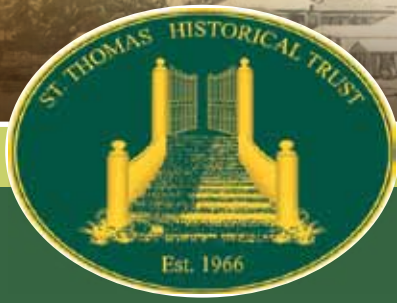


# The Welcoming Arms

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ST. THOMAS HISTORICAL TRUST

SEPTEMBER 2011



## OFFICERS

Ronald S. Lockhart

*President*

Bernice A. Turnbull

*Vice President*

Frank McConnell

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## DIRECTORS

Felipe Ayala, Jr.

Steve Bornn

Filippo Cassinelli

Charles Consolvo

Stephen Jones

Thomas Moore

Frances Newbold

Michael Sheen

Ray Szymanski

Pamela Reid

*Executive Director*

Mailing Address :

P.O. Box 6707

St. Thomas, VI 00804

Telephone :

(340) 774-5541 • (340) 690-5510

Email :

[execdirector@stthomashistoricaltrust.org](mailto:execdirector@stthomashistoricaltrust.org)

Website:

[www.stthomashistoricaltrust.org](http://www.stthomashistoricaltrust.org)

Physical Location

of Office & Museum:

Roosevelt Park West

St. Thomas

U.S. Virgin Islands

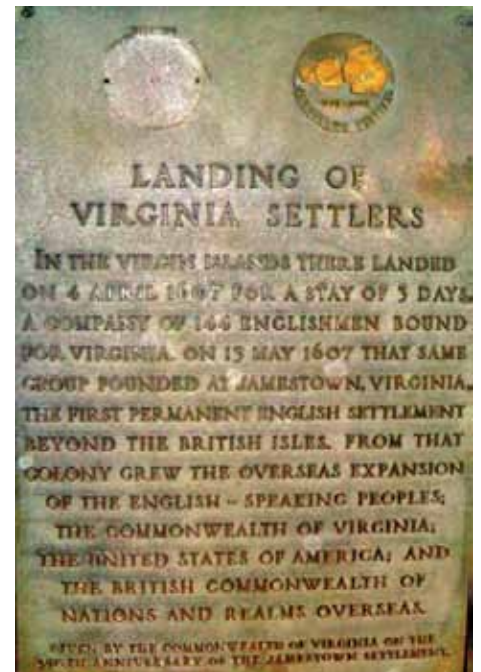
## Plaque Commemorating the Landing of Capt. John Smith Found Languishing in Fort Christian Basement



*Refurbished plaque in Emancipation Garden*

In 1957 the Commonwealth of Virginia presented to the US Virgin Islands a bronze plaque in commemoration of the 350th anniversary of the settlement of Jamestown in North America, the first permanent English settlement on that continent. The plaque was presented to signify the little known circumstance that Captain John Smith and his three ships stopped in the St. Thomas harbor on April 4, 1607 to collect wood, water and incidentally some sea turtles. The plaque was re-discovered by the Trust languishing in storage in the basement of Fort Christian. With the cooperation of the Virgin Islands State

Historic Preservation Office and the Historic Preservation Commission the Trust has had the plaque refurbished and the seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia, which had been pried off of the plaque, restored. The plaque has been mounted in Emancipation Garden, providing our community and visitors with information about the first documented contact between St. Thomas and what was to become the United States of America.



*Damaged Plaque*

## Our Mission Statement...

*To identify, protect & preserve the historical identity, structures and sites & cultural heritage of St. Thomas through education, advocacy and promotion.*





## Letter from the President

Dear Fellow Trust Members!

Here's another fantastic newsletter to update you on happenings at the Trust.

We are moving ahead on projects on Hassel Island. There have been some great new donations. The trails project is under way and I am sure Charles Consolvo will be reporting on this. We have established a 'cadre' of volunteer tour guides who have been busy giving tours to small groups. By the time the Park is ready to go full force with various tours, we will be ready as well

Fundraising Chair Filippo Cassinelli has been outstanding raising funds. I keep asking him where he was hiding before. It's a pleasure having him on board. We managed, along with the State Historic Preservation Office, to unwrap Ft Christian. Chair Steve Bornn got some donations for Public Works to tear down the construction fence and clean up the area and you can now see the Fort, rather than the unsightly fences.

The Step Street project is clearly underway. My Brother's Workshop has teamed up with us to start on the Bred Gade Step Street. One started, 45 to go!

We lost our Executive Director, whom we thank for all the work she did while here. We closed the gap with new Executive Director Pamela Reid, who has hit the ground running! The museum/store is opened on a regular basis under the leadership of Vice President Bernice Turnbull and her band of volunteers. As usual she always is in need of more.

New walking tour maps are on sale and a 2012 calendar will be available for the holiday shopping season with wonderful pictures of our historic town.

We have been busy and will continue to be.

Once again, thanks for your support!!

*Ronnie*

Ronnie Lockhart  
President

2011 Edition of the

### SELF-GUIDED WALKING TOUR OF THE ST. THOMAS HISTORIC DISTRICT

Now Available at the Trust  
Office,  
Roosevelt Park

Retail: \$12

SELF-GUIDED WALKING TOUR OF THE ST. THOMAS HISTORIC DISTRICT  
*Charlotte Amalie - Kongens Quarter*  
WITH VIEWS OF BLUEBEARD'S HILL AND DENMARK HILL



A PUBLICATION OF THE ST. THOMAS HISTORICAL TRUST



## Freeing the Fort From the Shackles of Bureaucracy

The past couple of months have been busy and successful ones for the Fort Christian Task Force of the St. Thomas Historical Trust. With a working relationship firmly established with Lorna Thomas, Director of the State Historical Preservation Office (VISHPO) and Daryl Smalls, Commissioner of Public Works (PWD), considerable progress has been made as evidenced by pictures and media coverage.

The light is getting brighter at the end of the tunnel with the goal of a partial re-opening of "Fort Chris" to the public. Any re-opening in the near future will be partial with the restoration work in progress but just enough to browse carefully and take pictures of the inside in a manner similar to other major restoration projects of such icons as El Moro in San Juan.

Fences have been removed with the exception of the construction staging area on the East side. The north and south grounds of the Fort are now fully accessible to the public for touching, feeling and taking pictures of the Grande Dame. Bollards have been installed to restrict vehicles. The interior courtyard remains off limits.

It is important to note that the Trust's role is strictly supportive. The approach remains a collaborative process to help get the Fort open, which is what everybody wants.

The process remains politically and legally delicate as the project remains in litigation. Steve Bornn, the committee chairman continues to work the program personally, lending help in managing crews and arranging for donations of material as needed.

"Public Works and associated road crews have been amazing: attacking the work with passion and pride in a diligent, professional manner," Bornn said. "They worked at blazing speed to get the initial interim beautification completed. The Governor and his team, including Director Thomas and Commissioner Smalls are to be commended in taking this initial step."

This kind of work, however, would not have been possible without the philanthropic commitment to and moral support of MSI Building Supplies and Sea Chest, in their contributions of material to the Ft. Christian project. Kudos also go to Frank's Lock & Key for their assistance.

My Brothers Workshop, the non-profit construction mentoring program, has been engaged to remove beams, steel scaffolding and other material which they may keep and use for their projects.

The government's stabilization and restoration project began in 2005 and was to end a year later. Disputes with the contractor that finally halted the project went into litigation earlier this year.



The Trust remains optimistic that work will resume soon and the Fort that once served as the jail will be completely freed.

Look for the iconic tower clock which was restored to be turned on soon. Stay tuned.



# Hassel Island Task Force

Following a meeting of the members of the Task Force at the end of May to review the status of our projects, it has been an active and interesting summer. On the initiative of the Trust's Executive Director, a number of organizations were contacted regarding the availability of tours for youth groups to Hassel Island. The response was substantial, and to date more than 150 youth have been taken toured Hassel Island. After a call went out to the membership for tour guides, we developed a cadre of a dozen members who have received training and have led tours.



First tour group from the Wesleyan Camp with tour guides



Students from the Chamber of Commerce Summer Program on Eco-tourism

None of these activities would have been possible without the transportation grant from the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands and the services of Alan Wentworth and his capable captains from Sea Tow.



Another Wesleyan group coming down a trail from Shipley's Battery

In addition to tours, we have had one group from White Bay LLC in June volunteer for shore clean-up, an on-going and onerous task with all of the debris that washes up on the island or is sometimes dumped by residents. Another group is scheduled for later in August.



White Bay Group with "everything including the kitchen sink"



Hassel Island Trail Network with major historic sites (from Sarah Dylla)

Fundraising Chairman, Filippo Cassinelli, worked to procure two major contributions from Diageo VI and the Vento Foundation, to assist in clearing, establishing and maintaining trails connecting all of the major historical sites on Hassel Island. These two grants, together with an Active Trails grant from the National Park Foundation have allowed us to begin cutting trails from Creque Marine Slipway on the north end of the island to Cowell's Battery on the south end, with spurs to Careening Cove (where a largely unknown lime kiln has been uncovered) and to Prince Frederik's Battery and the Garrison House.

In connection with the Active Trails grant, a grand opening of the new trail network is proposed for December, the exact date will be forthcoming. All of these trails are being cleared with the Bobcat purchased for the Virgin Islands National Park Service by the Trust thanks to a generous donation from the Prior family. The actual clearing operation has been accomplished by Alan Wentworth and his crew.



The newly revealed lime kiln is situated at the back of Careening Cove. This kiln was probably constructed by the British in 1801 to provide the essential ingredient for the mortar that was utilized to construct the extensive fortifications and quarters on Hassel Island.

Lime Kiln

## OTHER TASK FORCE ACTIVITIES

- Solicitation of bids for construction of a roof for the iron cistern behind Creque Marine Railway, a fence around the Head House, repairs to the slipway, repairs to the concrete dock by the Garrison House and salvage of parts of a typical Frenchtown house.
- An electrical permit has finally been received for the storage containers placed at Creque Marine Railway
- The document research in Denmark and the United Kingdom for the American Battlefield Protection Program grant has been completed. The baseline survey of Prince Frederik's Battery and underwater survey of the waters surrounding the Battery, as part of the grant, have also been completed, and draft final reports received.



# THE CREATION AND UTILIZATION OF IN THE CARIBBEAN DURING

by Charles Consolvo

The raising of black regiments to be a part of the British Army establishment was originally proposed by Lt. Gen. Sir John Vaughan in a letter to the Home Secretary on 22 December, 1794. This was, however, preceded by an earlier proposal apparently from the government offices in Jamaica, and the later use of freed blacks recruited from the Carolinas at the end of the American War.

General Vaughan was anxious to overcome the severe losses to European soldiers that he was experiencing in the West Indies, the majority of whom were being killed by the environment. In 1796 the governors of colonies in the West Indies were instructed to prepare proposals for raising five black regiments. The principal barrier to the raising of regiments of armed slaves as part of the British Army was the strong resistance by colonial planters to the concept of armed slaves.

Despite the order from Britain to raise five regiments in 1796, the assemblies of Barbados and Jamaica saw nothing but "ruin and death" in the proposal. This was certainly a possibility. There were as many as 75 actual or aborted slave uprisings in the British West Indies before 1837. This fear is further reflected by the action of the Assembly in Jamaica, which on learning that a mulatto regiment known as the Guadelupe Rangers had been transported to Jamaica after the evacuation of St. Domingo, requested its immediate re-embarkation.

Only two recorded instances of mutinous slave soldiers have been found. On April 9, 1802, the 8th West India Regiment mutinied, killing some officers and non-commissioned officers. The mutiny was suppressed after nearly 100 of the mutineers were killed. In the subsequent investigation, it was discovered that the black soldiers had been severely abused, and Colonel Johnstone, their commander was blamed for the mutiny and suspended. In 1808, some of the black soldiers of the 2nd West India Regiment mutinied and killed two officers. They were subsequently overcome by loyal soldiers of the Regiment, and seven leaders were executed.

The principle justification for using slaves and free blacks for the proposed regiments was the extremely high mortality rate of European soldiers in the West Indies. Many more soldiers died of fever or alcoholism than were ever killed in combat in the Caribbean. Assignment to the West Indies was extremely unpopular with the British Army, leading to a refusal to serve, as with Lt. Hector MacDonald who was superseded for failing to report for duty with the 4th West India Regiment. A posting to the West Indies also caused sudden rises in the sick lists and even mutinies in the army in Britain. Assignment to the West Indies became a form of punishment.

The data available stand as justification for the premise that the survival rate of black soldiers was much better than that for white soldiers. Between 1796 and 1802, on an annual average, white soldiers in the West Indies suffered a mortality rate of 41%, while black soldiers suffered only a 6% mortality rate.

Alcoholism apparently arose as a problem through sheer boredom and inactivity on the parts of both officers and men. According to St. Clair the Royals at Demerara, generally healthy otherwise, lost a great number by their own intemperance, indulging too freely in the "vile beverage" rum. He observes that "It has frequently happened that a widow has buried four husbands, but it is rare to meet a man who has survived one wife".

The British West India Regiments were established along the lines of the traditional British regiment with eight battalion or line companies and two flank companies for a total of one thousand men, for the 1804 establishment. It was expected initially that these regiments would be formed by enlisting free coloured and purchasing additional slaves from plantation owners to complete the manning requirements. This did not prove feasible, in part from the high prices the plantation owners demanded for their slaves. The difficulty in procuring slaves from planters led to the direct purchase of slaves, both from ships and from Africa. From 1797 to 1807, when Great Britain abolished the slave trade, the British Army was the single largest purchaser of slaves in the West Indies.

A statement of account dated 31 March 1801 for the purchase of 272 new negro men for His Majesty's 5th and 6th WIRs, showed a cost of about £114 per man, together with £771 for clothing and £270 for inoculation against smallpox. On 10 March 1801 the sum of £115 per man was expended for 40 Eboe negros.

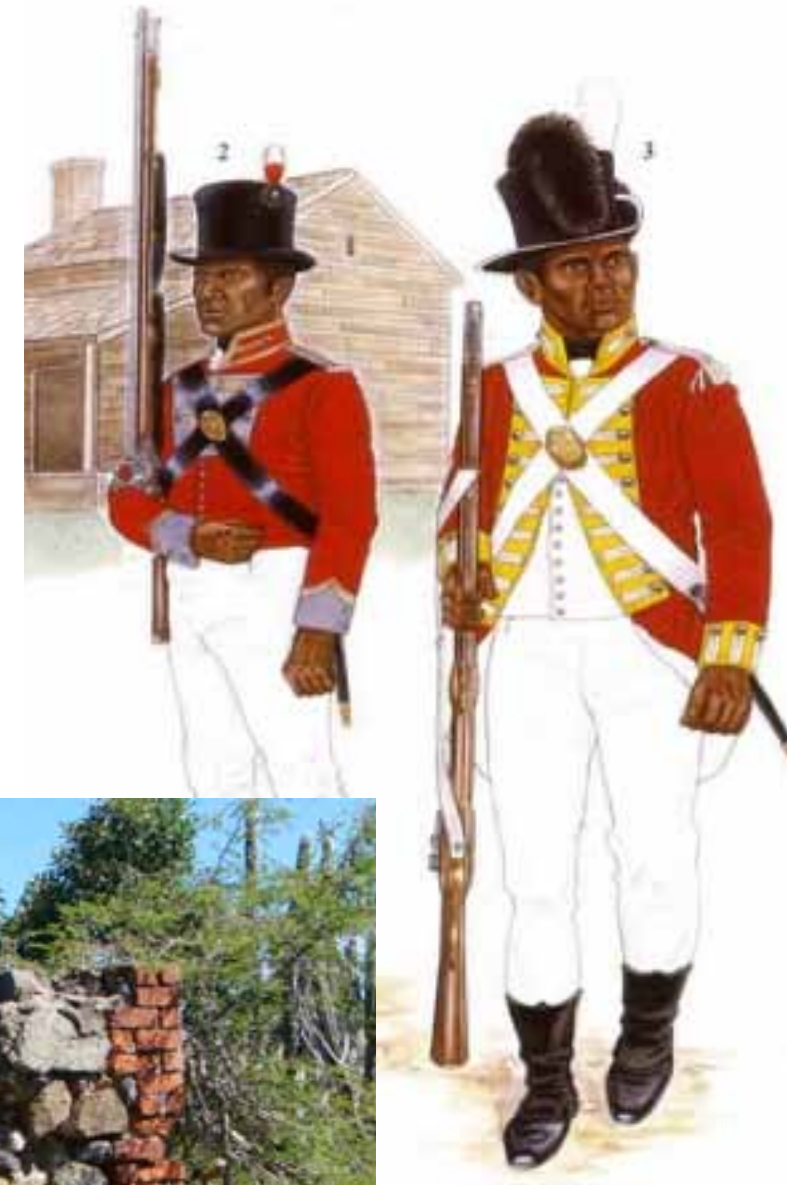
The black soldiers' status in the Army was equal to that of white soldiers for pay, rations, discipline, uniforms and medical care.

# BRITISH WEST INDIA REGIMENTS THE REVOLUTIONARY/NAPOLEONIC WARS

After an Act of Parliament in 1807 abolishing the slave trade, recruitment for the West India Regiments was assisted by a law which permitted the involuntary enlistment of slaves captured from an enemy or taken as prizes. This same Act of Parliament emancipated black slave soldiers. However they were still enlisted for life, unlike white soldiers who could enlist for seven years.

According to documents found in the National Archives, Public Records Office in London, in 1802 at least two Companies, one from the 1st British West India Regiment, and one from the 8th British West India Regiment were stationed on St. Thomas and lived in barracks on Hassel Island. The foundations of the barracks and associated kitchen are still in evidence.

During the capture of the island of St. Martin by the British in 1801, the bravery and discipline of the soldiers of the 8th British West India Regiment were highly praised by the commanding officer of the British Army in the Caribbean.



*Ruins of Barracks Kitchen being cleared*



*Button, 1st British West India Regiment*

## St. Thomas Historical Trust Upcoming Events

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**October 6th, 2011**

Annual Meeting  
Election of Board Members  
Location To Be Announced

**October 29th, 2011**

Fourth Annual Halloween Gala  
Oceana Restaurant  
SOLD OUT!

**Mid November 2011**

Lecture: Details To Be Announced

**Early December**

Hassel Island Trails Opening Celebration

**January 2012**

Renewal Time for Annual Trust Memberships  
Individual \$25, Family \$50, Business \$75,  
Sponsor \$100, Patron \$500  
Student (under 21) \$10.

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Fourth Annual  
ST THOMAS HISTORICAL TRUST  
**HALLOWEEN GALA**  
OCTOBER 29TH, 2011



"THE ROARING TWENTIES"  
Prizes for Best Male and Female Costumes



ST. THOMAS HISTORICAL TRUST  
P.O. Box 6707  
St. Thomas, VI 00804