which is located northeast of Spanish Point. Since this is the area drained by Mint Gut it can be assumed that Mint Gut flowed through this pond en route to the ocean. A *Sucrerie des Anglais* (English Sugar Works) is shown upstream from the pond. The English Sugar Works could have been powered by a water mill.

A second pond is shown south of Frederiksted on the Lapointe map. This pond still exists today.

A third pond, shown north of Frederiksted, was not completely filled with soil until recent years. The Arawak Village that provided pottery that antedated St. George pottery was located on the banks of this pond.

The ponds south and north of Frederiksted are shown on Danish maps made a century later. The pond downstream from the English Sugar Works is not shown on Danish maps. Evidently the pond disappeared after it was filled with soil that eroded from the land under cultivation around the English Sugar Works.¹⁰

It is apparent that during the early 1640's St. Croix was occupied by the English, French and Dutch—and that the Dutch built a fort at Salt River. The groups quarreled. Fearing English reprisal after siding with the Dutch, the French decided to leave. They reached agreement with Thomas Paul, the captain of an English ship, whereby Paul would take them to Guadeloupe in return for manioc plantations and other possessions.

This is one of the few times that the importance of manioc (also known as cassava, yucca, and tapioca) is recognized, even though it was the most important Indian food and the most important food in the early European settlements. Today it is the chief food for 20,000,000 tropical people.

Cassava has been a life saver in the frequent periods of drought that plague the Caribbean. A Jamaican adage describes hard times as "cassava without salt, coffee without sugar."

The English managed to chase the Dutch from St. Croix. However, they did not enjoy exclusive control for long. The Spanish made one last effort before they were forced to yield St. Croix. There was an unconfirmed report of the capture of a Spanish scout at Long Point. This was followed by a 1650 landing of Spanish soldiers from Puerto Rico. Some soldiers probably landed at Long Point as it is shown on French maps as P. Espagnole. The English were expelled to Barbados.

Archaeologists and historians will continue their efforts to pinpoint the locations of the two *Sucrerie des Anglais* (English Sugar Works) shown on French maps of St. Croix. Priceless

10. Known changes that occurred in the section of Mint Gut that lies within the Botanical Garden boundaries seem to reinforce this theory.

A stone dam was placed across Mint Gut, possibly by Peter Oxholm—the premier Virgin Islands engineer. The pond created by the dam supplied water for a water mill. The pond disappeared after it became filled with soil washing down from the St. George hillside.

After the Botanical Garden began operating, efforts were made to create small ponds in the Mint Gut channel. The results of these efforts are available for study.

Heavy equipment impacted the soil in the Mint Gut channel—by the Botanical Garden entrance—in an effort to make the bottom leakproof. The effort failed. Then the bottom of the pond was covered by a leakproof sealer. The latter effort also failed. The sealer cracked when the water in the pond dried up completely during a drought.

Several ponds were created by placing cement slabs four feet high across the Mint Gut channel. The ponds created rapidly filled with soil. The dams, moreover, raised the Mint Gut water level four feet at each dam during cloudbursts. This caused such unexpected results that the removal of the cement slabs is under consideration.

Heritage, using the evidence provided by the 1671 French map of St. Croix, will claim that St. George was named from the English Sugar Works located adjacent to, or within, St. George until proof is provided that this claim is wrong.

French and Knights of Malta, 1650-1733

The French Period on St. Croix started out very auspiciously. It was destined to end with the ignominious abandonment of a lush Caribbean island.

The Spanish, after banishing the English from St. Croix, returned to Puerto Rico, leaving a small garrison at Christiansted. A small Dutch force, believing that all of the Spanish had left, landed a small force in Christiansted that was ambushed and destroyed. Shortly thereafter the Spanish garrison was forced to capitulate to a French force assembled in St. Kitts by de Poincy and led by de Vaughlan.

The French half of St. Kitts belonged to the Knights of Malta. The highest ranking official in the Order in the Caribbean was the flamboyant de Poincy. He had originally gone ashore on St. Kitts wearing his full dress uniform, preceded by a color guard bearing his personal flag, and followed by hordes of military personnel, craftsmen, and three kinds of servants—hired servants, engagés and slaves. As might be expected, he was soon living in the “showiest” house in the Caribbean quickly built by his huge labor force. The “showiest” exotic tree in the tropics is known as the poinciana in Hawaii. It is known in the Caribbean as the flamboyant—possibly because of de Poincy’s flamboyance.

De Poincy found himself in sole charge of an island with homes built, forests cleared, and orchards planted by earlier inhabitants—the English, French and Dutch. Elated at this turn of events and fully expecting to build a new showplace and move to St. Croix where he would not have to share his island with others, de Poincy carefully recruited 300 settlers and sent them to St. Croix. It soon became evident that most of the settlers were not tropically acclimated—200 of the 300 and all three governors sent to St. Croix died within a year.

This huge loss of life naturally called for drastic measures. Medical knowledge was insufficient to diagnose the cause of the deaths. Some medical personnel thought that the fevers preceding death were brought on by damp air in humid forests. Therefore, many trees were cut down. The workmen supposedly lived aboard ships while the St. Croix forests were burned.

No one has yet identified which areas of St. Croix were burned. There were many areas that were not burned as St.

Croix later provided much lumber for French homes.

Other medical personnel thought swamps caused fevers. Headquarters was moved to present-day Judith's Fancy.

De Poincy recruited another group of farmers and sent them to St. Croix. It was soon evident that the farmers were faced with another major problem—de Poincy himself. It would tax the ability of a Diogenes to find a person less suited to control the destiny of a colony of farmers than de Poincy. He had no knowledge of tropical farming. Instead of learning tropical agriculture he spent his time fighting with any and all Caribbean rivals.

One of his first actions was to order any ship taking supplies to the St. Croix farmers or taking St. Croix cash crops to Europe to stop at St. Kitts. De Poincy helped himself to anything aboard the ship. He then placed a heavy tax on the remaining cargo. He also put a ban on trading with ships of any other nation and even with any French ships that were not under his direct control. This was adding insult to injury, as the chief cash crop being raised was tobacco which spoils easily. A historian records: "It was very often necessary to burn piles of tobacco, for want of vessels to come pick it up."

While de Poincy had every right to try to recover the money he had spent in recruiting farmers, paying their transportation to St. Croix and providing them with tools, seeds, farm animals and other items needed to start farming, the farmers had to concentrate on surviving and getting their farms into full production before they were in a position to pay heavy taxes. Du Tertre estimated that de Poincy recovered less than one tenth of his investment.

The farmers complained bitterly to de Poincy, but the complaints fell on deaf ears. Finally the farmers seized a ship sent by de Poincy and sailed away, it is thought to Brazil.

De Poincy sent out his recruiters for the third time. They encountered problems as St. Croix now had such a bad reputation that neither farmers nor engagés were interested in coming to St. Croix.

The number of French engagés, or English indentured servants who signed contracts to go to an island was a good gauge of its popularity. Most Europeans, over 90%, were landless peasants who had little chance of improving their status at home. Many were willing to sign a contract binding them to a number of years of labor without wages in return for passage by ship to a colony. Some women agreed to marry any man who paid her passage.

Farmer recruitment lagged until de Poincy agreed to stop the practice of having all ships servicing St. Croix stop first at St. Kitts to pay taxes. De Poincy had to turn to forced labor to obtain farm workers, while prospective engagés signed contracts to work in French colonies other than St. Croix. He obtained forced white labor for the farms from French jails which held many debtors and prostitutes. He obtained forced black labor through the slave trade. He sent du Bois, a highly capable leader, to St. Croix. Population soon increased to 822 persons paying

72,000 pounds of tobacco in taxes.

The farm labor situation on St. Croix was the same as that on other Caribbean islands at the time. The farm labor force consisted of slaves, engagés and former jail inmates. All worked side by side in the fields without wages. Engagés and former jail inmates had a termination date for their period of work without wages—the slaves did not.

The farmers provided food, shelter, clothing and medicine. No two farmers treated their workers alike. While the engagé usually received the best treatment and often ended up the owner of a small farm, many farmers gave slaves preferential treatment when the time neared for the engagé, or the former jail inmate, to be freed. If a severe drought or hurricane reduced food supplies to the starvation level, or an epidemic made medicine scarce, the slave was kept alive as he had permanent market value.

Some overall improvement in general conditions resulted after de Poincy died. However, St. Croix development remained far below that on St. Kitts and Barbados where there were thousands of small farms and a steadily growing number of sugar plantations.

A 1687 St. Croix census showed the St. Croix population to be 264 men and boys, 267 women and girls, 56 forced laborers, 546 slaves and no engagés. This small population had to man the farms, staff government offices, handle shipping, provide military protection and whatever medical, educational or religious services were provided.

The Lapointe map of 1671, the best of the French maps, shows two farms or plantations in the general area of St. George among the approximately ninety in St. Croix. Most of the farms or plantations were located close to the ocean as sufficient manpower did not exist to build and maintain a comprehensive road system.

It seems obvious, in view of the small population, that most of the ninety farms or plantations shown were small farms operated by a farmer and his family with some of the farmers assisted by one or more of the forced laborers brought to St. Croix. After family food requirements had been met the additional time available was spent in growing an export cash crop that did not require a large outlay of capital for processing. Thus the small farms grew such cash crops as cotton, tobacco, ginger, coffee or cocoa, leaving the production of sugar (and indigo to a lesser extent) to a few large plantations.

Taxes could be paid in either sugar or tobacco. When the revenues obtained were less than the salaries of government employees and other expenses, the French King had to pay the difference from his own pocket. This was a period of warfare in the Caribbean. Although St. Croix was not invaded, military personnel to prevent raids had to be located on St. Croix. There were enemy ship captains looking for an undefended island to raid. Slaves and farm animals were prime targets in these raids common throughout the Caribbean, as slaves and farm animals had a ready market.

After the French Crown lost money on St. Croix year after year, an exasperated Louis XIV agreed to a petition sent by his governor in St. Domingue (present day Haiti) that the St. Croix farmers be settled in the thinly settled northern area to prevent the Spanish from reoccupying the area. Louis XIV sent orders to his St. Croix farmers to get ready to leave for Haiti.

A French fleet arrived at Christmas time 1695 to take the St. Croix farmers to Northern Haiti. The St. Croix farmers left their farm animals behind as Northern Haiti had supplied fresh meat to pirates for many years. So many cattle and pigs were cooked on boucons that the pirates became known as buccaneers. Other thousands of farm animals were slaughtered for their hides only.

The farm animals left behind on St. Croix began to multiply. They provided meat to the buccaneers who began to operate from St. Croix after the French pulled out. Some pet deer were left behind, but these did not survive. The deer seen in St. Croix today were introduced in 1790.

Was St. George farmed by the French? The English farmed an area far inland from the mouth of Mint Gut. It would be logical for the French to do the same.

It is only when one reflects how illogical everything was on St. Croix during the French Period that it is conceded that perhaps the French did not use the many St. George assets. The situation is perhaps best summarized by Knox, the first Virgin Islands historian, who commented on the "strange procedure on the part of the French Government thus to abandon an island so fertile, its rich soil having yielded tobacco, cotton, indigo and sugar."

Danes and Africans Settle St. Croix, 1733

One of the most interesting periods on St. Croix is the period that followed after Louis XIV threw up his hands in disgust and ordered the island abandoned. This island often described as "the jewel of the Caribbean"—an island so desirable that seven flags have flown over her rich plains and "sweet water" streams—did not remain abandoned.

French ships were kept busy patrolling this jewel as buccaneers found St. Croix a fine haven with no one to interfere with their illegal activities. Woodchoppers harvested valuable trees. Hunting parties obtained meat and hides from the wild animals now roaming about. Some farming was done, possibly for the entire period. There is evidence that the ancestor of some present day Cruzans was involved—a person who may have run afoul of the law and found St. Croix the ideal hiding place.

When the French sold St. Croix to the Danes in 1733, the Danish West India & Guinea Company was put in charge. This company had learned a great deal about tropical agriculture while administering St. Thomas and St. John and by closely watching developments on nearby islands. Through this experience many of the mistakes made during the French occupation were avoided.

Several decisions were made before farmers were recruited for St. Croix. Production of sugar, molasses, and rum had not been very profitable on St. Thomas and St. John. Company officials attributed the small returns to the hilly farm land and small size of the sugar plantations. It was expected that results would improve when the level plains of St. Croix were brought into production.

It was known that expensive equipment was needed—a mill to extract the cane juice, a factory to change the juice into sugar and molasses, and a distillery to make rum. Experience had shown that it was not feasible for several farmers to share the same facilities. Cane ripened at the same time on most farms and, as cane processed at its peak produced the most sugar, all farmers wished to process cane at the same time. It was concluded that each sugar tract should be 150 acres in size to permit each farmer to own his own "works." A surveyor soon divided the St. Croix plains into 150 acre tracts.

These undeveloped tracts were valuable properties. The company, however, expected to make most of its profit from transporting, refining and marketing sugar, molasses and rum. It was preferable to find a farmer who would quickly get his farm into production than to wait for a buyer who would pay more for the land.

Experience had shown that the ideal owner of a St. Croix sugar estate was a farmer who knew tropical agriculture, who had obtained some immunity to tropical diseases, and who had a nucleus of slaves trained in the skills needed to set up and operate a sugar industry.

By 1740 the agricultural heartland of St. Croix had been distributed to planters who met some or all of the ideal qualifications. These selected candidates were given the tracts for the low price of 500 rigsdaler for a 150 acre tract—a price far below the market value of a similar tract on a nearby island. As an additional inducement, taxes were waived for seven years as farmers developed their estates.

As might be expected, a few speculators obtained farms they did not expect to develop before selling them at a big profit. The experienced Danes gave these speculators a development deadline. Those who did not meet the deadline lost their estates.

There were two groups of farmers waiting impatiently for the tracts to be surveyed and distributed. One group was the St. John farmers who had lost their homes, "works," and cane fields in the 1733 slave revolt. Many chose to come to the St. Croix plains instead of returning to the St. John hills. The other group consisted of those already living on St. Croix—the supposedly abandoned island.

After Captain Frederik Moth was appointed the first Danish governor of St. Croix, he came to St. Croix to discuss the Danish purchase with those on St. Croix and to "make a report that would encourage the sale of land on behalf of the Danish West India & Guinea Company."

Entries in the logs of ships that visited the Frederiksted area referred to a large English plantation. Moth, in his report, referred to a French force that had landed in the Frederiksted area several years earlier but he made no reference to an English plantation. A Moravian historian found some evidence that the plantation was abandoned during a cycle of dry years that struck in the 1720's.

After Moth found Christiansted buried in brush, he started west looking for the settlement. One account tells how he followed a road—another how he hacked his way through the brush. But whatever port the settlement used—whether Christiansted, Salt River, or a south shore anchorage—the whereabouts of the settlement was kept hidden from the French who thought the island abandoned.

The settlement was surprisingly large. It was estimated by Moth as 150 Europeans, chiefly Britishers, their wives and children, and more than 500 Africans. This made a population almost equal to that of the French on St. Croix as listed in the census of the French population taken in 1687.

A clue exists as to where they came from originally and where they settled on St. Croix. It was recorded that in the 1720's a group came to the Danish West Indies from Anguilla, an English Island. An estate inland from the south shore was named Anguilla. A connection does exist, according to Alfredo E. Figueredo who is currently extensively researching early St. Croix history.

Sketchy research shows that most of those in the settlement remained on St. Croix after they pledged their word of honor as gentlemen that they would be loyal to the Danish Crown or, lacking gentleman status, gave an oath of allegiance to the Danish Crown. The large number of Britishers in the settlement partially accounts for the early predominance of English planters or plantation managers on St. Croix and of the use of English as a primary language from the beginning.

As St. Croix was a Danish Island, efforts were made to induce farmers in Denmark to sell their farms and invest in St. Croix. Additional tempting proposals were added to the inducements made to others. However, only a few Danish farmers came to St. Croix, possibly because of the tragedy that befell the first St. Croix arrivals.

Chamberlain von Plessey, a major stockholder in the West India & Guinea Company, reached an agreement with the Moravian Church whereby Moravian carpenters, blacksmiths, potters, or others with skills needed in the sugar industry would establish themselves on one or more of the ten von Plessey Tracts. They would then be on hand to train the slaves arriving from Africa and from nearby islands.

While the site of their settlement on St. Croix will probably remain unknown forever, the possibility exists that they began clearing away brush around a pond located in the vicinity of the Estate Plessen Village—currently being used by Rastafarians—an area a few hundred yards east of the Botanical Garden.

Of the fourteen Moravians in the first group, ten died within a year. Of ten replacements sent, nine soon died. The annals of the Moravian Church call this "The Great Dying."

A Moravian historian thinks they settled in an area that had polluted drinking water. Another historian ascribes the deaths to yellow fever. A third claims that malaria, the disease many believed caused the French to set fire to St. Croix forests, killed the Moravians. Knox, the Virgin Islands historian, attributed their deaths to the "insalubrity of the climate and incessant toil upon the land."

Many tourists arriving during the winter months find the St. Croix heat debilitating at first. In earlier times many settlers, European and African, reached St. Croix in a weakened condition due to seasickness, poor food, outbreaks of disease, or other harmful conditions encountered in a slow Atlantic crossing in a sailing vessel.

The first settlers were forced to perform "incessant toil" requiring strength and stamina under a broiling sun. Food, seeds, seedlings, tools and animals had to be unloaded and shelters built to protect them—and the settlers—from the sun,

wind and rain. Land had to be cleared and seeds and seedlings planted so that food crops matured before food brought by ship was exhausted.

Under ideal conditions, sufficient food was available to replace the energy expended in hard labor. When food was inadequate the workers were weakened, thus becoming susceptible to the diseases they brought with them. Even worse for the European, who had not acquired any immunity to tropical diseases, were the tropical diseases awaiting him¹¹.

The tropically acclimated sugar planter from a nearby island was far less apt to die from a tropical disease than the newly arrived Danish farmer. The sugar planter with a nucleus of skilled slaves was able to develop an efficient industry on a St. Croix estate faster and at less expense than a Danish farmer, inexperienced in tropical agriculture, who had to depend on untrained Bosuls newly arrived from Africa. The development of a sugar industry on St. Croix was not harmed by the failure of Danish farmers to participate on a large scale.

The highest loss of life to tropical diseases occurred among the Danish Militiamen. After suffering the usual high death rate for new arrivals, the tropically conditioned survivors were rotated back to Denmark. They were replaced by new recruits, thus starting the same cycle over again.

11. *In the exchange of diseases that occurred between the Indian, the African, and the European, the African was by far the best situated—the Indian the worst.*

With the exception of mosquito-borne diseases, the Indian had no built up immunity to the myriad diseases imported from Europe and Africa. It has been recorded that the Indian gnashed his teeth in fury as his friends died like flies from smallpox, while the African and European were largely spared. Even measles, sometimes described as a children's disease, killed thousands of Indians. One author attributes the easy conquest of the Aztecs by Cortez to the death of half of the Indians, including many tribal leaders, from outbreaks of disease.

The Indian reciprocated with syphilis, which became the "plague of Europe" when it was introduced by returning sailors, killing or maiming hundreds of thousands before some immunity was developed. Similar serious effects were not felt in Africa—possibly due to the similarity of the yaws germ to the syphilis germ—a similarity so close that microscopes are unable to distinguish between them.

The African had some immunity to the mosquito-borne diseases that killed so many Europeans in the Caribbean (dengue, malaria, yellow fever). The extent of this immunity is still being questioned. According to one evaluation, the Americans succeeded in building the Panama Canal, when the French gave up, because they imported thousands of Jamaicans who survived when others had been killed off by yellow fever.

St. George Owners

By 1736 the agricultural heartland of St. Croix had been surveyed into Quarters. Each Quarter was divided into 150 acre Tracts. The Botanical Garden is located in Tract 27, Princess Quarter.

Tract 27's 2,000 foot southern boundary touches on Centerline Road, its 3,000 foot western boundary on Bog Allen Road. The eastern boundary runs north from the first gut east of the St. George entrance, and the northern boundary passes the metal fan mill north of the Botanical Garden.

The document transferring Tract 27 from the Danish West India & Guinea Company to its first owner is missing. The earliest record in our National Archives in Washington, D.C., showing Tract 27 ownership, is a 1751 Matricul showing Mogens Andersen (with eighteen slaves) and Lorentz Grundel (with two slaves) as the owners of Tract 27.¹²

The Matricul, prepared annually, listed the information needed by the Danish administrators to levy taxes and for planning purposes. Matricul format changed from time to time. In later years, it usually gave the name of the owner of St. George, the number of acres in cane cultivation, the number of acres used for other purposes, and a complete inventory of slave workers according to age group, sex, physical condition, and position held on the estate.

St. George slaves (or workers, after emancipation) were classified as tradesmen (craftsmen), field workers, or household workers. Field workers, constituting between eighty-five to ninety percent of the total work force, were divided into three classes based on their physical condition.

Listed on some Matriculs but not subject to tax were the very young and those recently arrived from Africa—the Bosul. The Bosul was not taxed as he was not considered to be a productive worker until he had undergone a period of training. There were probably some exceptions, as some of the new arrivals from Africa were skilled in iron work, pottery making or other crafts that could be readily utilized on the estate. Bosuls were usually known as Africans after the training period was completed.

Although the twenty slaves listed on the 1751 Matricul had not yet been divided into categories, it can be assumed that they included several craftsmen. Skilled personnel were needed to

12. *Priceless Heritage* is deeply indebted to Dr. Harold Larson the Archivist, Historian and College Professor who was sent to the Virgin Islands by our National Archives to select the documents now being held in the Archives.

Dr. Larson spent many days compiling a short history of St. George from documents in our National Archives and Library of Congress, which he presented in manuscript to the St. George Village Botanical Garden. Much of the information concerning the Danish/African period contained in Priceless Heritage was taken from Dr. Larson's manuscript and from copies of selected Matriculs and other documents which he supplied.

cultivate food and cash crops and to install and operate a mill, sugar factory (boiling shed), and small distillery.

The market value of these skilled slaves far surpassed the market value of the 150 acres comprising Tract 27 which was originally sold for 500 rigsdaler. This situation changed as land rose in value from 500 rigsdaler to around 15,000 rigsdaler at the turn of the century.

The market value of the ordinary field worker did not increase very much as an inexhaustible supply kept prices stable. Captains of ships loaded with Bosuls headed for any area paying higher than average prices for slaves.

The price of a skilled slave naturally varied considerably. Some were so valuable that the owner would refuse almost any offer made. If, for example, a construction man (mason/carpenter) was lacking in St. George, the owner had to hire a European or free black if he could not purchase a skilled slave.

It is not known whether Mogens Andersen (A Dane, according to his name) was one of those already on St. Croix when the island was bought by Denmark; whether he came over from St. John or St. Thomas; or came from Denmark¹³.

The pioneer stage of the development of Tract 27 had been passed in 1751 as the Tract was producing sugar. This meant that trees had been cleared from a part of the Tract, food crops were being grown, and sufficient cane seedlings had been grown to plant acres of cane.

Many developers of St. Croix estates met a part or all of their development costs through the sale of trees harvested as the area was cleared for farming. If Tract 27 was covered with such valuable native trees as *lignum vitae*, ironwood, satinwood, mastic and cedar; or if earlier English and French farmers had planted mahogany, thibet, and flamboyant trees, the original St. George owner probably met most of his development cost by selling the trees he cleared away. It is highly probable that mangoes replaced the trees cleared from the banks of Mint Gut and that cocoa and coffee were planted under the mangoes.

Breeding stock for cattle, horses, and pigs may have been obtained from the descendants of the farm animals left behind by the French when they abandoned the island. Chickens, ducks, geese, sheep, and goats were brought in from nearby islands. Horses and oxen—and later the mule—were vital in estate operations as they pulled stumps, dragged heavy tree trunks, and otherwise relieved the slaves of the most arduous tasks.

Shelter had been built, but it represented minimum cost and effort. The first worker homes, quickly thrown together from local materials, had mud walls, grass roofs, and dirt floors.

Materials for an animal mill, boiling shed, and distillery had been imported from Europe and installed. So it is obvious that development had started many years before 1751 when we have our first documentary evidence of activities in Tract 27.

The next owner of Tract 27 also had a Danish name, Matthias Taarling. After his death, his widow held Tract 27 a few years before selling to William MacDougall who, in turn, sold Tract 27 to John Heyliger in 1769.

13. Mogens Andersen had been on St. Croix for some time as Mrs. Rachel Armstrong Colby, while doing research in Denmark, saw a record showing that in the 1740's Andersen owned nearby Tract 23.

Shortly after buying Tract 27 Heyliger also bought Tract 22 (later known as Sally's Fancy) lying north of Tract 27. In time the two 150 acre tracts became known as Estate St. George—or St. George's, as it was often called.

The Heyligers

John Heyliger and his heirs owned St. George during most of the Golden Age of Sugar (1770-1820) when fortunes were made, "Great Houses" were built, and the term "Cruzan Planter" was used worldwide to describe a wealthy man. King Sugar climbed the highest hillsides as trees and grass were uprooted and the land converted into cane cultivation. A recent Coast Guard map uses as a navigation aid a windmill perched atop a hill at a 992 foot elevation!

Several Heyligers came to St. Croix from St. Eustatius and St. Martin. They soon owned more land on St. Croix than any other family—a fabulous family in a fabulous age. One of the Heyligers was formerly the Governor of St. Eustatius. Another is popularly credited with serving food to guests on plates of solid gold. A Heyliger married the youngest sister of President Monroe. Judith's Fancy gets its name from Judith Heyliger. A Heyliger married Peter Oxholm, the next St. George owner. However, she died before any children were born. The list goes on and on.

St. George did not follow the general pattern that prevailed during the Golden Age of Sugar. While many other planters were becoming wealthy, after John Heyliger's death St. George went bankrupt.

Most St. Croix estates were mortgaged to the Royal Loan Commission which acted as a lending agency for the Danish King. Most estate owners reduced the amount they owed when the estate had a prosperous year. Those who did not reduce their mortgages in good years found themselves forced deeper in debt when bad weather, low prices, cane field fires, or other calamities caused an estate to operate at a loss.

It may have been that John Heyliger listed too many heirs to share his estate when he died. Or, the heirs may have quarreled so bitterly among themselves that St. George could not function efficiently.

At least three heirs and their families lived on the estate. One heir probably lived in a house located on a knoll in Sally's Fancy overlooking the Botanical Garden—the site of the present Zugelter home.

The Heyliger heirs almost lost St. George to a grasping British agent during the second British occupation of St. Croix (1807-1815). This was prevented by the active intervention of General Harcourt who was in charge of the British occupation force.

Evidently the Heyligers reached the point they were not able to pay the interest due on the mortgage, and the annual taxes assessed, and St. George was taken over by the Royal Loan Commission. The estate could have been sold at public auction

St. George
L. H. Heyliger
St. Croix

or the Royal Loan Commission could declare the Danish King to be the owner and operate the Estate themselves. The latter was done until 1815 when St. George was leased to the new Governor General of the Danish West Indies—Peter Lotharius Oxholm.

The Oxholms

P. L. Oxholm, one of the more versatile Danes to live in the Danish West Indies, reached the top of three success ladders. The position of Governor General was the top political position in the Danish West Indies. No military officer in the Danish West Indies surpassed the rank of Lieutenant General reached by Oxholm. He was also a highly successful planter who owned and operated several sugar plantations. In addition, Oxholm was a top level engineer, the most widely read Danish West Indies writer of his day, and certainly the most prolific mapmaker.

Oxholm was sent to St. Croix to put the Frederiksted Fort in a state of combat readiness after it failed to challenge a British warship which violated the harbor's neutrality during the American Revolutionary War. He amassed several sugar estates which he sold in 1797 when sugar estates were selling for fabulous sums. Then he married a second time and returned to Denmark, taking his new bride with him.

Oxholm purchased two Danish estates and began rearing a family. Then, in 1803, he returned to St. Croix, purchasing Estates Diamond and Ruby in Queens Quarter and Estate Hope whose southeast corner touches the northwest corner of St. George.

He was busily engaged in developing his estates when the British occupied St. Croix for the second time in 1807 and he, and all other Danish officers, were banished to Denmark.

When St. Croix was again restored to Denmark, Oxholm was promoted to Lieutenant General and named the Governor General of the Danish West Indies. One of his first acts after settling down in Government House in Christiansted was obtaining St. George from the Royal Loan Commission. While it is likely Oxholm used his political position to pick a political plum, records covering the transaction are not available. It is possible that the Royal Loan Commission, recognizing Oxholm as a very capable planter, used him to put a bankrupt estate on its feet, thus helping the bank to recover its investment.

There had been an earlier connection between Oxholm and St. George. Plot 27, Princes Quarter, is shown for the first time as Estate St. George on Oxholm maps circulated after 1794. It is not known what part Oxholm played, if any, in giving to St. George the name of the English Patron Saint.

Some St. Croix estates were given names whose Danish, English, French, Dutch or African connections can be traced. Many were named for an estate owner or member of his family. For some there is no discernible reason for the name given.

Plessen, east of St. George, was named for Chamberlain von Plessey, whose estates were partially cleared by the Moravians.

Sally's Fancy, to the north, had a succession of owners with English names—Tanchard Looby, John Grice, Robert Townsend and Dr. George Gordon. Sally was probably a beloved English wife, daughter, or sister.

There are no clues why little Mint on the west or Diamond to the south were so named.

It is difficult to ascertain which St. George Village structures were designed by Oxholm, the premier St. Croix engineer. He laid out a design for a sugar estate in a book he wrote describing the St. Croix sugar industry. The present layout of St. George follows the design outlined in the Oxholm book but so do many other St. Croix estates.

The only dated structure in St. George Village is the building forming the south wing of the Great Hall. It has the date 1860 affixed to the south wall. This is the only worker home in St. George Village that definitely was never a slave quarters as its date shows it was built after the slavery period ended in 1848.

It is probable that Oxholm designed the St. George water mill and its dam, reservoir and aqueduct—as there were few water mills built on St. Croix—and that he also designed the famous St. George bridge that withstood flood and hurricane until it succumbed to the cloudburst that ended the 1977 drought.

Governor General Oxholm returned to Denmark in 1816 and remained there until his death in 1827. Then St. George reverted to the Royal Loan Commission while Hope remained in the family.

Oxholm had two sons who came to St. Croix—Frederik and Valdemar. Valdemar became an Aide to Governor General Peter von Scholten in 1827, thus starting a diplomatic career that was to end as he became the trusted advisor to the Danish King. Frederik followed in his father's footsteps becoming a successful planter, Acting Governor General of the Danish West Indies, and Major General in the Danish Militia.

The high prices that made expensive hillside cultivation profitable during the Golden Age of Sugar began to fall as huge sugar plantations were opened in Cuba, Brazil and other tropical areas with vast amounts of land. At the same time it was discovered that sugar could be obtained from a beet that matured in cold climates. The sugar beet could be grown successfully in European countries which were some of the best customers for St. George sugar. Land values declined along with the decline in sugar prices. Slaves from bankrupt hillside estates were loaded on ships and sold elsewhere.

Frederik came to St. Croix as the Golden Age of Sugar was ending. He lived in the house, situated on a knoll in Estate Hope overlooking the southern and western shores, that remained in Oxholm hands when St. George reverted to the Royal Loan Commission. The Royal Loan Commission and Frederik soon became joint owners of St. George—the second time that an Oxholm and the Royal Loan Commission jointly owned St. George.

In addition to the gradual decline in the value of St. Croix land, Frederik and subsequent St. George owners received three

severe financial jolts. The financial dislocation experienced by Frederik, the most severe of the three, came in 1848 when the unfree in the Virgin Islands were set free. Frederik had paid much more for each slave than the \$50 reimbursement received from the Danish Government. Land value nosedived. A big outlay was required to mechanize cane cultivation and sugar processing so that the number of workers needed to operate the estate could be reduced.¹⁴

There was a stampede to steam immediately following emancipation. Within a decade, St. George and most of the larger St. Croix estates replaced animal, wind, and water mills (and boiling sheds with their rows of boiling vats) with a steam operated sugar factory.

According to early Danish maps, the first St. George "works" was built around an animal mill located south of the present parking lot. No trace remains of this "works" as the area where it stood became a cane field.

Oxholm maps show a wind mill, which powered the second "works," located north of Mint Gut in the area of the ruins of the steam operated sugar factory—the third St. George "works." Additional evidence that the third "works" was built on the site of the second "works" is provided by the locations of the water mill and manager's house. While the exact date these structures were built is not known, they were both built before the 1830's as they appear on an inventory of St. George structures made in 1836.

The most logical location for the wind mill is east of the water mill which was used to crush cane when the wind fell so low the wind mill could not operate effectively. Then the juice from either mill flowed downhill into large clarifying vats which impounded the juice and removed some of its impurities before the juice passed to the boiling vats. This scenario would place the clarifiers and boiling vats in the area of the present day ruins of the sugar factory.

The owner of an estate often acted as its manager. This was the case when John Heyliger owned St. George. Subsequent St. George owners lived elsewhere, leaving the supervision of the "works" in the hands of a manager.

The manager usually lived very close to the "works." Freshly cut cane and extracted cane juice soon soured if not converted into sugar and molasses. The "works" operated twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, when the cane crop was at its peak. Cane harvested at its peak produced more sugar and the sugar was of better quality. The manager was responsible for assuring that the cane crop brought in the greatest profit or that a loss was prevented. This meant that nothing was permitted to halt the sugar processing activity. If the factory had to close because acid in the cane juice and chemicals used to "set" sugar corroded the equipment—or if sugar piled up because the equipment needed to take it to shipment points had broken down—we can be sure the craftsmen involved were soon back on the field gang and that a new manager was hired.

The manager's house was built before the 1830's—the steam

14. We can picture Frederik riding down the hill to see the first steam mill built in St. Croix at Estate Hogansborg. Although the steam mill pressed out more juice from a stalk of cane than the animal, wind or water mills used in St. George, it had such a poor performance record Frederik and other planters shied away. New steam mills were built on only one or two other estates before 1848. Frederik had begun to experiment with steam as an 1846 inventory of St. George structures lists "a small steam machinery."

15. *The St. Croix Landmarks Society, while restoring the Estate Whim boiling shed and steam factory, found separate foundations for the boiling shed and sugar factory. This has made archaeologists interested in digging in the ruins of the St. George sugar factory as earlier foundations and artifacts of historic value may be located underground.*

factory in the 1850's. If the manager's house was located adjacent to both the second and third "works" the third "works" was built on the site of the second "works"¹⁵."

The St. George sugar factory was powered by a twelve horse-power steam engine. Steam was also used to remove water from the cane juice by the "vacuum process." The St. George factory differed from the other small factories on St. Croix by its use of a large cast iron pipe chimney instead of the stone or brick chimneys that dot the St. Croix countryside. While the deep and fertile soil that washed down the hillside and piled up along Mint Gut attracted the Arawaks, it was a headache for those who wished to erect a heavy structure. It was wisely decided that the soil would not support a heavy stone or brick chimney. The remains of the cast iron chimney serving the St. George sugar factory are scattered along the banks of Mint Gut.

It was very fortunate for Frederik that he had such a famous father and that his brother was a power behind the throne in Denmark. The financial disruption caused by emancipation (the South remained bankrupt for years) was much less for Frederik (who was serving as the Governor of St. Thomas) than for many of his fellow planters. Apparently the Royal Loan Commission was flooded with bankrupt estates as more and more were leased to Frederik. By 1863 Frederik and the Royal Loan Commission together owned what was probably the greatest collection of sugar estates under the control of one man in St. Croix history. Frederik, assisted by Walker and Ratcliff, his two managers, farmed St. George, Sally's Fancy, Hope, Mint, Mountain, Walberggard, Envy, and Enfield Green in Princes Quarter; Diamond and Ruby in Queens Quarter; and Cane in West End Quarter.

The Royal Loan Commission evidently had much more invested in the estates than Frederik, as the estates scattered a few years after Frederik died. The largest block, consisting of St. George, Sally's Fancy, Hope, Mint, Mountain, and Walberggard, was bought at a bankrupt sale in 1873 by Alex Fleming.

The Flemings

Alex Fleming came to St. Croix from Ireland as a manager. He was obviously very capable as he owned two famous Estates—Hogansborg and LaReine—and a showplace, Bog Of Allen "Great House" located in the upper reaches of Mint Gut. After purchasing St. George and nearby Estates, Alex sent to Ireland for his nephew, George Latimer. Latimer lived in the manager's house in St. George until he married his cousin Victoria—the daughter of his uncle, Alex.

St. George assets plummeted the second time in the 1878 "big trashing." Alex was in his Bog Of Allen showplace when a friend advised him to take his wife and daughter to Frederiksted as unruly crowds were gathering. Alex told his friend that he was not worried as he had always treated his workers fairly.

Evidently there was a difference in opinion. A large crowd approached the house. Alex fired his shotgun into the air. When the mob continued to advance, household servants lifted Alex

and his horse over the back wall and hid his wife and daughter in their quarters. After the usual looting was completed, the showplace was "trashed." In the meantime, Latimer was hiding in Mint Gut while another group looted and "trashed" St. George¹⁶.

The Bog Of Allen showplace, over one hundred years old when it was "trashed," is credited with being the first house on St. Croix with running water. Apparently running water was a prestige item for St. George owners, as the Oxholms and Flemings—who lived outside St. George—had running water, and there is evidence that the Heyligers who lived in St. George also had running water.

Proceeding downstream from Bog Of Allen one sees the well that supplied water to the Frederik Oxholm house. Continuing on one finds the famous spring that originally supplied the St. George Arawak Village and later supplied those living in the Danish/African Village.

A walled well is located between the spring and the Botanical Garden boundary. A water tower was built to support a metal wind mill which pumped water from the well to nearby Estate Mountain. This tower is so tall it is being used by the Coast Guard as a reference point on its maps of St. Croix.

Alex had a choice between several houses located on the estates he owned. He decided to restore the house in Estate Mountain, possibly because of the fine supply of water pumped in from the St. George well.

St. George had a dual purpose water system when the dam across Mint Gut was completed. The dam impounded water to operate a water mill. In addition, an aqueduct was built from the top of the dam to a hollow column located below the lime kiln.

The gradually sloping aqueduct and hollow column allowed soil particles and other impurities to settle. The column had two openings. One lead east to a walled underground storage tank that probably served both the second and the third St. George "works."

The second opening pointed south. The 1836 inventory of St. George lists two buildings that have disappeared—a large wooden dwelling house and a small garden house. The Heyligers who lived in St. George were probably served with water from the settlement column.

The next water system developed for St. George and adjacent estates was built by Felix Pitterson, a World War II shipmate of Robert Moon. While Moon became interested in St. George, Pitterson bought estates lying upstream and to the west of St. George. Pitterson cattle grazed the area west and northwest of St. George and also on the land belonging to Moon, the captain of the Navy ship.

Following in the tradition of cattlemen all over the world, Pitterson developed the water resources of his ranch into a system of wells, ponds, storage tanks and cattle watering stations connected by pipe lines. The largest unit—a fifty-five million gallon pond—is located across Bog Allen Road from the Botanical Garden.

16. Trash (usually dried cane leaves) was gathered and tied into bundles. These were lit and tossed into buildings and placed on the windward side of cane fields—usually by female field workers.

17. *The saga of the St. George cattle vs. Botanical Garden plants has become a part of Botanical Garden lore.*

When the Botanical Garden came into being, fences were built which the St. George cattle, accustomed to obtaining water and grass in the Botanical Garden area, refused to honor. Tempers flared as the cattle pushed through the fences or broke away from cowboys herding them past the St. George entrance en route to other grazing grounds.

After an era of building stronger fences and court cases failed to solve the problem, Pitterson sold the offending cattle to a cattleman from St. Barts who sent a ship to St. Croix to evacuate the trouble-makers.

18. *Like many other St. George families, the Nesbitts went to New York after St. George was converted into a cattle ranch. The Nesbitts still retain ownership of the area lying between the Botanical Garden and Bog Allen Road. According to St. George lore, the Nesbitts also own one of the St. George Village houses.*

The St. George walled well was a part of the system. The cattle watering station in St. George was situated in the "corral"—the area planted in fruit trees after the Botanical Garden started. The fruit orchard is served by the last water system created for St. George—a system composed of a huge cistern beneath the Great Hall and water supplied by the Virgin Islands Government¹⁷.

After Alex moved to Frederiksted, George Latimer and his wife Victoria lived in the Mountain "Great House." A manager was hired who lived in the house adjacent to the "works." The manager lived on the main floor. Latimer kept an office in the basement.

The third major drop in St. George assets came in 1916 when cutthroat competition from the Bethlehem Sugar Central forced a shutdown of the St. George "works." We can imagine the reluctance of Latimer to write off as a total loss the steam mill, sugar processing factory, rum distillery, and supporting shops. He had labored hard to pay off the \$90,000 debt he inherited from his uncle.

Latimer did have the satisfaction of getting even with the Bethlehem giant. The Bethlehem manager several times tried to buy St. George. Latimer refused to sell, even after he had shut down the St. George "works" and was hauling cane to the railway running to Bethlehem.

In 1918, a year of great labor unrest in St. Croix, fire broke out in the Diamond cane fields across Centerline Road from St. George. Malcolm Skeoch, the Diamond owner, asked Latimer if he would send the St. George workers to help his workers harvest the cane before it spoiled. Latimer agreed and sent word to his workers to harvest the Diamond cane.

Latimer later drove to Diamond and saw the St. George workers idle. An investigation disclosed the St. George workers had agreed among themselves that they would harvest the Diamond cane only if they were given a bonus. Latimer asked Nesbitt¹⁸, his driver and go-between, to explain to the workers he had promised Skeoch that the St. George workers would help out in the emergency.

After it was apparent the St. George workers were standing firm in their demands, Latimer advised the Bethlehem management that he would sell St. George for a stated down payment and annual payments, provided St. George would revert to him if an annual payment was missed. These conditions were met. So when Bethlehem went bankrupt in 1930 Latimer evened the score with the giant sugar central that forced St. George to throw in the sponge. St. George reverted to Latimer and Latimer retained the down payment and annual payments that had been made.

With no mill to grind St. George cane, St. George became a cattle ranch. Cane was not replanted in St. George after Bethlehem was reorganized and began operating again.

When Latimer died St. George passed to John Albert Fleming, Sr., who subsequently transferred it to John Albert Fleming, Jr. St. George passed from the Flemings in 1951 when sold to the

investment group who subsequently sold St. George to the Lakeside Manufacturing Company headed by Robert and Mary Moon.

The Moons sold lots on the St. George hillside, donated thirteen and one-third acres, including the St. George Village, to the St. George Village Botanical Garden, and then sold the remaining St. George land to the deChaberts, a prominent St. Croix family. The deChaberts subsequently donated three and one-third acres to the Botanical Garden.

St. George Workers

A Nigerian sociologist once commented: "Try to picture the differences between Bantu bushmen and Wall Street brokers. This will give you an idea of the vast differences that exist between some of the African tribes."

Nigeria alone has approximately 240 tribes, three of whom have often been called nations. By permitting marriage only among members of the tribe, individual tribes tenaciously perpetuated their different languages, religious beliefs, marriage and burial customs, tribal facial markings, hair and clothing styles, tribal celebrations, and other customs and traditions.

According to Nigerian sources, the slave trading post at Bonny in Eastern Nigeria shipped more slaves than any other African port. The largest Eastern Nigerian tribe, the Ibo, did not effectively eliminate the Osus (cult-slaves) until 1956, although slavery was officially outlawed throughout Nigeria in 1916. Since cult-slaves married only cult-slaves it is likely that cult-slaves were among the many Ibos who left Bonny for St. Croix in the 1700's.

The most terrifying aspect of slavery was the ocean voyage from Africa to St. Croix—the infamous "middle passage." The most degrading experience in slavery was the sale of humans along with the sale of mules or other farm animals. It is very likely that a St. George owner went to Christiansted, paid \$125 for a mule arriving from the U.S. or Puerto Rico and \$300 for a slave arriving from Africa. Led by an attendant, slave and mule walked to St. George.

The Portuguese, Dutch, French, and English had been engaged in the slave trade for many years before Denmark organized the West India & Guinea Company to compete with the other nations. The original authorization allowed the Company to collect slaves only at stockades maintained by the Danish Government located on the African west coast—from Guinea to the Nigerian border. This area was popularly known as the African Gold Coast. The Company brought most of their slaves to St. Thomas and St. John, the two Caribbean islands flying the Danish flag, before St. Croix was purchased from France.

The stockades, holding slaves until slave ships arrived to take them across the Atlantic, overflowed whenever a tribal or inter-

tribal war broke out. Between wars tribal rulers brought in a steady stream of tribal rivals, debtors, criminals, and those who disobeyed tribal customs and traditions.

Many African tribes had their own slaves whose status was similar to the status of the slaves in St. Croix. As the Cruzan planter sold or traded a slave when he needed to make a purchase, the African ruler often sold or traded one of his stock of slaves.

Slaves at times were taken from unprotected villages by Europeans. In most areas of Africa, strong African rulers did not permit the Europeans to obtain slaves without paying for them.

Ship captains often found less than a full load of slaves in Danish stockades. They complained bitterly as they waited for more slaves to be brought in. Their complaints intensified until the Danish Government permitted them to collect slaves from stockades maintained by other nations.

This change in policy was made shortly before St. Croix was purchased. This meant that the origins of St. Croix slaves differed from the origins of the slaves on St. Thomas in two respects: (1) The slaves brought to St. Croix from Africa represented many more tribes. (2) St. Croix drew planters from nearby islands who brought their slaves with them. Thus, approximately half of the St. Croix slaves were Creoles, (slaves born in the Caribbean). Nicholas Tuite is credited with bringing in 1,000 slaves, most of them Creoles, from Montserrat alone. Events thus conspired to make St. Croix the melting pot of the Caribbean.

Most of the slaves brought to St. Thomas and St. John in earlier years came from tribes in the Gold Coast area. The two largest tribes were the Ashanti and the Amina, so it can be assumed that in early years they furnished more slaves than other tribes to St. Thomas and St. John¹⁹.

The new arrivals from Africa were called Bosuls. Their progress in St. George was more difficult when no one spoke their language or had similar customs and traditions. Marriage often presented a problem as Africans traditionally obtained their wives or husbands from within the tribe. This tradition resulted in considerable inbreeding on estates which had several members from the same tribe.

The Bosul eventually established a pattern of open revolt, of minimum cooperation, or full cooperation. The position he formerly held in Africa and the customs and traditions of his particular tribe influenced the new pattern he established. It can be assumed that those who held a high political, social or religious position in Africa found adjusting to the new conditions much more difficult than Ibo cult-slaves. Many never adjusted, preferring to run away or starve to death. Running away in earlier years was not too dangerous.

Some areas of St. Croix, particularly along the northern coast, were covered by trees and brush where a run-away could hide until a seaworthy boat or raft could be obtained and favorable weather prevailed. When wind and tide were

19. Among the Aminas taken to St. John were one or more who had been tribal leaders at home. Some planters preferred Aminas as they were big and strong. The Aminas, however, earned a reputation for failure to adapt to plantation life whenever they constituted a large part of the group. They are credited with leading the Maroons who fled to the hills of Jamaica and remained independent for years.

It is likely that another tribal group with a warlike tradition would have led the 1733 slave revolt on St. John if the Aminas had not supplied the leadership. Drought and hurricane had reduced food supplies to starvation levels. The number of whites on St. John, including soldiers, was low compared to the number of slaves. Planter leadership, fearing a revolt, passed new regulations increasing already harsh penalties for "crimes." This resulted in making many uncommitted slaves fall in line behind the Amina leaders.

Two lessons learned in the 1733 revolt on St. John were applied on St. Croix when St. Croix was settled shortly thereafter: (1) Avoid a concentration of slaves from one African tribe. (2) Prevent food supplies from dropping to starvation level.

favorable, the boat or raft was pushed in the direction of Puerto Rico. There were one or more concentrations of former St. Croix slaves living on the east coast of Puerto Rico ready to provide assistance. The Puerto Rican Government frequently refused to return a run-away slave to his St. Croix owner.

More information is being made available on which African nations were the origin of St. Croix slaves, details of their lives in Africa before coming to St. Croix, and life on St. Croix. Records kept by Moravian Missionaries are being found to be most valuable. Some of the information documented by the Moravians is difficult to find elsewhere and the Moravians are regarded as the most unbiased reporters of the African scene.

The study that scholars rate highest was made on St. Croix in the 1770's by the Moravian Missionary Oldendorp. His two volume study printed in German has provided source material to many African scholars. One of the most recent is Pauline Pope.

Pope lists the Mandingo Nation in the Senegal/Gambia area as the origin of the largest number of St. Croix slaves. The Ibo Nation, of eastern Nigeria, was second followed by the Watyi Nation located in the Togo/Benin area. The Amina and Ashanti Nations are listed fourth and sixth respectively.

The Oldendorp material has not been easily available to those developing their own African study materials as his study was written in German. This gold mine of information is being translated into English by Dr. Arnold R. Highfield of the St. Croix Branch of the College of the Virgin Islands, and by others. When the translation is completed and published, instructors in African history and customs will be able to glean their information from a primary source instead of having to depend on others to do this for them.

When John Heyliger bought St. George in 1769 he, his wife and child were the only whites on the estate. The Heyliger period, coinciding with the Oldendorp period, is a good time to study life in St. George.

Except for a sprinkling of Bosuls, the estate was almost evenly divided between Africans and Creoles. Creoles held most of the key spots as they were born on a Caribbean estate and had more opportunities to develop the skills needed on the estate. These skills were transferred by the apprentice system whereby a skilled craftsman took in a young man as an apprentice and trained him.

In some respects, St. George resembled a feudal estate. At the top of the ladder was the Governor General representing the Danish King. John Heyliger was the Lord of St. George—an owner who had almost unrestricted power over his workers.

The estate nobility was headed by the bomba, who was in charge of the field workers, and the manager who took care of the business and industrial operations.

The bomba was aided by another key man—the man in charge of the farm animals. If there was an outbreak of disease among the farm animals those stricken had to be replaced as soon as possible. And nothing caused a greater uproar than St.

George animals running loose in neighboring cane fields or provision grounds.

The St. George owner frequently took care of selling the sugar, molasses and rum produced, and purchasing and maintaining an inventory of the many items that had to be obtained from Europe or the U.S. At other times the actual buying, selling, and bookkeeping was done by a highly qualified assistant with the owner checking the books and store rooms from time to time.

A manager or superintendent supervised the "works." Under his supervision were the craftsmen who were the heart of the sugar industry—the blacksmiths, coopers, masons, plumbers, wheelwrights, carpenters, saddlers, kilnmen, and others who kept the wheels rolling and machines operating. Many of the craftsmen were "allrounders" or skilled in more than one craft.

Each estate had at least one man and one woman who assisted the owner and his wife. The man could be expected to be a highly intelligent individual who could successfully perform a variety of duties—a go-between for the owner, coachman, and butler. The woman supervised or prepared meals, kept clothes in order, and otherwise assured a well-run household. John Heyliger was evidently not as socially inclined as some of the other planters, as estate records show that he had only three household workers.

The first St. George worker homes were probably built in the area of the present worker homes as this would place them close to Mint Gut and the spring. The spring was located at the northwest corner of Estate St. George where St. George and Mint touch the southeast corner of Hope.

The Mint Village ruins and its cemetery can still be seen. Although Mint contained only fifty acres it had its own "works" powered by an animal mill and operated as a sugar estate for many years. It was later combined with 100 acre Mountain, and still later with St. George.

A St. George Village building was specially equipped and set aside as a "hospital." The sick were cared for by a herbalist between visits by a Danish doctor, when one was available. An estate was fortunate when it had its own herbalist and midwife.

The St. George Village bake oven had the misfortune of being in the path of a bulldozer when the Botanical Garden was being developed.

Many worker homes faced east into the prevailing wind. Cooking, eating, laundry, and other household activities usually took place under sheds situated on the lee side of the house. The houses served as windbreakers.

Soups and stews were often prepared as the clay "coal pot" (charcoal users) could accommodate only one cooking utensil. These coal pots were probably baked on the banks of Mint Gut in an African oven. Similar coal pots are still in use in Africa.

Everything on the estate revolved around sugar. The most undesirable work was done by field workers. The hardest work was done by the men and women classified "capable." In St. George the hardest work was "holing and banking"—preparing

the soil for cane seedlings.

"Holing" on St. George was more difficult than on many other estates as St. George soil is sticky when wet and bakes hard when dry. The St. George blacksmith was kept busy replacing worn out hoes. Other field workers did lighter work, such as manuring and weeding.

The cane seedlings, planted after the fall rains had started, began ripening around fourteen months later. Three crops were usually harvested from the new shoots that developed before the roots were dug up. The land then lay fallow for a season as bagasse (dried cane stalks), manure or lime were used for fertilization and soil conditioning.

A Christmas celebration provided a welcome interlude between crop planting time and crop harvesting time. Another celebration (Crop Done) was held after the harvest was completed, usually in July. Mules, donkeys, oxen and horses—and homes were decorated with flamboyants.

Harvest time was the high point of the year. The ripe cane was cut, stripped, topped, bundled, and taken to the mill. When the cane was growing on the St. George hillside it was loaded on racks strapped to the backs of mules or donkeys. Cane from the level fields along Centerline Road was loaded into carts which horses, oxen, or mules pulled to the mill.

The total number of estate workers was based on the number needed at crop time. This number was hard to estimate as St. George records show that five times as much sugar was produced in some years as in others. In recent years the price of sugar has ranged between six and sixty-two cents per pound. These fifty to one odds were known to all sugar planters. Many lost their estates by spending recklessly, hoping that a jackpot year would replace dissipated assets.

It is probable that most field workers hated to see a bumper crop. This meant that the bomba's whip cracked as extra effort was demanded of workers and farm animals. Old and young, weak and strong, men and women were pushed to the limit, or beyond, to get the cane harvested and processed before it spoiled.

Young children carried water from the spring to those toiling in the field and in the hot sugar factory where fires boiled away the water in the cane juice. The young, the old, and the infirm, gathered cane tops and guinea grass to feed the farm animals and drove them to and from the mill. A few elderly women cooked big pots of stew, while the coal pots that cooked individual family meals were set aside for the duration.

The shipping quality of sugar was important in determining its price after it arrived at the Denmark refineries. One of the most important St. George craftsmen was the sugar cook—the person most instrumental in the production of high quality sugar.

In the sugar making process, as water was removed from the juice by boiling, the syrup became thicker and thicker. In the meantime the impurities in the juice were removed and Bristol lime, wood ashes, and other agents were added when and if the

sugar cook felt they were needed to aid crystallization or that the resulting sugar would have better shipping qualities. At the point determined by the sugar cook that the best sugar would result, the syrup was poured into cooling flats.

The cooled syrup contained sugar and molasses. The mixture was put into big vats with holes in the bottom through which most of the molasses drained. The resulting brown sugar (muscavado) was packed into casks that were strong enough to protect the sugar while aboard ship en route to Europe.

Most of St. George sugar was shipped to Denmark where refineries removed the remaining molasses, leaving the sugar white.

Some molasses was consumed by estate personnel and a bit was mixed with guinea grass to give the farm animals a treat. Most of the molasses was converted into rum by another very important craftsman—the stillman who was in charge of making rum.

Competition was fierce between estates to determine who produced the best rum. Each estate had its own mixture of fresh cane juice, molasses, lemon and tamarind peel, or other ingredients which gave its rum a distinctive flavor.

Unfortunately, the formula used at St. George has not been found. The stillman tried to duplicate the taste and alcohol content of each keg of St. George rum. A rum whose taste and alcohol content did not vary brought a better price than a rum with a "pig in a poke" reputation.

The customers for St. George rum (most of them in the U.S., as the Danes chose aquavit) were protected against substitution by the Danish Government who insisted that each keg of rum or cask of sugar be branded. A St. George branding iron was given to the Botanical Garden by a member of the family owning St. George when the St. George sugar and rum operations closed down.

Food, the most important concern of millions of people throughout the tropical world today, was also the chief concern of the St. George worker. Its importance was recognized by the Danes after the St. John riots. Each child reaching ten years of age, by law, was given a small plot, usually 20' × 20', to be used for growing food.

Each estate set aside land for "provision grounds." Yams and other crops, planted when the rainy season began, ripened after Christmas. When the season was favorable, the food produced lasted several months, or until the yams began to sprout and the corn became wormy. Then the estate provisions were supplemented by rations "from the cask." The weekly ration was taken completely from casks of wheat flour, corn meal, salted fish, pork and beef, after the provisions grown on the estate were finished. The chief staple was salted herring and salted shad—the cheapest fish. It is still not clear why more cassava was not planted as cassava matured in the off season when supplies of yam and corn were getting scarce. During crop season quantities of cane juice, sugar, and molasses were consumed. Rum flowed freely during the

celebrations marking Christmas and the end of crop time.

The private plots allocated to individuals were carefully tended. They provided the vegetables and herbs that, in the hands of a good cook, turned a few basic foodstuffs into savory dishes. Many kinds of peppers, chivel, and thyme, were used to flavor foods. Thyme, sweet marjoram, anise, and boiled mabi bark were added to sugar and water to produce a tasty beverage. Sorrel and guavaberry gave color and flavor, particularly to Christmas beverages. The Christmas celebration did not extend through Three Kings' Day as it does today. Three Kings' Day was imported from Puerto Rico in recent years.

In the rainy season uncultivated plants sprang up, such as whitey mary, bowar, purslane, centipede plant, and kallalo. These were picked and put into the pot, along with pond crabs, fish and any meat available to make kallalo—a Cruzan "Soul Food."

A good working arrangement seems to have prevailed while St. George remained a 150 acre estate and the owner, John Heyliger, lived on the estate. The close bond weakened somewhat when the size of the estate and number of workers doubled after Sally's Fancy was purchased.

There was undoubtedly an era of intrigue before new relationships within the estate nobility were sorted out. With two bombas, for example, who was the head bomba? The competition probably involved everyone except the field worker who remained in his usual place at the bottom of the pecking order.

When the British occupied St. Croix for the second time in 1807, the sugar formerly shipped to Denmark was shipped to England where, for a combination of reasons, it brought a higher price than in Denmark.

Most of the rum produced in St. George, and some of the sugar, was sent to the U.S. to be exchanged for casks of flour, meal, fish, pork, beef, barrel staves and other items needed on the estate.

Corn was produced on St. George and in the U.S. During this period of high prices for rum and sugar, more money could be made buying corn in the U.S. than by raising it in St. George. Land in St. George that had been producing corn was converted to cane. Sugar production throughout St. Croix reached its peak in 1812.

Reducing the amount of food grown in St. George with the expectation that it could be bought cheaper in the U.S. was a calculated gamble as relations between the U.S. and England were severely strained. England had been seizing U.S. ships on the high seas and taking away sailors, who were supposedly British subjects, to assist in the bitter struggle against Napoleon.

The U.S. declared war on England in 1812 and the calculated gamble was lost. The food chain was broken. The St. George slaves paid for the mistake as food supplies fell to starvation level and the death rate shot upward. Several St. George slaves ran away.

Running away was far more dangerous than in earlier years. Trees and underbrush that formerly provided sanctuary had

been cleared out to make charcoal or cut down for lumber. The run-away could not hide out while he awaited favorable weather and obtained a good boat or raft. Many of those who left hastily did not reach Puerto Rico.

The quality of life for the slave depended on a number of factors, one of which was the amount of land on the estate that was not in cane. When a slave had a parcel of land he could garden, space for a pen for pigs, chickens, or other farm animals, and the estate had an area filled with trees that could be used for lumber, charcoal, or were in fruit trees, a slave had an opportunity to sell enough produce to purchase his freedom or, at a minimum, made cooking and other daily activities easier. The amount of land set aside for provisions and its fertility often determined whether food supplies were fully adequate or were in short supply.

There was great improvement in St. George when, in 1815, St. George and Hope were combined by Governor General Oxholm. In his 1815 report, Oxholm suggested to planters that they put more land into provisions. Records show that Oxholm followed his own advice.

Before St. George and Hope were combined, Hope land was used for cane cultivation and for other uses. After the estates were combined, cane cultivation ceased in Hope, the windmill was shut down and workers were gradually transferred to St. George. This was a great advantage for the workers as land not in cane cultivation was usually an asset to the workers.

The gains Oxholm brought to the St. George workers were lost when Oxholm returned to Denmark in 1816, where he remained until he died in 1827. Absentee landlords usually caused a drop in the living standard of slaves as most managers tried to improve their financial status by cheating the owner or cheating the workers—usually a combination of both. Records show that for the first time cane was planted on the top of St. George Hill.

Cane cultivation in Hope was started again. We have no way of knowing how much of the additional money, brought in by an increase in the amount of cane cultivated, reached Oxholm in Denmark. We can be sure, however, that the changes resulted in less food and fuel, and reduced the prospects for St. George workers becoming free men.

St. George was leased to Oxholm's oldest son, Frederik, in the early 1830's, but Frederik was often away. Inspectors were sent by the Royal Loan Commission to St. George in 1836, 1838, 1842 and 1846. The reports they submitted give us considerable information on the workers, buildings, equipment and farm animals. As in almost all reports on slaves submitted by investigating Danes, the St. George workers were described as a happy group with few problems.

However, it is obvious that everything was not smooth and quiet in St. George. The estate was buzzing with the latest facts or rumors concerning how the slaves on nearby British Islands had been freed and how many slaves from St. Thomas

and St. John were paddling doors over the short distance from St. John to freedom in the British Virgins.

The Governor General, "Massa Peter" von Scholten, was leading efforts to educate slave children so they would be ready to accept responsibility when freedom, just over the horizon, reached St. Croix. A new Moravian center opened in Midlands attended by the Governor General and many St. George workers.

Eight new schools were built and turned over to the Moravians to operate, including Diamond which was conveniently located across Centerline Road from St. George.

There were many planters on St. Croix who did not approve of the Governor General's activities. One of the opposition leaders was Frederik Oxholm, the owner of St. George.

Frederik was one of the most influential St. Croix planters, due to the strategic position of his brother Valdemar, close to the Danish throne. This close relationship is shown when the Oxholm children were made members of the Danish nobility in 1840, and by Frederik's appointment as Governor of St. Thomas.

Events reached a climax in 1848 when von Scholten took on his own shoulders the responsibility for freeing the unfree in the Danish West Indies. Von Scholten doubtless intended that this would be done peacefully as it had been done in the nearby British Islands.

This hope was dashed. Those freed "trashed" vast amounts of property, including homes, "works," and cane fields of some of von Scholten's closest friends. They upbraided von Scholten so bitterly he ordered Frederik to return from St. Thomas and named him Acting Governor General. Von Scholten then left for Denmark, never to return—a broken man rejected by blacks and whites.

With von Scholten out of the picture, Frederik and other planters who had opposed emancipation now tried to reestablish the conditions that existed prior to emancipation. This did not prove too difficult, as most of the employment on St. Croix was in the sugar industry. Many estates became bankrupt, putting owners and workers alike into the ranks of the unemployed, so a big labor surplus existed.

Frederik and other estate owners were able to charge the former slaves enough for food, shelter, clothing and medical attention to equal the amount paid in wages. There was little change in the overall situation. The job market was kept overflowing with the unemployed. St. Thomas had a big increase in the number of ships calling. New workers were needed to service the ships. When surplus St. Croix workers began to go to St. Thomas, a passport system was hastily introduced to keep the unemployed at home. The new jobs were filled by the unemployed from other islands.

The use of ploughs in soil preparation and cane cultivation, and the use of steam mills for processing cane, rapidly increased as planters tried to reduce the amount of hand labor required. The St. George records, however, do not show a

noteworthy drop in the total number of workers on the payroll. They show only that the number of younger workers dropped and older workers increased. This could be expected as the younger workers left the estate hoping to improve their prospects. Older workers, the aged, and infirm, remained on the estate, as Danish law required the estate owner to care for his former slaves in their old age.

General dissatisfaction over the lack of any marked improvement in conditions exploded suddenly in the "big trashing" of 1878. Compared with neighboring estates, only Estate Plessen suffered greater damage. St. George smoke and popping of rum casks could be seen and heard miles away as buildings, "works," provisions and 70 acres of cane were "trashed."

There were approximately 70 sugar estates on St. Croix in 1878 producing sugar, molasses and rum. Some were so deeply in debt they could not obtain replacement equipment and supplies from Denmark, England and the U.S. unless a shipment of sugar, molasses or rum accompanied the order. Estates with burned cane fields were helpless, as they could not produce sugar, molasses or rum for export until a new crop of cane had matured. In the meantime, estate payrolls and other overhead expenses had to be met. Thus, more estates were forced into bankruptcy, adding more owners and workers to the already swollen mass of unemployed.

St. George was able to avoid bankruptcy. Records show a steam mill was brought over from Estate River and installed. There were doubtless other steps taken to get the estate back into production as rapidly as possible. However, although not suspected at the time, the death knell for St. George was sounded in 1878. This was the year the first giant sugar central began operating in St. Croix.

Estates that had faced low prices, drought, hurricane, fires, epidemics among farm animals, the "little trashing" and the "big trashing" now faced a new threat. As many small grocery stores find themselves unable to compete with supermarkets, the small sugar estates had difficulty competing with the giant sugar centrals who, like supermarkets, used a variety of techniques to eliminate smaller competitors.

One by one the small sugar "works" closed. St. George was one of the last, if not the last, of the 70 odd small steam operated units producing muscavado sugar, molasses and rum. By 1916 St. George had closed all of the five units comprising the St. George "works."

In retrospect, it is only natural that St. George should be the last of the small, independently owned sugar estates to throw in the sponge. St. George had two major components, an agricultural unit and an industrial complex, each of which was outstanding when compared to other estates.

The agricultural unit was the plantation that specialized in cane but also grew food crops and had a big collection of farm animals. Since St. George was selected as a farm site by Indians and Europeans, and finally as the site of a Botanical Garden, its

agricultural possibilities are obvious.

St. George stood head and shoulder above neighboring estates as an industrial complex. There were very few sugar estates which, like St. George, had four types of mills—animal, wind, water, and steam. There was probably no other sugar estate on St. Croix with all four types of mills and which also had a lime kiln and a blacksmith shop.

The most important component of the St. George "works" was the mill that, instead of producing meal from corn or flour from wheat, extracted juice from cane. The four types of mills used in St. George were powered by energy produced in St. George, energy furnished by animals, wind, water, or locally grown plant fuel. The wind mill had an animal or water mill on a standby basis in case the wind died or the wind mill, for some other reason, was not able to operate.

The second industrial unit was a sugar processing factory that converted the cane juice to sugar and molasses and packaged them for shipment overseas.

The third unit was the distillery that made rum and packaged it for overseas shipment.

St. George had two smaller industrial units that served St. George and nearby estates—the lime kiln and the blacksmith shop. If a neighboring estate needed lime for mortar (used in construction before cement was invented), to sweeten sour soil, to dust cotton, or for other uses, arrangements were made to have the lime made in the St. George lime kiln.

The highly skilled St. George blacksmith used his ingenuity to make broken metal parts operable again, or to cast a new part in a mould prepared in the blacksmith shop. This kept machines operable, thus avoiding a long shut down period while a replacement part was obtained from Europe or the U.S.

Industry, large or small, cannot operate effectively without skilled personnel. It is obvious that the St. George craftsmen were outstanding to make St. George the last of the independent sugar "works" to throw in the sponge. It is remarkable that little St. George on tiny St. Croix was able to hold its own in hardnosed competition with other areas of the world for almost two centuries.

St. George had to compete with the Bethlehem Sugar Central. Bethlehem won and St. George shut down its "works." Then the cane produced in St. George was hauled to a nearby railway running to Bethlehem. Bethlehem bought St. George shortly thereafter and the St. George workers were transferred to the Bethlehem payroll.

The 1920's had a cycle of dry years capped by a hurricane in 1928. St. George had weathered similar calamities in the past by juggling muscavado sugar, molasses and rum to take advantage of a good market in any one of these three products, and through income obtained from the lime kiln and blacksmith shop. The Bethlehem Sugar Central did not have the same flexibility, as it produced only a brown granulated sugar. Bethlehem closed in 1930 when its stockholders refused to put up new funds to cover losses incurred. Suddenly, at the

bottom of the worst depression of modern times, the St. George residents lost their jobs.

Finding other employment on St. Croix was almost hopeless. The Virgin Islands Government was helpless and the United States Government was still to develop New Deal, New Frontier, and Great Society programs. Taxes collected dropped to less than \$150,000 a year on St. Croix as sugar exports were reduced to a trickle. This was also the period when the sale of rum, a traditional St. Croix income producer, was prohibited.

Emergency Red Cross food supplies helped while the St. George residents, with no money to pay for food or other imports, concentrated on becoming self-sufficient as rapidly as possible. This was possible in 1930 as many had agricultural skills and there were still skilled craftsmen who could make or repair most of the essential items needed.

Soon, as in the days of the Arawaks, the English and the French, those living in St. George became largely self-sufficient, producing their food and meeting most of their other needs.

A St. George resident recalls how they ate so much corn they grew tired of it. However, no one starved; those who had, shared with those in need. The bonds formed were so strong that today when two strangers meet they soon determine if two "born here" have met.

Conditions gradually improved as Bethlehem reopened, some sugar estates were parcelled out, and the New Deal came to St. Croix. The latter was most welcome. Cruzan humor tells of the little girl kneeling by her bed who prayed: "Thank you God for father, mother, brother, and for the New Deal bacon, butter, flour, and cheese." Climbing into bed she suddenly sat up and added, "and the ham."

The sugar factory, lime kiln, and blacksmith shop began disintegrating when the St. George "works" shut down in 1916. The blacksmith shop remained largely intact, as its fireproof roof was made of tiles.

The homes of the farm workers did not begin to disintegrate until St. George was converted to a cattle ranch after the Bethlehem Sugar Central shut down, for the first time, in 1930. The walls of the structures were held together by a mortar made of lime from the lime kiln which was mixed with molasses or other liquids. The roofs were of shingles or galvanized metal.

The roofs rusted or rotted away exposing the walls to the rain as the unemployed St. George residents found employment elsewhere or emigrated to the United States. Rain washed the mortar away and the walls began to collapse. Some homes had disappeared when the Village was donated to the Botanical Garden. Others were in varying stages of disrepair.

Archaeological Heritage

Caribbean archaeologists have two areas of interest—pre-Columbian, which deals with Indian history and culture—and historical, which involves Indian history and culture and the history and culture of all other Caribbean inhabitants. St. George comprises both areas.

The St. George Indian Village is of great interest to the pre-Columbian archaeologist. Its area, as listed in our National Register of Historic Places, starts west of the St. George spring and extends east through the Botanical Garden to a point slightly east of the blacksmith shop. It also extends south of the worker homes for a short distance. This area is larger than that covered by any of the other ninety-five Indian Villages on St. Croix.

A considerable amount of searching in St. George for Indian artifacts has been done. The most prolific of the early diggers was Folmer Andersen, the administrator of the Bethlehem complex of factory and plantations when that firm owned St. George. Workmen were instructed to preserve any artifacts that were turned up as the fields were cultivated. Other workmen dug for artifacts in likely places.

A few of the thousands of articles in the extensive Andersen collection are on display in the museum in the Steeple Building in Christiansted. Andersen considers St. George pottery superior to that found in other Indian Villages. He believes that the Arawaks baked their pottery in an Indian "oven" situated on the banks of Mint Gut. He writes:

Salt River outside which Columbus anchored on his second voyage, and where his landing party had an encounter with the Indians, has always been considered the richest Indian settlement in St. Croix, but I am inclined to regard the site at St. George of the greatest interest.

St. George artifacts are among the Draper Richards collection which was recently made available for display in the Frederiksted Fort Museum. There are others who have collected in St. George who have not made their artifacts available to the general public.

Trained historical archaeologists explored St. George for the first time in the summer of 1976 when a team of archaeologists

employed by the Government of the Virgin Islands, assisted by St. Croix students, sank two small pits in the northwest corner of the Botanical Garden.

Historical archaeologists are interested in St. George as the St. George Village is possibly the only place on St. Croix where African slaves built their homes in an area that was covered with Indian homes at an earlier period. French maps show that an English Sugar Works may have been located in the same area. So it is possible that a 17th Century ceramic fragment, clay pipe, bottle, or some other artifact will be found that would substantiate that St. George was farmed by the English and French; or that a fragment of a coal pot will be found with a design or marking that can be traced to an African country using the same design today. Virgin Island Archaeologist Gary Vescelius writes:

By excavating at "historic" sites, archaeologists can recover various kinds of information that can be used to round out the historic record in a number of important ways.

The rich St. George archaeological heritage suggests that many projects could be explored by Botanical Garden members interested in archaeology or ceramics. As volunteer workers developed blisters and sore backs clearing away trash and stones so that mowers could operate, a junior member found the hilt of a Danish Militiaman's sword that serves as the Botanical Garden logo. An Arawak stone ax, Danish coins, and many articles fashioned in the village blacksmith shop were also found. School children have picked up many pieces of Indian pottery and 18th and 19th Century European ceramics.

A collection of St. George artifacts could probably be made by requesting private collectors to donate some of their St. George artifacts to a small Botanical Garden museum, and by organizing programs to mine the St. George soil—so rich in archaeological treasures. In addition, since there is evidence that both the Indians and the Africans made pottery in St. George, the practicality could be explored of producing pottery in Indian and African "ovens" for sale in the Garden gift shop or even to museums scattered throughout the world, if pottery of appropriate quality results.

Structural Heritage

The structures in the Danish/African Village were in varying stages of disrepair when they were donated to the St. George Village Botanical Garden of St. Croix. The roofs had not rotted or rusted away on two row houses and the structure used by the manager as they were never abandoned. The two row houses were immediately made a part of the Garden infrastructure. Some restoration principles are being followed as the manager's house is being converted into living quarters under the overall supervision of a historical architect.

Many structures had partial walls. Some of these walls were cleared away, along with cook-sheds, out-houses, brush, rocks and other debris that might interfere with lawn mower operation.

Other walls were stabilized by workers studying masonry under the Comprehensive Education and Training Act (CETA). These CETA workers partially or wholly renovated several structures under the overall guidance of an historical architect and also built rock walls that improved Garden landscaping.

Two structures were renovated by Garden members. Other members sponsored facilities, provided equipment, aided the Garden planting program or otherwise contributed to Garden development. The plaques scattered throughout the Garden, and the plaque listing lifetime Garden members, identify most of those who contributed \$500 or more.

Some of these benefactors, including many retirees, had craft skills that were utilized in the maintenance and construction of facilities, or talent that was effectively used in fund raising activities. It was not unusual to see a Botanical Garden president smeared with grease after repairing a lawn mower or heading a cleanup detail that took over after paying guests at a fund raising activity had returned to their homes. The landscape gardener pulled more weeds than any other Botanical Garden member.

Friends in the business community and in government provided personnel and equipment that aided in road and parking lot construction, landscaping, and installation of water and power facilities.

The "pay as you go, do it yourself" policy was suspended

long enough to raise funds for the construction of a meeting area, office and storage space, library, and kitchen by selling bonds to Garden members. A Garden member, an architect, designed at no cost to the Garden a soaring Great Hall whose architectural characteristics harmonized with the other structures in the Danish/African Village. Wide galleries linked the soaring Great Hall to two row houses formerly used by farm families.

This inspiring administrative headquarters was dedicated in December 1977. Since then it has been used for an increasing number of Botanical Garden meetings; meetings held by other social or scientific organizations; for weddings and wedding receptions; for funerals and memorial services; and for concerts, fashion shows, dinners, dances, fairs, plant sales, and other fund raising events.

Botanical Garden financing of new projects, involving the restoration or preservation of the priceless St. George structural heritage, could strain a budget already committed to bond reduction, bond interest payment, and meeting the costs inherent in Garden operation and maintenance. Any new outlays have to be carefully compared to the estimated additional income that would be provided by the new dues-paying members who would be attracted by the new restoration and preservation programs, and by the increase in donations received from the greater number of visitors attracted.

Fortunately, all heritage restoration and preservation does not have to cease until the Garden pays off its bondholders. There are foundations, trusts, scientific societies, and government agencies actively searching for worthwhile restoration and preservation projects to sponsor. The priceless St. George structural heritage includes structures built by Arawaks and possibly by Caribs and other Indians, and by the many Europeans whose flags flew over St. Croix, aided by those brought involuntarily to St. George from many African nations and tribes.

Unfortunately, all of the structures that existed on the site of the Botanical Garden before 1733 have disappeared. It is believed that all of the structures built on the site before 1800 have also disappeared—such structures as the original “works” powered by an animal mill that was located south of the present day parking lot and the original slave homes with their grass roofs, mud walls, and dirt floors. These crude houses also served the English indentured servants and French engagés who worked in the fields alongside the African slaves during the English and French occupations.

The sugar and rum factory; the dam, reservoir and water mill; one of the two village bake ovens; the lime kiln; many homes of workers; and the homes of the manager and foreman still exist in varying stages of disrepair.

The restoration of an animal mill, wind mill, sugar boiling shed, or the sugar and rum factory would probably not attract foundation, trust, scientific society or government agency support, as similar structures have been or are being restored or reconstructed in Estate Whim by the St. Croix Landmarks

Society. It is highly likely, however, that projects such as the restoration and preservation of the house and furnishings of a slave family, or the restoration and preservation of one of the existing worker homes and its furnishings, would be seriously considered by those who establish restoration, preservation, and cultural standards for foundations, trusts, scientific societies, and government agencies committed to the preservation and restoration of cultural and historic resources.

It should not be difficult to obtain funds for restoring Indian structures as the St. George Indian Village is listed in our National Register of Historic Places. Funds for the restoration and preservation of structures in the St. George Danish/African Village would likewise be easier to obtain if it—like many former English, French and Spanish Villages now a part of the United States—is listed in our National Register of Historic Places.

Zoological Heritage

The St. Croix animal heritage is so limited that one cannot buy in a St. Croix market today the meat of any animal that is native to St. Croix.

Only one large animal, the iguana, roamed St. Croix before the Indians arrived. A few iguana still inhabit St. Croix. The Indians brought with them the agouti, hutia, and the barkless dog. The Indians obtained their protein from these animals and from birds and landcrabs; crayfish, eels and fish that lived in Mint Gut; and the many seafoods obtained from the nearby ocean.

It is doubtful that the Botanical Garden membership will ever attempt to restore the iguana, agouti and hutia (if he still exists). If one or more Mint Gut pools are kept filled with water in times of drought, many of the original Mint Gut inhabitants could be restored.

One species of crayfish reappeared in such quantity in 1974 that a local fisherman was seen gathering them with a net. Both crayfish and gobies were seen by school students following the heavy rains in the fall of 1978.

A more feasible Botanical Garden project would be a program designed to arrest the steady decline in the St. Croix bird population. Mr. George A. Seaman, one of the closest observers of St. Croix birds, has provided the Botanical Garden with a list of some of the plants that provide food and shelter for St. Croix birds. Special plants for this purpose could occupy a prominent place on the Botanical Garden planting agenda.

Historical Heritage

Where is there a Botanical Garden elsewhere in the world located on an Indian Village; which had the flags of seven nations flying over it; which inherited the ruins of the homes and industries of a historic Danish/African Village and a wealth of native and exotic plants?

As this monograph of St. George was being compiled it was obvious that much more information on the people, plants and animals who lived in St. George lies buried in archives and libraries. For example, enough information can be found on the Heyligers, Oxholms, and Flemings to write a thesis on each family.

If the many opportunities afforded by the rich St. George heritage are exploited and publicized, the St. George Village Botanical Garden could earn additional recognition as one of the most unique Gardens in the Caribbean or elsewhere. The publication effort is already under way. The Botanical Garden monthly bulletin, *The Conch Call*, is including more and more information of botanical value. Ovide's *Natural History of the West Indies* will soon be available in the gift shop to those who desire a copy of this important publication.

It may be possible for the *Natural History of the West Indies* and *Priceless Heritage* to start a revolving fund that can be used to finance future publications the Botanical Garden may wish to sponsor.

Botanical Heritage

The Botanical Garden visitor soon becomes aware of the unique mixture of old and new plants—an outstanding Garden characteristic. Approximately 500 plant species were found *in situ* at the Botanical Garden. To these have been added exotic plants from many tropical areas. The two plants endemic to St. Croix and some native plants have been restored to the Garden.

The Garden has been artistically landscaped, taking advantage of its unique 19th Century sugar estate setting—possibly the only Botanical Garden in the world with such an interesting backdrop. Planting themes emphasize large beds of such colorful tropical plants as bougainvillea, poinsettia, hibiscus, frangipani, and single species of exotic tropical imports. The mass of plants lining Mint Gut, most of them native, have been left largely intact and pierced with garden walkways providing an opportunity for a stroll through a tropical forest.

Trees, native and introduced, highlight the Garden, beginning with an avenue of native royal palms lining the Garden entrance road. The Garden boundaries are a “Path of Gold,” provided by planted trees, all of which have yellow blossoms, strategically chosen so that some will be in bloom each season of the year. Plans are under way to encircle this golden avenue with rows of *lignum vitae* which, when in bloom, will provide masses of pale blue blossoms. Since *lignum vitae* is a slow growing tree, many of those involved in this project may never live to see the blue and gold vista that is envisioned. A tropical fruit orchard has been planted and a cactus garden started by individual Botanical Garden members.

Although 500 plant species were inherited by the Garden, it was soon obvious that many plants that formerly grew in St. George were missing, most important of which are the largest—the trees. Trees are the plants that attracted the attention of most early visitors to St. Croix—one of whom wrote in the 1670's (French Period):

Of the trees growing in the island some bear good fruits, which contribute to the nourishment of the Inhabitants; others are fit for Building. Joyners work or Dying. There are some also very successful in Medicine, and some which only delight the Smelling by

their sweet scents, and the sight by their verdant leaves.

As the identification of the plants in the Garden began, it became apparent that many of the inherited plants were those used by the Indians. These included trees that bore "good fruits," provided "Medicine" or were used for shelter or transportation. Since the Indians had only tools of bone or stone to hollow out canoes, they used the softest tree, the kapok, whenever a suitable specimen was available.

Both the Indians and Europeans used trees "fit for Medicine and Dying," but the most valuable trees to the Europeans were those used for "Building and Joyners work." The "Joyner" made furniture, cabinets, closets and chests.

The Spanish brought citrus and other trees. The English and French brought many trees, including the tamarind, flamboyant and thibet—fine specimens of which were growing in the Garden.

The Danish/African Period was a period of contrast. While many native plants became extinct when all usable land on St. Croix was stripped of its vegetation to provide more space for sugar cane, many new plants were brought in from Africa—medicinal plants in particular.

A short list of St. Croix plants was made by Father Labat, a Frenchman, as he described a visit to St. Croix around 1700, a few years after the French abandoned St. Croix. Labat came ashore with the crew of a passing ship who obtained a supply of fresh meat from the rapidly reproducing farm animals left behind by the French when they abandoned St. Croix.

A somewhat longer list was compiled by Freneau, an American who suddenly appeared after the American Revolutionary War had started. There were many who thought Freneau was a spy as he spent his time roaming throughout St. Croix ostensibly studying its flora and fauna.

The first comprehensive list of St. Croix plants was compiled by West in 1793 when valuable trees were becoming scarce—or even extinct—as vegetation was stripped from steep hillsides to provide more space for sugar cane. The areas of St. Croix still in trees were shown on a Peter Oxholm map. The map also shows that the area around the mouth of Mint Gut was being used as an anchorage. This map and the 1671 Lapointe map showing a *Sucrerie des Anglais* (English Sugar Works) in the St. George area are reproduced on an insert to this monograph.

Early botanists listed several plants as endemic—found on St. Croix exclusively. Additional research reduced the number of endemic plants to two—the *Agave eggersiana*²⁰ and the *Malpighia pallens*, known on St. Croix as the "Touch Me Not."

Two native plants are being highlighted in the Garden—the royal palm and the *lignum vitae*. The *lignum vitae* is certainly the most interesting and possibly the most valuable of the native trees on St. Croix. Its credentials read like a *Who's Who* among trees. It was probably named "Tree of Life" after its bark was used to combat syphilis—the "Scourge of Europe"

20. Botanist Eggers was in charge of the Danish Militia during the 1878 "big trashing." While collecting over a thousand different plants on St. Croix he found a previously unreported agave. Other botanists honored the discoverer by giving his name to the newly discovered agave.

Botanists classify a plant as endemic to St. Croix if it is not found elsewhere. A native plant may be as old as an endemic plant, but it is found elsewhere. A third category — exotic / introduced — covers any plants introduced to St. Croix by water, wind, birds and other animals, or by people.

introduced by sailors accompanying Columbus. One of the heaviest of woods in the world, it was used when the toughest of woods was required. One widespread use was in gavels that demand order in courtrooms. It was widely used for bearings before metal bearings were invented because of its toughness and ability to lubricate itself.

Satinwood, used in handles for brushes and combs, was so valuable its roots, and those of *lignum vitae*, were dug up and sold by the pound as supplies were becoming limited. The favorite among the ladies was the aromatic "West Indian Cedar" used to line chests and closets. Other valuable native trees were the ironwood—the heaviest—and the mastic, a very important tree, as lives depended on it during ocean storms. The mastic was used extensively in wooden ships. The tough gre-gre (frequently spelled *gri-gri*) was used for beams, yokes for oxen and other heavy duty work, and its thick bark for tanning. Valuable native trees extinct or seldom seen today include the bay, locust, fustic, and the acajou of the mahogany family. Most botanists believe that the true mahogany was introduced to St. Croix around 200 years ago. Two other native lumber trees—the saman and the dog almond were found in the Garden.

Three of the largest trees growing in the Garden—kapok, sandbox, and jobo (hog) plum—were too soft to be widely used for lumber. The kapok, also known as the ceiba (canoe) and as the silk cotton, had a place in Indian, European, and African history.

The Indians who settled in St. George arrived, it is believed, in canoes made from the "canoe tree." In later years this tree was made into rafts by Frenchmen who chose the perils of the ocean to dangers that existed on the land. DuTerte records one occasion when the tree trunks were not allowed to dry before they were made into rafts. Those putting out to sea were not heard from again. Many slaves reached Puerto Rico on kapok rafts.

The sandbox was used in making canoes, whenever a kapok of the proper size and shape was not available. There are two young kapok trees in the Garden with the proper shape—a straight trunk stretching a long distance from the buttresses at the bottom to the first limbs. Oviedo described a kapok tree that grew so tall on the banks of a Mainland river that when it was felled it served as a bridge across the river. He also told how travelers slept restfully in hammocks beneath jobo plum trees.

A beginning has been made in developing the rich botanical heritage of the Garden. Many major trees have been identified. These are located on a map designed by a Garden member for unaccompanied walking tours. Some Garden "weeds" have been identified and specimens mounted. Ahead lies the basic botanical function of identifying all of the estimated 500 species in the Garden and mounting specimens for reference. Ideally, all plants that grew in St. George, but are not there now, should be restored.

It soon became evident that tropical fruits greatly attract tourists, many of whom did not realize, before visiting the Garden, that the tropics has its own apples, plums, cherries, berries, and other fruits—some of which resemble their Stateside counterparts only in name. Since catering to tourist interests is a major Garden objective, an exhibition of tropical fruits is usually arranged whenever organized tourist visits are expected.

Scattered throughout the Botanical Garden are fruits native to St. Croix; fruits brought in by the Indians; and fruits brought in under the flags of Spain, England, Holland, France, Knights of Malta, Denmark and the United States. A Garden member planted a fruit orchard of approximately twenty trees, and other fruit trees have been planted by individual Garden members.

During their varying fruiting seasons the genips, tamarinds, sour sops, and jujube and jobo plums (hog plums), produce enough fruit to supply a taste sample to organized tourist groups, if the fruit is not picked by unauthorized persons. Other Garden fruit trees supply fruits for demonstration. Garden members often supplement the fruits grown in the Botanical Garden with fruits grown in their own gardens and by fruits bought from stands selling fruits imported from other Caribbean Islands.

Among the tropical apples that were native or restored are the pineapple, sugar apple, maumee apple and the bell apple (passion fruit). Among those not yet restored are the custard apple, star apple²¹, manchineel apple²², and the *pomme cythere*.

The jobo (hog plum, yellow mombin), purple mombin, jujube and Netal plums are found in the Garden. Not yet restored are the governor's plum and the cocoplum.

Other fruits conspicuous by their absence are the bread-fruit, cashew, and cocoa. However, the interest that exists in tropical fruits suggests that the St. George fruit heritage will, in time, be completely restored.

The projects that will conceivably set the St. George Village Botanical Garden apart—and give it status and originality—combine its many heritages. One such combination—botany and history—is exemplified by the Oviedo Garden Project.

The Oviedo Garden Project

A few years after Columbus established the first Spanish settlement in the Caribbean, the King of Spain sent Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo to be in charge of the gold and silver mines in the New World. After traveling throughout the Caribbean and the Mainland for many years, Oviedo wrote a five volume *Natural History of the West Indies* which he, while on leave in Spain, condensed into a single volume.

The condensed history, published in Spanish, was translated into English by Professor Sterling Stoudemire and published in 1959. It became a collector's item on St. Croix with only a single copy in a St. Croix library and this copy

21. The star apple should not be confused with the star fruit—a Botanical Garden success story. The star fruit was introduced to St. Croix by a guest lecturer at a Botanical Garden meeting. Largely through the efforts of a Garden family, the star fruit is being popularized throughout St. Croix.

22. The highly poisonous manchineel apple resembles the apple grown in cooler climates. Thus the manchineel apple was frequently eaten by new arrivals, often with fatal results.

In early days the manchineel crab was an important protein source. The manchineel crab was penned and fed corn meal or another food until its digestive tract was clear of manchineel poison before the crab was cooked.

mysteriously disappeared. Professor Stoudemire wrote:

It was my belief that history "buffs" who cannot read Spanish would be those interested in the translation, but it has been the botanist and zoologist who have shown the major interest. I have tried to urge the Museo de America in Madrid to establish a garden of plants described by Oviedo.

This suggestion of an Oviedo Garden and a generous offer by Professor Stoudemire to permit the Botanical Garden to publish a new edition of his translation triggered the **Oviedo Garden Project**. Implementation funds have been provided by the Stanley Smith Horticulture Trust. In time, visitors should be able to purchase a copy of Oviedo's *Natural History of the West Indies* from the Garden gift shop and see the plants described by Oviedo growing in the Garden.

There are at least two combinations of the St. George botanical and structural heritages that should merit consideration for support by a foundation, trust, scientific society or government agency concerned with the restoration and preservation of cultural and historical resources. It would be logical to locate a restored Indian home adjacent to a garden planted in the Indian vegetables listed by Oviedo. Danish law declared that each slave child reaching ten years of age should be given a small garden plot to cultivate. It would likewise be logical to locate a child's garden adjacent to a restored slave's home.

A project of considerable local interest (and of increasing interest in the scientific community) is a study of the origin and use made of plants traditionally used for medicinal purposes. The Virgin Islands has been the scene of a lively discussion centering on the origin of the plants that the Indians and later inhabitants used as medicine. Some believe that a majority of the medicinal plants are of Caribbean origin, while others believe that a majority were brought from Africa—many by slaves who, faced with an uncertain future, brought seeds of plants that had served them in the past.

Cruzan herbalists do not have complete agreement on which plant cured which illness. The differences are compounded when the opinions of "off island weed women" are also considered. Thus, a number of "authorized" lists have been compiled.

One such list was published in a pamphlet entitled *Weed Women of the Virgin Islands*. The conclusions reached were based largely on interviews with Cruzan "weed women." It is possible that some foundation would support a package consisting of: the identification of the medicinal plants listed according to their place of origin; collecting and mounting specimens; planting and maintaining an herb garden; and making copies of the publication available for distribution by the library, or for sale in the gift shop.

The project that would attract large numbers of school children to the Garden is the use of the Botanical Garden in a Virgin Islands Environmental Studies Program. Such a project has been in operation for several years using the National

Park in St. John for field trips. The Board of Governors of the St. George Village Botanical Garden has notified the Virgin Islands Government that the St. George Botanical Garden can be used (as the St. John National Park is currently being used) for field trips by Virgin Islands students if the Virgin Islands Government wishes to sponsor an Environmental Studies Program on St. Croix.

Organized visits by thousands of school children to nature trails laid out in the Botanical Garden and their familiarization with the archaeological, botanical, historical and zoological heritage of St. George would certainly be an exciting way to gain the cooperation of students, teachers, parents and the community at large, in preserving and enhancing the priceless St. George heritage.

Danish-African Heritage

The members of the St. George Village Botanical Garden—the present day St. George Villagers—were bequeathed a “Can Do” heritage by their predecessors.

The rich 300 St. George acres were combined with above average managerial, agricultural and industrial skills to make little St. George competitive worldwide for almost two centuries. This combination also made St. George probably the last of the privately owned agricultural/industrial units on St. Croix forced to throw in the sponge by the giant St. Croix sugar centrals.

Mrs. Frances Christensen, an Honorary Botanical Garden Lifetime Member, is possibly the only person still alive who was born in the St. George Village and can remember seeing the St. George “works” in full operation. Her father was one of the skilled craftsmen who kept St. George competitive. Such men are worthy of emulation today—a source of pride to anyone who appreciates a “Can Do” heritage.

To date, Botanical Garden Presidents and Boards of Governors have followed the “Can Do” heritage set by their predecessors. In addition to providing pragmatic management, they have considered grease spots a badge of honor, collected garbage, and performed any other essential Botanical Garden work.

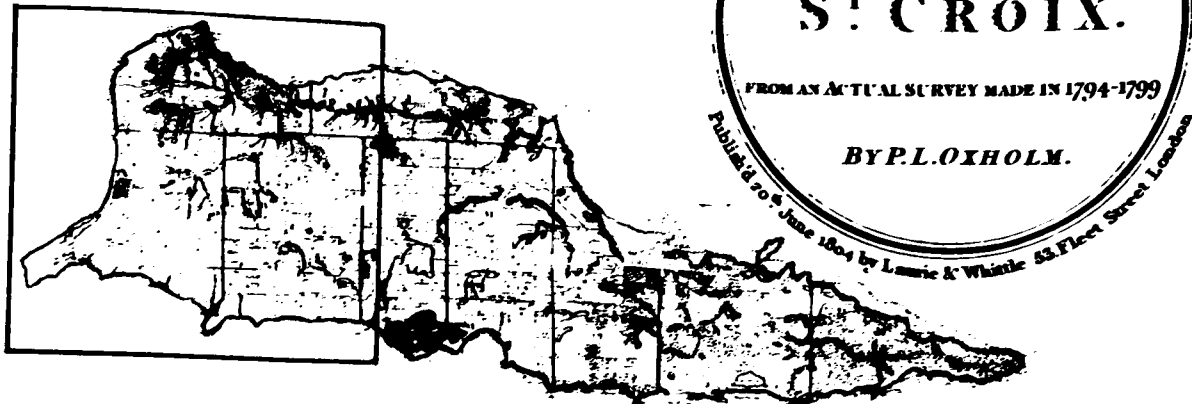
The Botanical Garden rank and file, individuals in business, in government, performing artists, and others, have responded to this dedicated leadership by sharing their time, talent and equipment or by faithfully supporting fund raising activities. This has enabled the Botanical Garden to progress rapidly without establishing a heavy schedule of fixed costs. If the totally unexpected occurs—as happened when the St. George Villagers lost their jobs in the midst of the worse depression of modern times—the present day St. George community, like their predecessors, would be able to become self-sufficient.

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Note: This map is referred to on pages 8, 9, 22, 24, and 49.



PLAN
OF THE ISLAND OF
ST. CROIX.
 FROM AN ACTUAL SURVEY MADE IN 1794-1799
 BY P. L. OXHOLM.
 Published on 6 June 1804 by Laurie & Whittle 55, Fleet Street London.

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Scale of 1 Dutch Mile or 24,000 Feet

