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ABSTRACT

This fourth grade Virgin Islands history textbook written for young Virgin Islanders depicts the struggle of their West African ancestors as they moved from slavery to emancipation and beyond. The title of the text is the name of a freedom song used by Danish West Indian slaves in the fight for emancipation. Written from an Afro-West Indian perspective, 13 chapters focus on the early Virgin Islanders; Christopher Columbus' visit; economic reasons motivating Europeans to settle in the islands of the Caribbean; Denmark and the West African slave trade; Africa before the Europeans; the West African slave in the Danish West Indies; early struggles for freedom; the road to freedom; the Proclamation of 1847; after emancipation; the new struggle; readiness for change; and the St. Croix labor Rebellion of 1878. Each chapter contains discussion questions and supporting illustrations. A glossary and topical index conclude the textbook. (LH)

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A Virgin Islands History Textbook

Clear de Road



A Virgin Islands History Textbook

WRITTEN BY ROGER HILL
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All of the people named below were of great assistance in the process of producing this textbook on Virgin Islands history. Some, because of their special talents and skills, served in various capacities on more than one committee, as indicated by the numbers after each name and the key which appears below. Our sincere thanks go to each of the following:

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P R E F A C E

In 1979, a cultural heritage project called "Emancipation: A Second Look," was sponsored by the Virgin Islands Bureau of Libraries, Museums and Archaeological Services, and funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The purpose of Project Emancipation: A Second Look was to encourage study, research and public awareness of the Emancipation of 1848 and the Fireburn of 1878 in the Danish West Indies, which is now the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Although by NEH mandate the Project was designed to reach an adult audience, teachers and parents often asked for Emancipation: A Second Look materials and activities suitable for use by and with children. The Emancipation project produced a series of lectures and research papers on different aspects of the events of 1848 and 1878. The organizers of the project thought that the information in these lectures and papers could be made available to the students of the Virgin Islands in the form of a Virgin Islands history textbook. Thus, a proposal was sent to the Ethnic Heritage Studies Program of the U.S. Department of Education requesting support for a project to produce a Virgin Islands history textbook. The proposal was approved by the Ethnic Heritage Studies Program and this textbook, *Clear de Road*, is the result.

The production of *Clear de Road* was a cooperative venture between the Virgin Islands Department of Education and the Bureau of Libraries, Museums and Archaeological Services, made possible by a grant from the Ethnic Heritage Studies Program, Public Law 95-561, Title IX, Part E, Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. A

Spanish-language translation of the textbook has been prepared by the Caribbean Bilingual Education Service Center of Puerto Rico.

We hope that *Clear de Road* will fill the great and presently unmet need for updated and accurate information about the history of the Virgin Islands. We hope the reader will find *Clear de Road* interesting and inspiring and that this book will be well-used and indeed, well-loved.

Dr. Henry C. Chang
Director

July, 1983

CLEAR DE ROAD

by Marie Richards



Clear de road, ah'yo clear de road
 Clear de road leh de slave dem pas, we a'go fo' ah'we freedom.
 Hardship in de marnin', sufferin' at night
 No one ever help us, it is only Father Ryan.
 Dey bring we here from Africa, das we barnin' land
 Bring we ya in slavery, in de land of Santa Cruz.
 Clear de road, ah'yo clear de road
 Clear de road leh de slave dem pas, we a'go fo' ah'we freedom.
 We no want no bloodshed, not a drop of bloodshed
 What we want is freedom, oh gi' we ah'we freedom.
 Com leh ah'we go to town, leh we meet de Gen'ral
 Gen'ral name is Buddhoe, he gon' gi' we freedom.
 Clear de road, ah'yo clear de road
 Clear de road leh de slave dem pass, we a'go fo' ah'we freedom.
 Governor von Scholten, da Governor von Scholten
 Stretch he power till he crack, and he write down ah'we freedom.
 Clear de road, ah'yo clear de road
 Clear de road leh de slave dem pas, we a'go fo' ah'we freedom.

INTRODUCTION

► *Clear de Road* is a history textbook written for the students of the Virgin Islands.

► In this book we will travel to Africa, to Europe and to the West Indies of long ago, to tell the story of Virgin Islands history. As we tell it, parts of the story are seen through the eyes of children very much like you. They might have lived here or in Africa many years ago, or they could be living here even today.

► We invite you to meet Atabei and Manicato; Keniya and her mother; Agnes and Joseph and their parents; and Isaac and Violet, as well as all the other real people who were part of Virgin Islands history.

► We hope you will join them in their search for identity and freedom. We hope you will share their dignity and pride in themselves and in their African heritage. Last, but not least, young Virgin Islanders, we hope you will find this book exciting as well as useful, as you learn more about the roots of Virgin Islands culture.

Happy reading!

CHAPTER 1.

Early Virgin Islanders

The Taino People

Nearly 500 years ago, there was a young girl named Atabei with red-brown skin, shiny black hair and bright black eyes. Atabei lived with her family in a village on the island we call St. Croix. Atabei's people had a different name for St. Croix. They called their island Ay-Ay.

Atabei had a brother named Manicato. Manicato's name meant "strong and brave." Atabei was named for an earth goddess worshipped by her peo-

ple. Atabei's people called themselves the Taino. They lived in small villages in the Virgin Islands, but in Puerto Rico there were great Taino towns where thousands of people lived.

Who Came First?

The Tainos were not the first Virgin Islanders. The first Virgin Islanders lived here nearly 4000 years ago. Perhaps they came from South America and, over a period of many hundreds of years, they travelled up through the islands of the Lesser Antilles until they reached the Virgin Islands. Some stayed in the Virgin Islands and others kept going until they reached Puerto Rico, Hispaniola, Jamaica and Cuba in the Greater Antilles.

The Pre-Ceramic People

These early West Indians are sometimes called the "Ciboneys," but the correct name for them is the Pre-Ceramic people. This name means that they had not yet learned how to make or use *clay* pots. We know the Pre-Ceramic people lived at Krum Bay and at Magens Bay on St. Thomas, because we have found the things they left behind. They left clam and conch shells, as well as the bones of fish and animals that they ate. They ate birds, *iguanas* and lizards, too.

The Pre-Taino People

The next people to move to the Virgin Islands were farmers who knew how to make clay pots. They are known as the Pre-Taino people. They spoke a language called "Arawakan,"

and for this reason they are sometimes called "Arawaks." These early farmers found good farm land in the Virgin Islands. Some of their farms and villages were at Prosperity, Longford and Richmond on St. Croix and at Coral Bay on St. John. The Pre-Tainos baked and ate *cassava* cakes, as well as crab, fish, turtles and birds.

Over many years, the Pre-Tainos developed into what we know today as the Taino Indians.

Atabei's Village

If you visit the Salt River area on the north shore of St. Croix, you will be standing near the spot where Atabei and her family lived. Try to imagine what the Taino village looked like. Taino houses were made of wooden poles, with straw and palm *thatch*

roofs. The houses were placed in a ring around a central *plaza*, where community activities such as feasts and ball games took place.

Taino men had cut down the tall trees that covered the island, so they could plant crops. Taino women took care of the crops. The most important Taino food crop was cassava, also known as manioc. Taino farmers also grew corn, sweet potatoes, beans, *squash*, peanuts, peppers, cotton, tobacco and herbs. They had fruit trees bearing papaya, guava, soursop, avocado and mamey apples. The Tainos kept barkless dogs which they used for food. They had no horses, cows, sheep or goats.

The Taino people were also artists and traders. They created works of art out of wood, shells and stone. They

made designs by weaving cotton cloth. Taino trading *canoes* carried gold, wooden and ceramic bowls, foods, cotton, parrots, *spices* and salt. The Tainos were skilled at making and *paddling* canoes, and everyone was a good swimmer.

Taino Culture

Atabei and Manicato learned the Taino skills of farming, swimming, carving, weaving, canoe-making and many other things. All the girls and boys in the village learned from their mothers and fathers the Taino way of doing things. The way people do things is called their culture. Language, religion, music, art, dance, food and other customs are all a part of culture. Tainos had their own culture.

The Calina People

Life was good in the Taino village, except for one thing. There was another group of people living in the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. They called themselves the Calina. Today they are known as the Carib Indians. The Taino word for the Caribs was "caniba." Our Spanish word "canibal" and our English word "cannibal" came from this Taino word.

The Caribs came to the Greater and Lesser Antilles many years after the Tainos, but soon, the Tainos learned to fear the Caribs. Caribs were trained to be mighty *warriors*. The fierce Carib warriors raided peaceful Taino villages. The Caribs *captured* Tainos and made them work as *slaves*. Sometimes the Carib cannibals would eat the Taino *prisoners*.



Life in a Calina Village.

Calina Culture

The Calina had their own culture, different from Taino culture. In the Calina villages there were two types of houses: the carbet and the adjoupa. The carbet was a large house in the center of the village where all the men ate and slept. The adjoupas, built in a ring around the carbet, were smaller houses where the women and children lived. The Calina had no furniture except *hammocks*.

The Calina painted their bodies with a red dye made from crushed *annatto* seeds. The red dye protected them from sunburn, and helped keep the mosquitoes away. Calinas had *pierced* ears and they also pierced their noses and lower lips so they could wear jewelry made of bones, feathers, shell and wood. Calina women wrapped their ankles in tight cotton bands that caused their legs to swell. Married women wore a grass or cotton apron, but other Calinas wore no clothing.

The Calina were farmers, like the Tainos, but they also were hunters. They liked to catch crabs, which were roasted and eaten with a pepper sauce. They also ate shellfish, fish, lizards and birds. The favorite drink of the Calina was a type of beer made from sweet

potatoes. They liked to smoke and chew tobacco.

Like the Tainos, the Calina had feasts at which they sang and danced and played musical instruments such as the drum, the *rattle* and the flute. Also like the Tainos, the Calina thought that they looked very beautiful if their heads were flat in front and back. Calina and Taino mothers tied wooden boards to their babies' heads so their heads would grow into the flat shape that they *admired*.

The Calina and the Taino people lived in towns and villages throughout Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands until some time in the late 1500's. They were living here when Christopher Columbus arrived at Salt River in 1493.

THINGS TO TALK ABOUT

1. Who were the first Virgin Islanders?
2. Describe the houses that Taino men, women and children lived in. Compare them to the family living arrangements that we have today.
3. List the types of work done by the Taino people.
4. What is meant by *culture*?
5. In what ways did the Tainos and the Caribs differ?
6. What did the Tainos usually eat? Compare their food to what we eat today.
7. Why do you think the Calina and the Taino peoples left the Virgin Islands?



Clay pots made by the Calina people and used for cooking.



Columbus' second voyage to the "New World."

CHAPTER 2

Christopher Columbus' Visit

When Atabei and Manicato were growing up, none of the people who lived in Europe knew of the island called Ay-Ay. This was because boats did not often travel far from their home lands in Europe. Boats stayed close to home because many Europeans thought that the world was flat. They believed that if a boat sailed far away from land, it would fall off the edge of the world.

A Different Idea

In Italy there was a man who thought differently. His name was Christopher Columbus. Columbus read books and talked with people who knew about ships and the sea. We know he met sailors and *navigators* from Africa. For thousands of years, Africans had believed that the world was round. Columbus believed it too. He decided he could prove that the world was round.

A Way to India

Europeans knew that there were places on the *continent* of Asia, such as India, where silk, pearls and spices could be found. The journey by land from Europe to India was long and dangerous. Europeans wished there were an easier way to reach India.

Columbus thought that if he sailed

west he could reach India in the east. This way he could find the *riches* of India and, at the same time, he could show that the world was round. Columbus did not realize then that there was a great land *mass* to the west between Europe and Asia.

The Three Ships

Portugal and Spain were two European countries with strong navies. Columbus went to the king of Portugal, and asked for ships to make his *voyage*. The king of Portugal said "no" to Columbus.

Then Columbus went to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain. Queen Isabella was interested in Columbus' ideas, but several years passed before she gave Columbus three ships for his first voyage. The



Columbus and his navigators aboard the flagship Santa Maria.

three ships were named the *Niña*, the *Pinta* and the *Santa Maria*. The *Santa Maria* was the *flagship*. The navigator of the flagship was a black man named Pietro Alonzo Niño.*

The First Voyage

It took Columbus much longer than he had expected before he saw land. He had started from Palos, Spain, on August 3, 1492. On October 12, 1492, Columbus landed at an island in the Bahamas which he named San Salvador. He saw many other islands too. He believed that he was close to India. For this reason, he called the islands the Indies. He called the people who lived there Indians.

With the help of the Indians, Columbus found some gold and spices in

*There is more information on Niño in the Teacher's Manual.

the new land. He wanted to show these things to Queen Isabella, so Columbus returned to Spain. He took with him a few Indians. He also took some *unfamiliar* plants and *objects* made by Indians from wood, shells, gold and stones.

The Second Voyage

The King and Queen of Spain were happy that Columbus had found the Indies. They sent him on a second voyage to the new land. This time he had seventeen ships. They hoped that Columbus would bring back more gold and other riches.

On Columbus' second voyage, the first land he saw was the island of Dominica. He did not stop, but sailed north up the chain of islands in the Lesser Antilles. He dropped *anchor*

first at Mariagalante* and then at Guadeloupe, where he met Carib Indians who had some Taino prisoners. Columbus took several Tainos away with him. These Tainos showed him the way to Ay-Ay.

On November 14, 1493, Columbus sailed along the north shore of Ay-Ay. He named the island Santa Cruz, which means Holy Cross.

The Calina Meet Columbus

When Columbus' ships sailed into the bay at Salt River, St. Croix on November 14, 1493, there were no people to be seen in the village at Salt River Point. Perhaps they were hiding or perhaps they had moved or been chased away. We know there was a Taino village near Salt River and later

*See Teacher's Manual.



The Calina's first meeting with Europeans.

on, a Calina village in the same place. But Columbus' crew were never sure who lived in the village at that time, because they did not stay long enough to find out. They left in a hurry after a fight with some Calina men and wo-

men. It happened this way: There were 25 Spanish sailors on their way to shore in a small boat, to get fresh drinking water. They met a fishing party of Calinas in a canoe. They knew these people were Calina because both the men and the women carried bows and arrows. This was a Calina custom; Taino women did not usually carry weapons. There was also a Taino prisoner in the canoe with the Calina fishing party.

The boat full of Spanish sailors came between the Carib canoe and the shore. The Calinas tried mightily to paddle the canoe away from the Spanish boat. However, the small boat with the 25 sailors came closer to the canoe. Since they could not escape, the Calina attacked Columbus' men. They shot skillfully at the Spaniards

with their bows and arrows.

By the end of the battle, the Caribs had *wounded* two of the Spanish sailors and Columbus' men had captured a few of the Calina. When the battle was over, Columbus decided to sail north.

How the Virgin Islands

Got its Name

As Columbus sailed north, he came across a group of nearly fifty islands. They were fresh and pretty and green. These islands included the ones we now know as St. Thomas, St. John and the British Virgin Islands. The islands reminded Columbus of the European *legend* of St. Ursula and the Eleven Thousand Virgins, so he named them *Once Mil Virgenes*.

Vieques and Puerto Rico

From the Virgin Islands, Columbus sailed west for the island of Hispaniola. There was already a European *settlement* on Hispaniola from Columbus' first voyage. On his way, he saw Vieques, which he named Gratiota. Then Columbus reached a large island that the Indians called Borinquen. This was the island we call Puerto Rico. He stopped there, along the west coast of Puerto Rico, where some members of his crew went fishing. One of the crew members wrote in his *diary* that they all admired the beauty of this island.

Because of Columbus' voyages, the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, as well as all the other Caribbean islands, became known to the European countries.

3. When Columbus returned to Spain, what did he bring to Queen Isabella?
 4. Study the illustration on page 14 and describe the ships that Columbus took on his trip.
 5. Describe the battle between Columbus' sailors and the Caribs.
-

CHAPTER 3

Europeans Come to Stay

For over 100 years after Columbus' voyages, Spain was the strongest European country in the Caribbean. Then she was defeated in a great sea war against England in 1588. Spain lost many ships in the war, and her power began to *decline*.

The Many Flags of St. Croix

Other European countries started sending ships to the Caribbean. France, England and the Netherlands began settlements in many of the islands. The *settlers* wanted to find gold, spices, lumber and other riches. They also

wanted to grow sugar, tobacco and other crops for their *mother countries* in Europe and for themselves. The Europeans fought against each other to win *control* over the islands. In fact, many furious battles among the Europeans took place on the island where Atabei and Manicato had once lived.

The English Settle St. Croix

The English were the first white people to settle on St. Croix. They came in 1631 and started a *colony* where they grew crops of tobacco, *maize*, sweet potatoes and watermelons. However, four months after the English arrived, they were attacked by the Spaniards from Puerto Rico. The Governor of Puerto Rico, Enrique Enriquez de Sotomayor, sent a ship with soldiers to St. Croix. The Spanish soldiers cap-

tured the English settlers and took them away to Puerto Rico.

Governor Sotomayor did not want any other Europeans to settle on St. Croix. He thought that if other Europeans learned that the soil of St. Croix was rich and good for growing crops, then many people would move to St. Croix. He was afraid that a large *population* of other Europeans on St. Croix would take business and *trade* away from Puerto Rico, and would threaten the safety of San Juan.

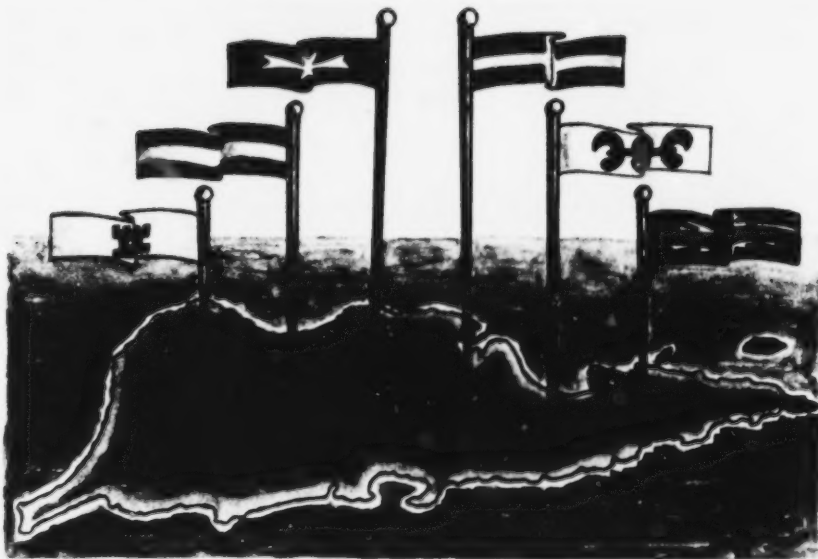
In 1634 the French settled on St. Croix. They too were attacked by the Spaniards. In 1636 the English returned and again they were forced out by the Spanish soldiers from Puerto Rico.

By 1639, the Dutch and the French had formed a company to settle St. Croix. The English also had a similar

idea and moved back to St. Croix in 1641. In 1642 the English were taken over by the Dutch, but they were permitted to stay on St. Croix. There is a report from 1643 that there were three towns at that time on St. Croix—one Dutch, one English and one French.

In 1645 the governor of the English town on St. Croix was murdered in the Dutch governor's house. The result was a fierce fight between the English and the Dutch. The Dutch governor was badly wounded and soon died.

The Dutch elected another governor. The English, pretending to be friendly, invited him to visit the English town. But as soon as he arrived, they seized him and had him shot. The Dutch decided it was too dangerous for them to stay on St. Croix. They left and the French left, too. For the next five years,



Flags of the European countries which owned St. Croix at different times in our history.

the English enjoyed success on their island colony.

Three Flags in One Year

The year 1650 was a year of confusion for St. Croix. The Spanish in Puerto Rico were worried that the English might become too rich and powerful in St. Croix. They planned a secret attack

to break up the English colony and to take control of the island. In the middle of the night on August 10, 1650, the Spanish invaded. The English quickly fled to St. Kitts, another English island colony 140 miles away.

The French and the Dutch heard about the English defeat and thought it would be safe to come back to St. Croix. First the Dutch tried to return, but the Spanish drove them away. Then the French tried to win control of St. Croix from the Spanish. At first they failed, but after a second try, they succeeded. By the end of 1650, St. Croix was a French colony.

France owned St. Croix on and off for the next 83 years. First, the Knights of Malta, a French religious group, controlled St. Croix for several years. They were followed by the *merchants* who

owned the French West India Company. Finally, the French king owned St. Croix when the Danish West India and Guinea Company bought the island in 1733. The Danish flag became the sixth flag to fly over St. Croix.

A Danish Colony in St. Thomas

Denmark was one of the last European countries to start a colony in the West Indies. Denmark was a small country with many problems. The Danes were at war with other European countries. Wars are expensive and Denmark was poor. The Danes wanted a share of the riches in the New World, so they sent small *expeditions* across the Atlantic Ocean.

The first Danes came to St. Thomas in 1665. There were no other Europeans living there at that time. The

Danish group was led by Eric Schmidt. He wanted to find an island where tobacco and cotton would grow. These were two *profitable* crops.

Schmidt started a small colony on St. Thomas. In a short time he was able to send back *cargoes* of tobacco, sugar and lumber to Denmark. He also started to build Fort Christian, which is still standing today. The colony did not last long. Eric Schmidt died, and many of the planters left the island.

The Danish West India and Guinea Company

In 1671, King Christian VI of Denmark gave the Danish West India and Guinea Company a *charter*. This charter said that the purpose of the

Company was to settle St. Thomas and to set up a profitable business there. The first job of the Danish West India and Guinea Company was to find a governor for the new colony. A young man named Jorgen Iversen was chosen.



European debtors who worked on the plantations before coming of the slaves to the Danish West Indies.

The First Workers

Governor Iversen's first problem was to find enough people who wanted to settle and work in the new colony. The Danish government helped him by letting the *debtors* out of the jails of Copenhagen. The debtors had to promise to work in the Danish West Indies for a certain number of years before they could be free.

One of the first things the Danes did was to build forts to protect them against attack. Thus, when the French from St. Croix attacked St. Thomas in 1678, the colonists were able to take shelter in Fort Christian.

The debtors did not solve Iversen's problem. Many of them got sick and died. Others were not eager to work. Despite these problems, Iversen was

determined to make the colony a success. He made certain rules. If the workers did not obey the rules, they were punished.

Pirates

In 1680 Governor Iversen *resigned*. He was followed by several governors who were friendly to pirates. For years, pirates *roamed* the waters around St.



Fort Christian in St. Thomas was built under Danish rule.

Thomas. They used St. Thomas as their base to attack and rob people on boats. The island was not a very safe place to live. Finally, John Lorentz became Governor in 1694. He chased many of the pirates away.

Lorentz and the West African Slave Trade

Governor Lorentz is thought to have been a good governor by some people. Others disagree. It was Governor Lorentz who introduced the West African slave trade into the Danish West Indies and opened a slave market in St. Thomas. The West Africans were brought to St. Thomas to work on the sugar cane *plantations*. Slave labor was the source of the first great wealth in the Danish West Indies.

THINGS TO TALK ABOUT

1. Why was Denmark the last European country to start a colony in the West Indies?
 2. What was the purpose of the Danish West India and Guinea Company?
 3. What flags fly over St. Croix and St. Thomas today? When did that come about?
 4. Why did the West Indies have so many European settlers?
 5. Why was the West African slave trade started?
 6. Why do you think the planters preferred slaves to debtors?
-

CHAPTER 4

Denmark and the West African Slave Trade

Cheap Labor for High Profits

The Danes came to St. Thomas to get rich quickly. They decided to do this by growing mostly sugar cane. Many people were needed to work in the sugar cane plantations. The Danes needed cheap labor to make high profits.

The Europeans who had been the first cane field workers did not last long as a source of labor. The Danes had to find another source of labor for the sugar cane fields. Some West Africans

were brought to St. Thomas around 1672 or 1673 as slaves. These West Africans became the new source of labor.

Slavery

The Danes may have known that the enslavement of the West Africans was wrong. However, they told themselves that the enslavement of West Africans was right, because their hunger for wealth was so strong.

The European planters looked upon the West African slaves as pieces of *property*. The Europeans thought of slaves as animals, not as human beings.

Slavery had existed in Africa long before the Europeans came. *Captives* in West African tribal wars were considered slaves. They would be given

low jobs in the tribal communities. However, Africans captured and kept as slaves in Africa were never thought to be less than human beings.

A European Myth

The myth that West Africans were less than human beings started with the Europeans. A myth is an *invented* story. The myth the Europeans told themselves was that the Africans were born to be slaves. Thus, the Danes thought it was all right to enslave the West Africans.

Capture and Trade

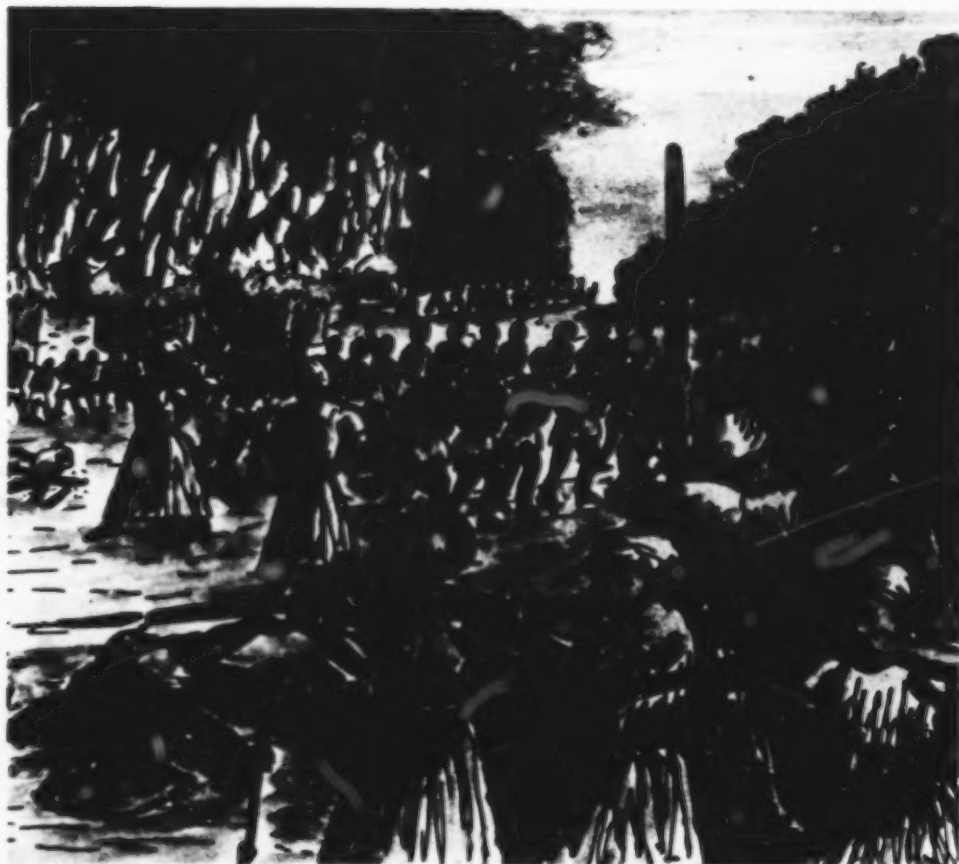
The Danes entered the West African slave trade by first *seizing* two Swedish forts on the west coast of Africa. They offered to trade guns and other European *products* in exchange

for African captives. Arab slave traders and sometimes African chiefs made many *raids* on peaceful African villages. They captured men, women and children. They took these cap-



Arab slave traders raiding an African Village. (Illustration adapted from John

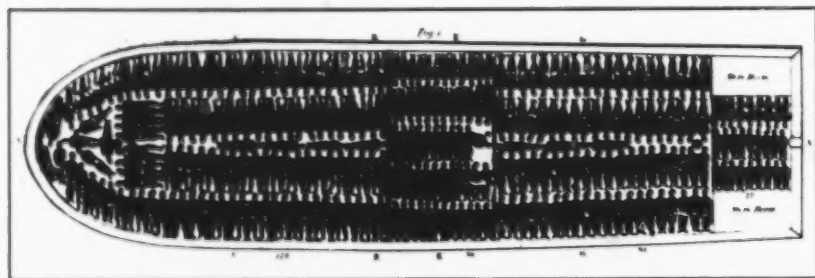
tives to the forts and sold the Africans to the Danish slave traders. The African captives were held at the forts until it was time to make the long trip to St. Thomas.



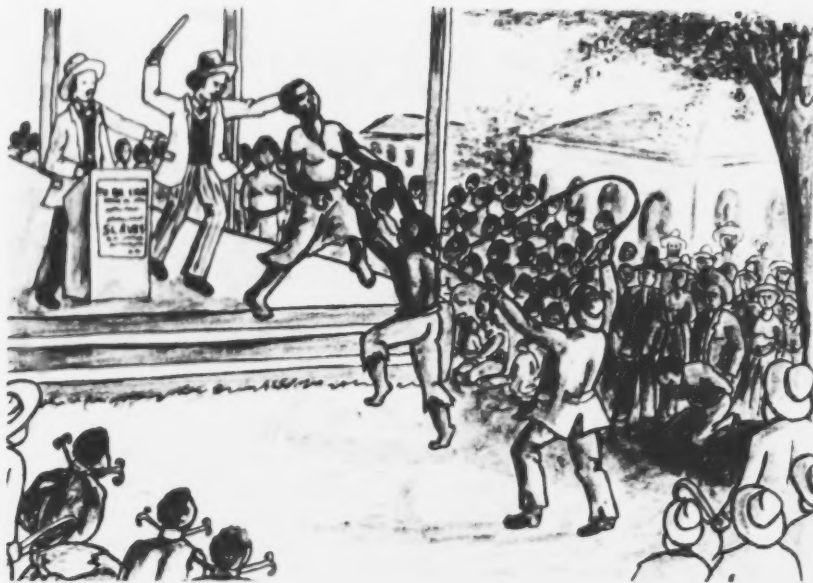
A. Williams, *Africa—Her History, Land and People Told with Pictures*).

The Middle Passage

The trip to St. Thomas, known as the Middle Passage, was another bad part of slavery. First, the West Africans were *branded* on their shoulders. Then, hundreds of them were chained very closely together in the hot *holds* of the slave ships. They were not given enough to eat. Many West Africans died on the four-week voyage to St. Thomas. They died from fright, diseases and *malnutrition*. Some even killed themselves rather than be slaves.



The hold of a slave ship which brought the slaves from West Africa to the West Indies (from Thomas Clarkson, History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, 1839).



A slave auction.

The Slave Market

When the slave ships reached St. Thomas, the West Africans were brought to the slave market. It was located in the place we now call Emancipation Garden. There were two ways of using slaves to make high profits. First, the slaves were sold at auction to the highest bidder, just as if

they were pieces of property. Then the buyers made the slaves work without paying them any *wages*.

The Fight for Freedom

Many years before the Europeans arrived in West Africa, there were great *civilizations* there. With such a great past, the West Africans were not willing to accept their new *positions* as slaves. From the moment they began to live as slaves, they started to fight for *freedom*.

The history of the Virgin Islands is about the fight for freedom by West Africans. They are the *ancestors* of most modern Virgin Islanders. The chapters that follow will tell about the struggle, strength and courage of these great people.

THINGS TO TALK ABOUT

1. Why did the Danes enter the West African slave trade?
 2. Discuss the ways in which West Africans were treated wrongly.
 3. What myth was created about the West Africans?
 4. Look at the illustration on page 46. Describe the conditions of the Middle Passage.
 5. How do you think the West Africans felt when they became the property of the highest bidder at the auction?
 6. How were the West Africans captured?
 7. Why is it important for a Virgin Islander to learn about the West Africans who were here as slaves?
 8. Why were the West Africans not willing to accept their positions as slaves?
-

CHAPTER 5

Africa Before The Europeans

Keniya Asks About her Ancestors

Today, many young Virgin Islanders want to know more about their ancestors. One Virgin Islands student, an eleven year old girl named Keniya, lives in Cruz Bay, St. John. She is smart and has always been interested in her ancestors.

One day, Keniya asked her mother, "Mommy, where did our people come from?"

Her mother asked, "Do you mean our ancestors?"

Keniya nodded.

Her mother said, "Keniya, it's a long story, but I will tell you if you'll sit still for awhile."

Keniya very eagerly replied, "Yes, I will! I want to learn everything about our ancestors."

Ancient Egyptians

Keniya's mother started to tell her the story. She said that our ancestors were from the continent of Africa. Africa is a very large continent located about 3,000 miles east of St. John.

Many thousands of years ago, there were great civilizations in Africa. One of the earliest and greatest was a North African civilization we call *Ancient Egypt*. The Ancient Egyptians called their country "Kemit," which means "The Black Land."* The *engineers* and

* There is more information on "Kemit" in the Teacher's Manual.

builders of Ancient Egypt built the great pyramids and *temples* still standing in Egypt today.

Keniya asked her mother, "What are the great pyramids?"

Her mother said, "The pyramids are large stone *structures* with *triangular* sides that meet in a point at the top."

Keniya's mother went on to say that the

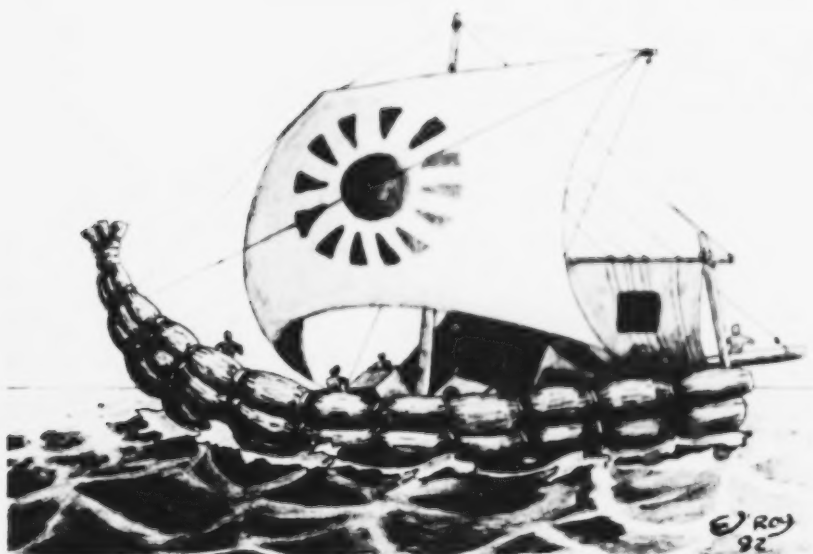


The Ancient Egyptians used slave labor to build the Great Pyramids.

pyramids were *monuments* built in honor of the rulers of Ancient Egypt. The pyramids were so difficult to build that *engineers* today are amazed at how the Ancient Egyptians were able to build them.

The Africans of Egypt were great scientists and mathematicians. They also had knowledge of government, religion, and farming. The Temples of Egypt were famous centers of learning. Many other peoples of the world such as the Greeks and Romans learned a lot from the Ancient Egyptians.

The Ancient Egyptians were also sailors and merchants. They built boats of *reeds* called papyrus. In their boats, they sailed up and down the Nile River. They also traveled to Europe.



A boat built of papyrus.

The Great Nations of Africa

Keniya then asked, "Were the Ancient Egyptian civilizations the only ones in Africa?"

Her mother answered, "No, Keniya, there were many other civilizations all over the continent of Africa." She went on to explain that some other African civilizations were Ghana and Benin-

Yoruba. They were called the *empires* of Africa. The empires had well-organized governments. The African people of the empires were traders and warriors.

Keniya asked her mother, "Which part of Africa did our ancestors come from?"

"Our ancestors came from the Asante (Ashanti) nation, which is now Ghana, or from the Benin-Yoruba nation, which is a part of Nigeria today," replied her mother.

The People of Ghana

The people of Ghana were skilled *blacksmiths, stonemasons, carpenters, sandalmakers, cabinet and furniture makers, jewelers and goldsmiths*. The Empire of Ghana was called the "Land of Gold." Ghana controlled the greatest

source of gold known to both Europe and Asia. Ghana was also a leader in the mining and *manufacturing* of iron for over a thousand years.

There was a strong army and a communications system that reached from one end of the empire to the other. To-day we have telephones, but then the people of Ghana had *talking drums*. These drums sent messages quickly over great distances, sometimes as far as 300 miles away.

One of the groups of people living in Ghana was the Asante. The language of the Asante was spoken by many other peoples of Ghana. This is one reason why their *descendants* on St. Croix and St. John could organize *uprisings*, since many of them came from the same area in Africa. The Asante people did not have a written language,

but they had story-tellers who sang and *chanted* the history of their nation. The stories and songs were carefully memorized and passed down from one generation to the next.

The Benin-Yoruba Nation

The King of Benin was called the Oba. His palace was filled with works of art made from wood, brass or gold, robes made with gold thread, precious gems, *cowrie* shells and *coral* beads. This great kingdom was most powerful from 1300 A.D. to the mid-1800's. Finally, the Oba of Benin ruled over the whole southern half of what is now Nigeria.

African Explorers

Many other African peoples were great traders, travelers and *explorers*.

They traveled along the busy trade routes linking their countries. Guinea, another important African nation, had a famous seaport. The people who lived there were good sailors and merchants, too.

Some *archaeologists* believe that Africans from Guinea and other nations sailed across the Atlantic Ocean. They traveled to Mexico and to the Caribbean Islands. The African sailors may have come to these places many years before Columbus. This means that some Africans might have been on St. John before others were brought there as slaves.

The Mystery of the Petroglyphs

Keniya thought for a few minutes after hearing this information. Then she said, "Mommy, my class went on a

hike down the trail to Reef Bay Falls to see the stone carvings there. My teacher said these are called petroglyphs. She said that in 1971 a visitor from Ghana looked at the petroglyphs and saw something familiar. He told her that one of the carvings was an Ashanti symbol from Ghana, and the symbol means 'Accept God.'

"My teacher said that the carvings



Stone carvings (petroglyphs) reflected in the pool at Reef Bay Falls on the island of St. John.

were probably made by West African slaves who used to wash and drink at the fresh water pool under Reef Bay Falls—maybe during the slave uprising of 1733!”

Her mother said, “Yes, Keniya, maybe so. But I heard that the petroglyphs were made by Indians, long before Columbus ever saw St. John.”

“But Mommy! Couldn’t the petroglyphs also have been carved by those African sailors who came before Columbus?”

Keniya’s mother gave her a hug and a smile. “Well, maybe and maybe not. The artist who carved those petroglyphs will probably be one of the everlasting mysteries of Virgin Islands history.”

“Mommy,” Keniya laughed, “you are rhyming! A mystery of history!”

THINGS TO TALK ABOUT

1. What are the great pyramids?
 2. Why do you think the pyramids were built?
 3. What were some of the occupations of the Africans in ancient Egypt? Ghana? Benin-Yoruba?
 4. Why do you think the ancient Egyptians called their country "The Black Land"?
 5. What were the African empires famous for?
 6. What nations did our ancestors come from?
 7. Were there Africans in the Virgin Islands before the Europeans came? Explain.
-

CHAPTER 6

The West African Slaves in the Danish West Indies

Family Life in an African Tribe

Keniya's mother told her about the great civilizations of West Africa before the slave trade began. She told her about Egypt and the other African empires. An important part of African civilization, she explained, was and still is the *tribe*.

Keniya wondered what it would be like to be part of a West African tribe before the slave trade. A West African child of Keniya's age would have lived

together with her mother and father, brothers and sisters. Her family group might also have included her father's other wives, if he had them, and their children. Grandparents, grandchildren and great-grandchildren were also part of the West African family group.



The elders of African tribes told stories about their ancestors to the young ones of the tribes.

Learning Tribal History

The elders of the tribe told stories to the children in their family groups and answered questions about their ancestors. In this way, all the children learned the history of their family and of the tribe.

Family Life in the Danish West Indies

Keniya knew that family life among the slaves in the Danish West Indies was not the same as family life among their ancestors in West Africa. The Danes were not concerned about keeping African families together or helping them to become part of the society. The planters made large profits from the cheap labor of slaves on the plantations. The Danes wanted to keep the West Africans as slaves.

The West Africans' lives were controlled by the planters. Many of the West Africans were not allowed to marry and have families as we know them today.

The Danes knew that marriages and families brought about *unity*. They knew that in unity there is strength. The Danes were afraid that unity among West African slaves would bring about *rebellion*.

When the West African slaves had children and tried to have a family life, the planters would sometimes sell members of the family to other plantation owners. This was done to make sure that West African slaves would not have strong family ties.

During slavery in the Danish West Indies, a young boy or girl had a hard life. The children started to work at a

very young age, sometimes as young as five or six years old. They did not know from one day to the next if they would be separated from their mother, father, sister or brother. However, even though many homes were broken, the parents of West African boys and girls during slavery tried to give them love, warmth and happiness. The West African slave parents also tried to give strength and courage to their children.

Living and Working Conditions

The living and working conditions of the West African slaves were poor. The families lived in small huts, called slave quarters, on the plantations.

Two types of West African slaves lived in the slave quarters: the house slaves and the field slaves. The house



Slave quarters. This is the type of house in which slaves lived on the plantations during the 1700's. It is made of young trees woven together and packed with clay and mud. This type of construction is called wattle and daub.



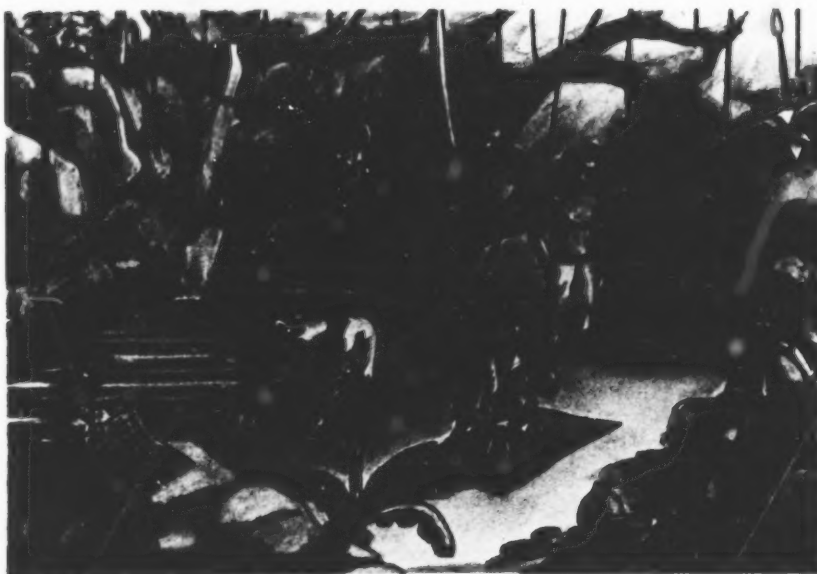
Slave quarters. This is a later type of slave dwelling, typical of the 1800's. The coal pot in front of the door is where all the cooking was done for the family. (Photographs from the collection of El'Roy Simmonds.)

slaves worked in the *greathouses* of the planters. They had the duties of a house servant. The field slaves worked on the plantations. The women and men planted and harvested the crops. The men also worked as carpenters, blacksmiths, masons, *coopers* or *wheelwrights*.

Free Coloreds and Free Blacks

Not all of the West Africans in the Danish West Indies were slaves. There were Free Coloreds and Free Blacks. The Free Coloreds were usually the children of white fathers and black mothers. When they grew up, these children might be freed by their fathers, or they might have saved up enough money to buy their freedom. The Free Blacks were freed by their owners or bought their own freedom.

Free Blacks and Free Coloreds were allowed to own small plots of land, and they could own slaves too. They could work at various skilled trades, and they could sell goods in the market.



Runaway slaves, or "Maroons."

The Maroons

There was another group of free people of West African ancestry. These were the Maroons. The Maroons were rebellious slaves who had run away.

They lived in small communities high in the hills, far away from the towns and the plantations. Some Maroons lived in a mountain cave called "Maroon's Hole," just east of Ham's Bluff in St. Croix.

Runaways

Many runaways left the Danish West Indies and escaped to Puerto Rico. After reaching Puerto Rico, they were usually put to work by the Spanish *authorities* for one year. If they agreed to become Roman Catholics, then they were given their freedom and a plot of land. This was much better *treatment* than runaway slaves could expect from the authorities in the Danish West Indies. If they were caught in the Danish West Indies, runaway slaves might be killed, or one foot might be cut off.

Religion and the West African Slaves

The slaves were always looking for ways to escape the terrible conditions of slavery. The Danes knew this and were always looking for new ways to control the West Africans. They were afraid the slaves would rise up against them. The Danes thought that if the slaves became Christians, they might become more obedient and peaceful. Thus, *Christianity* was introduced as a way of life for the West Africans in the Danish West Indies during the 1700's.

The Moravians were a religious group from Germany who wanted to teach the slaves about Christianity. The Danish King and Queen gave the Moravians permission to set up a *mission* in the Danish West Indies. In 1732 the first group of Moravian *mis-*

sionaries, led by Leonard Dober, came to St. Thomas.

The Moravians tried to tell the West African slaves about the teachings of Christ. The slaves were not allowed to attend church, so the Moravians worked side by side with the slaves in the fields. They held religious services in the fields and in the slave quarters instead of in a church.

The Moravians wanted to show their unity with the West African slaves. However, the teachings of Christianity could not change the fact that the West Africans were still slaves. Their sufferings continued.

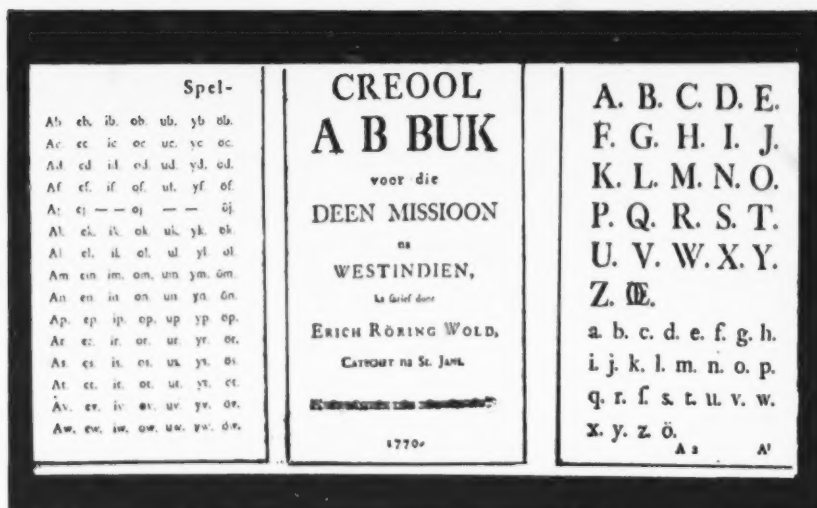
Reading and Writing Dutch Creole

The most important result of the Moravians' work with the West Afri-

cans was that the slaves learned to read and write. The Moravians *translated* the Bible into Dutch Creole. This was the language spoken by the slaves in St. Thomas. The Dutch Creole Bible was used for reading lessons by the slaves. This new ability to read and write would help them in their fight for freedom.



A father reading to his family from the Creole Bible.



Creole ABC book. (From *The Danish Heritage of the U.S. Virgin Islands*, St. Croix Friends of Denmark Society.)

THINGS TO TALK ABOUT

1. Discuss family organization in West African tribes.
2. Compare the way African children learned tribal history with the way you learn history today.
3. Why didn't the Danes allow West Africans to marry and have families?
4. Name two types of West African slaves that lived in the slave quarters.

Describe the different kinds of work they did.

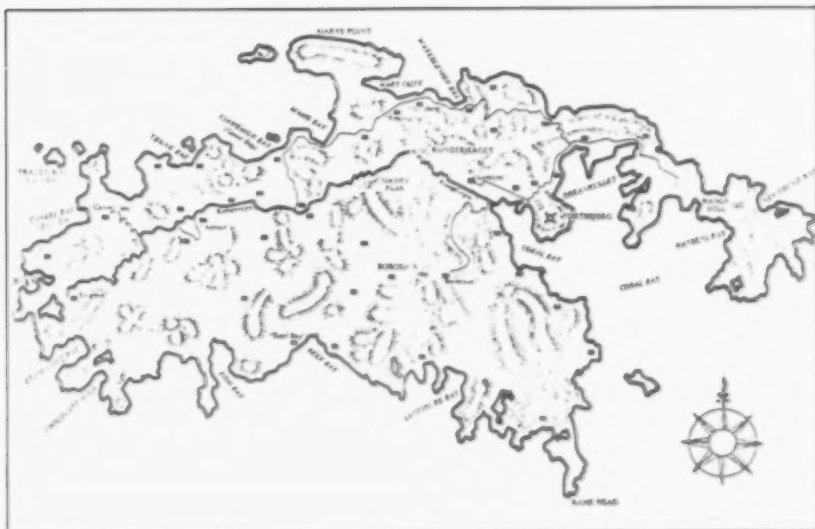
- 5. Do you think it was possible for children of slave families to be happy with the conditions described in this chapter? Why or why not?**
 - 6. Why did the Danes allow the West African slaves to practice Christianity?**
 - 7. How did the ability to read and write help the West African slaves in their fight for freedom?**
-

CHAPTER 7

Early Struggles For Freedom

Feud over St. John

In Chapter 3 we learned that St. Thomas was settled by the Danish West India and Guinea Company. The Danish West India and Guinea Company was also instructed by Denmark to colonize any nearby islands. As a result, the Danes *claimed* St. John. Located three miles east of St. Thomas, St. John is a very beautiful island with some of the best beaches in the world. England, which had colonies nearby in the British Virgin Islands, also made claim to St. John.



An old map of St. John (from P.L. Oxholm, 1780).

For several years there was a *feud* between the two European countries over St. John. In 1718 Denmark made it clear that she planned to control the beautiful island to the east of St. Thomas.

Under the leadership of Governor Erik Bredal of St. Thomas, the Danes made the first *permanent* settlement on St. John. They landed at Coral

Bay with 20 planters, 5 soldiers and 16 slaves. Even though the British were very angry, they did not try to remove the Danes by force.

***St. John As Part
of the Danish West Indies***

St. John became part of the Danish West Indies on March 25, 1718. The Danes wanted to settle St. John because they had already used up all the flat land in St. Thomas. Most of the land in St. Thomas was too steep for planting. The Danes needed more farm land for new plantations. St. John was the nearest *uninhabited* island.

The Danes wanted to become rich quickly by growing and selling sugar cane. Thousands of West African slaves were *imported* to St. Thomas

and St. John to work on the sugar cane plantations. In a very short time, the West Africans outnumbered the Danes on both islands. In 1733, there were five times as many blacks as Europeans on the island of St. John.

Harsh Laws

Because of the large population of West Africans, the Danes were very fearful that the slaves would rise up against them. As early as 1691, there were rumors that the slaves were planning a revolt. As a result of the Danish fear, harsh laws were passed by the Danish crown. For example, these are some parts of a law passed in 1733:

- *The leaders of runaway slaves shall be pinched three times with red-hot pincers and then hanged.*
- *Each other runaway slave shall lose*

one leg, or if the owner pardons him, shall lose one ear, and receive one hundred and fifty lashes.

- Slaves who steal the equivalent of four rigsdalers or more, shall be pinched and hanged; less than four rigsdalers, they shall be branded and receive one hundred and fifty lashes.

- A slave who lifts his hand to strike a white person, or threatens him with violence shall be pinched and hanged, should the white person demand it; if pardoned, he shall lose his right hand.

Reasons for Revolt

The West African slaves were forced to live under these brutal laws. In addition, in 1733 there were several natural disasters that made it even harder for the slaves to survive. During that year, the Danish West Indies was hit by two



In 1733, two hurricanes struck the Danish West Indies, causing great destruction.

hurricanes. There was also a *drought*, and insects invaded the crops. There was a shortage of food and many slaves starved to death.

The Aminas Organize

Faced with these terrible conditions, West Africans throughout the Danish West Indies became more and more

angry with their way of life. This was especially true on the island of St. John. Many of the slaves on St. John had come from the Amina kingdom of West Africa. These Africans were proud and brave.

Many Aminas were intelligent and good organizers. The Amina kingdom was highly civilized. In West Africa, the Aminas had been *accustomed* to freedom.

Driven by the extreme hardships of 1733, the West African slaves on St. John finally decided to take matters into their own hands. They organized a rebellion led by the Aminas.

The Revolt Begins

In November of 1733, the St. John Slave Revolt started. The leaders were two great organizers, Kanta and Claes.



Kanta and Claes, leaders of the St. John Revolt of 1733.

On the morning of November 23rd, several Aminos entered Fort Frederiksvaern at Coral Bay. They were carrying bundles of wood. In the bundles of wood they had hidden their weapons.

When they entered the Fort, they killed all the soldiers except for one who hid under a bed and later escaped to St. Thomas.



The Aminas attacking Fort Frederiksvaern on

The African slaves at the Fort then signaled to the others on each plantation to attack the planters. The slaves were waiting on the plantations.



St. John, as one Danish soldier escapes in a boat.

When they heard the signals, they attacked. Many of the planters and their families lost their lives.

The Talking Drums

The leaders at the Fort used two kinds of signals. One was the firing of the cannon. The other signal was the sound of the talking drums. The West Africans had developed a language using the different sounds of the drums. These were called talking drums.

Six Months of Freedom

The St. John slaves were determined to obtain their freedom, and, for a time, they succeeded. For six months, the West Africans held control of most of the island of St. John. They were well organized and strong.

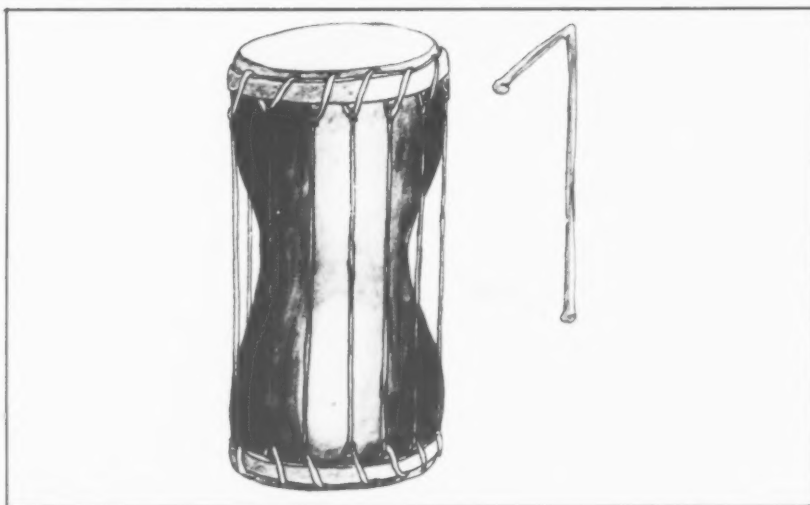
The Danish *militia* could not defeat the Africans.

After several months of struggle, the Danes were forced to ask for help from the French in Martinique. The French sent two hundred soldiers to help the Danes on St. John. Some free blacks from St. Thomas were also used to help the Danes regain control. The combined forces of the Danes, French and free blacks finally defeated the West Africans on St. John. By the end of May 1734 the six months of freedom was over.

Before the revolt ended, many brave members of the Amina tribe *committed suicide* rather than be slaves again. Some shot themselves, others, according to *legend*, *jumped* off the cliffs onto the rocks below at Mary's Point and at Amina Hill, near

Ram's Head. Some of the people that were brought from Africa believed that after they died, they would be born again in the African homelands.

This revolt was a very important step toward the eventual freedom of the West African slaves in the Danish West Indies. They realized that a successful rebellion was possible. They had planted a seed along the road to freedom.



Talking drum used by the slaves to send messages and to signal the start of the attack in the St. John Revolt of 1733.

THINGS TO TALK ABOUT

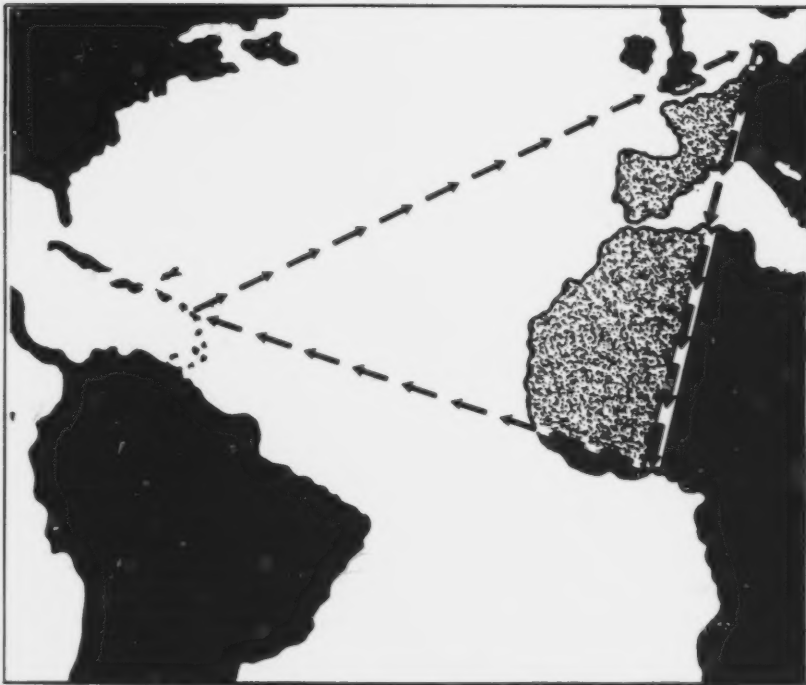
1. What were some possible reasons for the feud over St. John between England and Denmark?
 2. What were some of the cruel laws passed by the Danes? Why were they passed?
 3. What conditions helped to start the rebellion?
 4. Describe how the West African slaves took control on St. John.
 5. How did the West Africans communicate with each other?
 6. How did the news of the revolt get to St. Thomas?
 7. Who were the leaders of the revolt?
 8. Soldiers from which nation succeeded in putting down the revolt?
 9. What did many West African slaves do rather than return to a life of slavery?
 10. Do you think the St. John slave revolt was successful? From whose point of view? The slaves'? The planters'? Explain your answer.
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CHAPTER 8

On the Road to Freedom

St. Croix as part of the Danish West Indies

Up until 1733, the Danish West Indies was made up of St. Thomas and St. John only. St. Croix became part of the Danish West Indies in 1733, when the Danish West India and Guinea Company bought the island from France. The Danish West India and Guinea Company invited planters to settle in St. Croix. Many planters thought that they might become rich by setting up sugar plantations there. They came to St. Croix from St. Thomas, St. John and Tortola. Many



The triangular trade route traveled by the slave trading ships.

were English, French or Dutch. There were also a few German and Danish planters.

The Triangular Trade Route

The sugar grown on the plantations of St. Croix was an important part of the Triangular Trade Route. In the

Triangular Trade, ships from the Danish West India and Guinea Company sailed from Copenhagen to the west coast of Africa. There they picked up a cargo of West African slaves and then sailed to the Danish West Indies. Here, the West Africans were sold and a new cargo of sugar, *molasses* or rum was loaded onto the ship. The ship then returned to Copenhagen. With the money from the sale of the sugar, molasses or rum, they would sail again to Africa to buy more West Africans, and the Triangular Trade *continued*.

High Taxes for Planters

Many Danish planters made huge profits from the Triangular Trade. Therefore, they were forced to pay increased taxes to the Danish West India and Guinea Company. The

planters were very angry with the higher taxes. They complained often, but the taxes were not lowered.

The King in Control

Finally, the planters sent a *representative* named Johann Wilhelm Schopen to Denmark to meet with the King. The purpose of Schopen's visit was to convince the King to take control of the Danish West Indies. The planters thought the King would not demand such high taxes from them. King Frederik V agreed, and in 1754 Denmark bought the three islands from the Danish West India and Guinea Company. The Danish King was now in control of the three islands.

Golden Days for Europeans

King Frederik did lower taxes, and many planters became rich very quickly. For this reason, the planters called the years between 1754 and 1815 the Golden Days of St. Croix.



Slaves working on a sugarcane plantation in St. Croix (adapted from Henry Morton's Danish West Indian Sketchbook.)

Population Growth

St. Croix continued to grow very rapidly. A large labor force was needed to work on the plantations. Many thousands of West Africans had been brought to the islands as slaves. By 1774, the population had grown to nearly 25,000. Of this number, 21,700 were slaves. They worked on the island's 180 plantations.

Poor Conditions for West African Slaves

As in St. Thomas and St. John, the West African population of St. Croix grew very fast. From the beginning, the West African population had been larger than the population of planters. The living and working conditions of the West African slaves on St. Croix were similar to those on the other two

islands. The conditions were terrible. The harsh laws described in Chapter 7 also applied to the slaves on St. Croix.

Two More Tries for Freedom

As conditions got worse for the slaves, thoughts of freedom grew stronger. The St. John slave revolt of 1733 had shown everyone on all three islands that the West Africans could plan and carry out a successful rebellion. With the memory of 1733 still in their minds, slaves on St. Croix made two more tries for freedom.

The first was in 1746. A large number of runaways planned a rebellion. However, a group of free blacks led by Mingo Tamarin from St. Thomas caught the runaways before their plans could succeed.

The second attempt at freedom was

in 1759. The leader of the 1759 revolt was a free black named William Davis. He had three friends who helped him plan the rebellion. One, named Sam Hector, could read and write. The other two were Michel and Quaco. They made careful plans for Christmas week of 1759. They planned to capture the forts in Christiansted and Frederiksted and to make William Davis the Governor-General of St. Croix.

However, one of Davis' followers named Cudjo could not keep a secret. The Danish authorities heard about the plans, and the leaders of the rebellion were arrested. Sam Hector and twelve of his followers were killed. William Davis committed suicide.

If the revolt of 1759 had succeeded, William Davis would have set up his

government. St. Croix then would have become the first *independent nation* in the Western *Hemisphere* since the start of European colonization.

End of the Slave Trade

In 1792, the slave trade was made illegal in the Danish West Indies, but eleven years passed before the slave trade came to an end in 1803. This did not put an end to slavery but it was another major step towards *emancipation*.

Freedom in Haiti

With the *abolition* of the slave trade in the Danish West Indies, the struggle for freedom continued. In 1798 the Danish West Indian slaves were given great hopes. They heard that there had been a successful slave revolt in



*Toussaint L'Ouverture, hero of emancipation in Haiti (from Percy Waxman, *The Black Napoleon: The Story of Toussaint L'Ouverture*).*

the French West Indies. Under the leadership of a great hero, Toussaint L'Ouverture, Haiti became the first free black nation in the Western Hemisphere.

Freedom in the British West Indies

The Haitians had won their freedom. Then in 1834 the slaves in the British West Indies were freed. This meant that the black people living on Tortola, Virgin Gorda, Jost Van Dyke and all the British Virgin Islands were free. However, their near neighbors on St. Thomas and St. John, as well as those on St. Croix, were still slaves. With freedom so close, the slaves of the Danish West Indies became more *determined* to gain their freedom.

THINGS TO TALK ABOUT

1. What were some possible reasons for the purchase of St. Croix by the Danish West India and Guinea Company?
2. Why was the period between 1754 and 1815 referred to by Europeans as "The Golden Days"?
3. Why were the planters on St. Croix angry?
4. Who controlled the islands after the Danish West India and Guinea Company?
5. Discuss the two attempted slave revolts on St. Croix. Why were they not successful?
6. Name the other Caribbean islands where freedom was achieved before emancipation in the Danish West Indies.
7. What was a major step toward emancipation?

CHAPTER 9

Clear De Road For Freedom

The Proclamation of 1847

Freedom was in the air. The Danish government could no longer ignore it, and issued the *Proclamation of 1847*. This Proclamation gave freedom to the slaves, but not all at once. It stated that as of July 1847, all newborn babies of West African slave parents would be free. All other enslaved black people would be freed twelve years later.

The slaves were not satisfied with the Proclamation of 1847. They did not like the idea that they would still be slaves and their children would be

free. They were worried that their children, born free, would not respect them. They were also worried that they might die before the twelve years were up and might never see freedom.

The Danes had expected the Proclamation of 1847 to satisfy the slaves and to make them more peaceful. Instead, the opposite happened.

Secret Plans

The enslaved black people started planning another revolt to win their freedom. They began to organize and to gather weapons. This had to be done secretly because meetings of slaves were *forbidden*. No slaves or free blacks were allowed on the roads after sunset. Since they worked hard all day, when did they find the time to

make plans? How could they have passed messages to each other?

Buddhoe

The answers may be found in the *character* of Moses Gottlieb. Moses Gottlieb was a free black man. Some people say he was from St. Kitts. Others say he was from Martinique. He worked on the La Grange *estate*. He was known as Buddhoe. He was a skilled *craftsman* and could read and write. He was *trustworthy* and often was sent to town on errands.

Perhaps this was the way he organized the revolt for freedom in 1848. If he traveled freely between plantations, he could carry messages between his people on different estates. His followers called him General Bordeaux. He was given this



Buddhoe, hero of emancipation in the Danish West Indies.

title as a sign of respect and because his clothing looked like a soldier's uniform.

Buddhoe worked quietly, planning the revolt with Martin King of Estate

Slob. Many other brave men and women worked with them. This time the secret did not leak out. Buddhoe's goal was achieved. All the black people in the Danish West Indies were finally free. They were no longer slaves or the property of the planters. After nearly two hundred years of struggle, they were emancipated.

A Letter from St. Croix

The events of July 1848 can best be understood if we see them through the eyes of someone who was there at the time. Let us imagine that our *witness*, a young girl named Agnes, was a free black living in Frederiksted. Her mother was a dressmaker and her father was a fisherman. She had an older brother, Joseph, who had been

sent to St. Thomas to work for a boat builder and to learn his trade.

Emancipation

Here is the letter Agnes wrote to her brother, to tell him the news of Emancipation.

July the 6th, 1848.

My dear Brother:

How I wish you were here so you might see with your own eyes the things I have seen during the past few days. Those things which I have not seen for myself, Papa has told me. I must tell you first the most important news—all our people are now free! This evil bondage under which our countrymen have labored for so long is no more.

Rumors

Here is how it happened. First of

all, Joseph, for weeks we had heard rumors in the market that those on the plantations in the country and at West End were planning to rise up and demand their freedom. These were only rumors, but now our father has told us that he knew about this plan from the start. He had sworn to tell no one and, Joseph, he kept his promise. He didn't even tell Mama or me.

Bells at Night—July the 2nd

I had gone to sleep early on Sunday evening. At about midnight, I was awakened by the ringing of church bells and the blowing of conch shells. I sat up in bed and thought there must be a fire nearby, so I went into the other room. The lamp was still lit and Mama was sewing by its light. Papa was not home so I said, "Where is Papa? Is there a fire?"

Mama said, "Hush, child. There's no fire. Go back to bed." I did, but I could not sleep because the bells and the conch shells made such a noise. After a while I heard Papa come in, so I got out of bed again. He said there were no fires yet, but the plantation workers were making a great commotion on the estates and demanding their freedom. Then he went out again. That was July the 2nd.

***Demanding Freedom –
July the 3rd***

We didn't see Papa again until the next morning. We were eating benyes for breakfast and he came home in a rush and said to Mama, "There will be trouble today. Keep the child inside." I begged to be allowed to go out with him but he said no. He said that

thousands of people from the country were already in town and more were coming every minute.

They were gathering at the Fort and shouting out for freedom. They told the soldiers that if a single shot were fired into the crowd, they would burn all of West End. Papa saw the piles of cane trash around the side of the Fort—ready to burn.

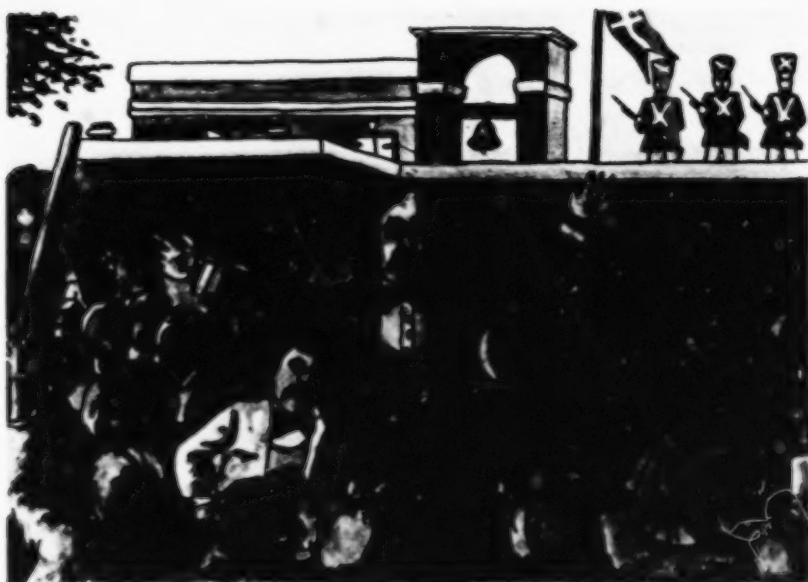
After lunch, Papa came back again and said that the crowd had wrecked two houses—one for the Police Assistant and the other for the Town Bailiff. Joseph, do you remember Mr. Moore, who keeps the shop where Mama says we should never go? Well, he was at the Fort and he told the soldiers to "Go ahead and shoot them all." When the people heard that, they went to Moore's house and store

and wrecked those too. Papa said there were many white people on boats out in the harbor. They were waiting to see whether their estates and houses would be burned or spared.

All are Free!—July the 3rd

Finally, the people sent word to Governor-General Peter von Scholten that unless he came to Frederiksted by 4 o'clock Monday afternoon, they would burn down the town. So, just before 4 o'clock, the Governor-General drove up in his carriage.

The crowd—Papa said there must have been more than 6,000 by then—gathered around and they heard Governor-General Peter von Scholten say "All unfree in the Danish West Indies are from today free!" The



Governor-General Peter von Scholten frees the slaves.

crowd roared when they heard those words of emancipation. Then Papa heard the Governor tell Major Gyllich from the Fire Brigade to break up the crowd and make certain the people returned to the estates.

Fires at Night – July the 3rd

Some did, but, Joseph, many were in the streets that night. A group of

freed men tried to go into Bassin. The soldiers were there to stop them and fired their guns so that many were wounded and some were killed. There were fires everywhere that night, Joseph. I saw them from my window, as I was not allowed to go out. That was the night of July the 3rd.

General Bordeaux
Keeps the Peace

The fires burned and groups of freed men and women were on the roads all through the 4th and 5th of July. That was Tuesday and Wednesday this week. Papa says that some people stole things from the stores and houses. He even saw a piece of bright blue calico that he thought would make such a pretty dress for me, but he didn't take it.

General Bordeaux was there, telling all the freed men not to take what doesn't belong to them, and to be peaceful and to return home. Papa said that everyone listened with respect to General Bordeaux as he rode through the countryside, spreading the news of Emancipation.

Did I tell you, Joseph, that the man they call General Bordeaux is really Mr. Moses who works at La Grange? You know the man that Papa sometimes takes fish to and who came to visit us last Christmas, when you were home? Well, everyone listens to him and does just what he says because Papa said he is the man who led the uprising of July 3rd.

Well, Joseph, I will stop here because my hand is sore from writing so many pages. If I don't stop, I will

soon have a whole book and you would not have the time to read it! Papa has promised to take this letter to the wharf and put it on the next packet to St. Thomas.

We miss you, Joseph. When you come home next Christmas, you won't know me, I shall be so grown up, but I shall still be

*Your loving Sister,
Agnes*

Freed Men in Prison

Agnes did not know it, but as she wrote, nearly 600 Spanish soldiers from Puerto Rico were on their way to St. Croix. Governor-General Peter von Scholten had asked them to come to help keep the peace. By the time they arrived, on July 8th, hundreds of the people who had demanded and

won their freedom were prisoners in the Forts. The prisoners were put on trial and some were shot.

Buddhoe Banished

Buddhoe was taken from prison and put on a boat called the *Ørnen*. The captain was told to let Buddhoe ashore anywhere in the West Indies. Buddhoe came on board the *Ørnen* dressed like a gentleman, carrying *luggage* filled with good clothes that were given to him by Major Gyllich and others. These things were taken away from him as soon as the boat left St. Croix. He was made to work as part of the crew. The Captain took Buddhoe to Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, and told him never to return to the Danish West Indies.

Some people say that Buddhoe

went to Curaçao and then to the United States, but no one knows for sure what happened to this great leader in the fight for freedom.

THINGS TO TALK ABOUT

1. What were the reasons for the planned revolt in 1848? Do you think the enslaved black people were right to demand their freedom in 1848?
 2. Why did the slaves take the action they did, instead of trying to sit down with the planters to discuss their problems?
 3. Why do you think Governor von Scholten freed the black people?
 4. Why do you think the slaves burned and destroyed property in St. Croix after they had been freed?
 5. What do you think happened to General Buddhoe after he was banished from the Danish West Indies?
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CHAPTER 10

After Emancipation

On July 3, 1848, the black people of the Danish West Indies fought for and won their freedom. They started a new life.

The Roots of Virgin Islands Culture

It had taken many generations to achieve the goal of freedom. During those years of struggle, black Virgin Islanders started to *develop* a new culture by mixing European and African cultures. The black people of the Danish West Indies started to develop new ways of living. These new ways became the roots of Virgin Islands culture.

Music and Dance

For example, Virgin Islands music and dance are beautiful mixtures of African and European *traditions*. The quadrille, the bamboula and the cariso are dances that combined the rhythms of the African drums with European and African dance steps and melodies.



Dancing the Quadrille.

The Food We Eat

The foods people eat are an important part of their culture. The food we eat is an example of the mixture of African and European traditions. In the Danish West Indies, the first meal eaten early in the morning was called "tea." Breakfast was eaten at 11:30 a.m. and dinner at about 5:30 p.m.

There was one big meal every day. The main dish at this meal was often a rich and satisfying soup. Soups were made with beef, goat or fowl, with dumplings and ground *provisions* such as sweet potatoes, yams, tania and pigeon peas. Today in the Virgin Islands, we eat soups prepared the same way.

Okras and tomatoes were popular vegetables. Other popular foods were fish and fungi or rice and meat. Food

was cooked over charcoal pots or wood fires.

Fine Mahogany Furniture

The art of furniture-making, or "joinery," is another example of the mixture of African and European cultures. Many Danish West Indians had brought woodworking skills with them from Africa. Others learned carpentry here. The Danish West Indies became famous for elegant furniture made by local *artisans*, called "joiners." They worked with locally grown West Indian mahogany wood.

Many Virgin Islanders worked hard to buy a mahogany bed or a pair of rocking chairs. This sturdy and well-made mahogany furniture was kept in the family and passed on from one generation to the next.

The Way We Speak

Language is another important part of culture. The West Africans who were brought to the Danish West Indies from different parts of West Africa spoke many different languages. Some West Africans spoke more than one language but often the West African slaves could not understand each other. They could not understand the European languages spoken by the planters, either.

Soon a new language developed. It was partly African and partly European. This mixture of languages to form a new language is called "creole." Early Danish West Indians from West Africa spoke, read and wrote Dutch Creole or English Creole. The Dutch Creole was spoken on St. Thomas and the English Creole on St. Croix. The

creole language spoken today by many Virgin Islanders has its roots in the Dutch Creole and English Creole spoken by our Danish West Indian ancestors.

The Way We Learn

The Moravian missionaries were the first school teachers in the Danish West Indies. They could speak the Creole language. They translated the Bible and spelling books into Dutch Creole so the students could learn to read in their own language. As a result of the Moravian teachings, more slaves in the Danish West Indies were able to read and write in their own language than anywhere else in the West Indies.

The students were still slaves, however, and the slave owners did not want them to go to school. The

planters were afraid that school work would take too much time away from field work.

At least one Dane did not agree with the planters. Governor-General Peter von Scholten thought that education was just as important for slave children as for free children. In 1834 von Scholten succeeded in convincing the Danish government to pass a law which promised that slave children would be allowed to attend school in the future. He did not want the planters to be angry, so he did not do too much about this promise for several years. Then, in 1839, a famous law was passed in Denmark. The law was called the School Ordinance of 1839 and it set up free *compulsory* public schools for children in Denmark. Von Scholten said that

the law should be obeyed in the Danish West Indies, too. Thus, von Scholten started the first free public schools for slaves and free children in the Danish West Indies. The Danish West Indies was the only place in the world where free compulsory education for slave children was the law.

There were eight schools in the country in St. Croix, five in St. Thomas and four in St. John. The first school was opened on St. Croix in 1841, at La Grande Princesse. The Princesse School, now known as the Theodora Dunbavin School, is still in use today. The next schools to be built were at Diamond, Two Williams, Mt. Victory, Peter's Rest, Kingshill, Green Cay and LaVallee.

In 1853 another law was passed. This School Ordinance said that all

children from six to ten years old had to attend school every week day from 8 o'clock in the morning until 12 noon. Children from ten to thirteen years old would attend the Saturday School only. The law said that teachers must not punish the children too severely. Teachers were allowed to punish children under ten years old with a rod, and children over ten years old with a thin *rattan*. The law also said that well-behaved children who were very good students should be given special rewards.

Lessons were given in *catechism*, singing of *psalms*, reading and arithmetic. Writing and needlework were also taught, but the parents had to pay extra for those lessons. Many of your great-grandparents may have attended school under these rules.

THINGS TO TALK ABOUT

1. Describe how a new culture was developed in the Danish West Indies.
 2. How did the slaves get an education?
 3. How many schools were built on St. Croix? Where were they located?
 4. How is your school today different from schools in the Danish West Indies?
-

CHAPTER 11

The New Struggle

After Emancipation, the former slaves were faced with a new struggle. They had to make a new way of life as free people. The new life was not an easy one. The laborers after Emancipation were no longer the property of the planters. In spite of this, they still had few rights. They did not have the right to vote or to *participate* in government.

One famous St. Thomian led the way towards greater self-government for Virgin Islanders. He was a newspaper editor named Robert MacKay Hughes. Hughes was born in Guyana and he made his home on St. Thomas. He was the *editor* of the *St. Thomas Tidende* newspaper in the 1860's and 1870's. He used his



A coal woman of St. Thomas carrying pieces of coal on her head
(Photograph from the collection of El'Roy Simmonds).

newspaper to *declare* his political ideas. Hughes believed that just as the slaves had won their freedom from the planters in the Emancipation of 1848, so should the Danish West India Islands also be set free from Denmark.

Robert MacKay Hughes was one of the first Virgin Islanders to lead the fight for self-government. This movement for political freedom was continued in later years by D. Hamilton Jackson, Rothschild Francis, Valdemar Hill, Sr., Earle B. Otley and many others.

Opportunity on St. Thomas

After Emancipation, many Virgin Islanders wanted to move to St. Thomas. There were more and different jobs available on St. Thomas. There were more business opportunities there. Freed Virgin Islanders in

St. Thomas worked on the docks and in the warehouses. They became house servants, coal workers, sailors, clerks and merchants.

The Passport Problem

If a freed man or woman wanted to move to another Danish West Indian island to try and find work, a special *passport* was needed. Many people from St. Croix wanted to work in St. Thomas. However, a very small number of passports was issued. The police made it very hard for laborers to get passports.

Before laborers could get passports, they had to show all their money to the police. In this way, the Danish government tried to keep the laborers on St. Croix to work in the fields. In spite of this, many laborers from St. Croix did

manage to move to St. Thomas, with or without passports.

The Labor Act of 1849

While different jobs were offered on St. Thomas, St. Croix kept on producing sugar cane. Most Crucians stayed on the plantations as laborers. To keep the plantations running at a profit, the planters still needed a source of cheap labor. Although the free black people now had to be paid for their labor, the planters wanted to pay very low wages.

The Danish West Indian government helped the planters by passing a certain law. This law was called the Labor Act of 1849. The greatest impact of the law was felt on St. Croix. The Labor Act forced most Crucians to continue working on the sugar plantations.

Under the terms of the Labor Act, laborers had to sign a yearly *contract* to work from October 1st through September 30th. October 1st was known as Contract Day. In August, the Crucian laborers had to tell the planters if they wanted to change jobs. They changed jobs on Contract Day. They could not refuse any work that was asked of them by the planters.



Vagrants in prison.



A vagrant sweeping the street.

Any laborer who did not work was considered a “vagrant.”

The dictionary defines a “vagrant” as a tramp or a wanderer. However, the Danes defined a vagrant as anyone who was unemployed. If a laborer was out of work, he was considered to be a vagrant. He was arrested. Then he was put in jail and fed only bread and water. The punish-

ment for vagrancy was to clean the streets and public gutters.

No laborer wanted to be called a vagrant and put in jail. No one wanted to be forced to clean the streets and gutters. So the laborers had to work for whatever pay they were given by the planters.

The Labor Act made the new life of Crucian laborers very hard, like their old life of slavery. The Labor Act was always meant to be *temporary*. Starting in 1849 and every year afterwards, the laborers were promised that the Labor Act would be *repealed*. Instead, it lasted for thirty years. This made the laborers very unhappy.

Three Classes of Labor

Laborers on St. Croix plantations were divided into three groups. The

first class laborers, earning 15¢ a day, were skilled workers. They might have been carpenters or masons. The second class laborers, earning 10¢ a day, were field workers. The third class laborers were children or old people who could not do hard work. They earned 5¢ a day.

Tradesmen and artisans earned 20¢ per day. Tradesmen might own a cart, with a horse or a donkey to pull it. They could hire an *apprentice*, but only with the permission of the planter who hired them. When laborers were given an allowance of cornmeal and *herring* every day, 25¢ was subtracted from the weekly pay.

The Central Factory

In 1877, there was a change for some workers in St. Croix. In that

year, the Central Factory opened at Richmond in Christiansted. In addition to the Central Factory, *crushing stations* were built at Glynn, Peter's Rest, Barren Spot, Fair Plain and Princesse. Miles of pipelines were laid from the crushing stations to Orange Grove and to the Central Factory. The pipelines carried sugar cane juice.

The planters had their sugar cane loaded onto carts and taken to one of the crushing stations. The cane was crushed. Then the juice was pumped into big tanks at Orange Grove. Finally, the juice was piped to the Central Factory. There the juice was boiled and made into sugar.

Workers at the Central Factory were paid 30¢-35¢ a day. There was a large difference between Central Factory workers' wages and planta-

tions workers' wages. This difference seemed unfair to the plantation workers.

Soon the new machinery at the Central Factory broke down. Central Factory workers were laid off. Those workers who had been making 30¢-35¢ a day at the Central Factory had to go back to the plantations where they were making 10¢-15¢ a day. Now all the laborers were upset, and determined more than ever to make a change in their lives.

The End of the Labor Act?

During the summer of 1878 a rumor was started. The rumor was that the Labor Act would be repealed on October 1st and that the laborers would get a raise in pay on that day.

October 1st was Contract Day. A

huge crowd of laborers gathered in Frederiksted.

THINGS TO TALK ABOUT

1. What did Robert Mackay Hughes believe?
 2. What rights did Virgin Islanders have after Emancipation? What rights did they not have?
 3. How did labor in the Central Factory differ from labor on the plantations?
 4. Do you think we need a vagrancy law in the Virgin Islands today? Explain your answer.
-



Waiting for passports on Contract Day.

CHAPTER 12

Ready for Change

Contract Day

The laborers came to Frederiksted on October 1st in 1878 just as they had come every Contract Day since the Labor Act was passed. Some came to change their contracts, so they could work on different plantations. Some wanted to sail to St. Thomas or other islands. They hoped to find a better job and a better life. These laborers came to get passports. Some just came to spend a free day in town.

Four Serious Complaints

No matter what their reasons were for being in town, all these laborers had serious *complaints*. The first complaint was the low pay of the plantation workers compared with the higher pay of the Central Factory workers.

The second complaint was the Labor Act itself. Under the terms of the Labor Act, the workers could only change jobs on a certain date. If they missed that date, they would be forced to stay in the same old job for another year. This was too much like slavery.

The third complaint was also about the Labor Act. This law gave planters the right to subtract *fines* from the workers' pay. The workers had to pay fines for many different reasons. One

reason was lateness to work. Also, if a parent kept a child home from work, the parent would be fined. Sometimes the estate *managers* would fine the workers without any reason.

The fourth complaint was about passports. It was illegal to leave the island without a passport. On Contract Day in 1878, some people were worried that the police might stop giving out passports.

The laborers had serious complaints, but they also had high hopes for Contract Day, 1878. They hoped that the Labor Act would be repealed and that they would get a raise in pay.

Two More Incidents

When they realized that there would be no changes in the Labor Act on that day, they grew angry. Two

more incidents happened during the afternoon of October 1st that made the workers even angrier.

The story of the first incident was told many years later by an old woman who had been a young girl at the time of the Fireburn. This incident happened at the market. Most workers had small plots of land on



Certain provisions were not allowed to be sold at the market. In this picture, the police are removing the forbidden provisions.

which they grew vegetables and ground provisions. They sold these provisions in the market. There were rules about what could be sold in the market. Some provisions could not be sold without a special pass from the estate managers.

On October 1st, some people in the market were selling avocado pears and oranges without permission. The police came and took all the pears and oranges away. The people were left with nothing. The workers were getting tired of all the Danish rules and laws.

The second incident happened at Prince Street and King Cross Street in Frederiksted. Here, a man named Henry Trotman was laying in the gutter. His foot was cut and bleeding. He was taken to the hospital. By this

time, the crowd was just east of town, near the well. A woman named Felicia James came running. She told the laborers that Henry Trotman had been beaten by the police and he was dead.

The crowd rushed to the hospital where the manager told them that Trotman wasn't dead, but only sleeping. The crowd didn't believe him. They ran to the Fort. This is where the St. Croix Labor Rebellion of 1878 really began.



THINGS TO TALK ABOUT

1. Why did the laborers come to Frederiksted on Contract Day in 1878?
 2. The laborers had complaints about the Labor Act. What were they?
 3. Describe the two incidents that occurred on October 1, 1878.
 4. Why do you think the crowd ran from the hospital to the Fort?
-



Violet reads aloud to Great-Grandfather Isaac about the Revised Organic Act.

CHAPTER 13

The St. Croix Labor Rebellion of 1878

Remembering the Story

There were many young people in the crowd outside the Fort on October 1, 1878. Some of these young people lived to become very old men and women. Most of them never forgot the things that happened in Frederiksted on that Contract Day. They told their children, their grandchildren and their great-grandchildren the story of the Fireburn of 1878.

Let us imagine that a ten year old boy, whom we may call Isaac Jackson, stood outside the Fort that day. Isaac grew up to be a cabinetmaker and lived with his family in Estate Whim. Many years later, when Isaac was an old man, his great-granddaughter Violet would read aloud to him from the newspaper every day.

The Bill of Rights

On July 27, 1954, Violet was reading to her great-grandfather. The Revised Organic Act of the Virgin Islands had been passed a few days before in Washington.* The newspaper had printed parts of the Revised Organic Act. Violet was reading a long section of the Act called the Bill of Rights. She was getting tired.

Sleepily, she read, "No law shall be

There is more information on the Revised Organic Act of 1954 in the Teacher's Manual.

passed *abridging* the freedom of speech or of the press or the right of the people peaceably to *assemble* and *petition* the government for the *redress* of *grievances*." Then she yawned.

Her great-grandfather looked at her sharply. "Me child, I don't know how you could yawn when you read that!" he exclaimed. "Don't you know what that means?" Without waiting for an answer, he continued, "That means that the people of the Virgin Islands can hold meetings and discuss our complaints about the government and the politicians. We can speak or write the truth, and no one can stop us or put us in jail. Me child, if they had a law like that in my day, I can tell you, things would have been different!"

Violet asked, "How would things have been different, Grandpa?"

"For one thing," Isaac said, "the Fireburn might not have happened in the same way, or it might never have happened at all. Surely, not as many of our people would have been killed. Don't you remember the story I told you about the Fireburn, Violet? I must have told that story a hundred times already."

"No, Grandpa, I didn't forget, but tell me again. I like to hear that story."

The Story of the Fireburn

Isaac closed his eyes. He could see the crowds in front of Fort Frederik as clearly as when he was ten years old.

"Well, Violet," he started, "I was standing with my father and hundreds of other people in front of the Fort. There were soldiers outside the Fort. They drew their *sabers* and waved

them in the air, trying to make us go away. We wouldn't go away. Instead, we started throwing stones, conch shells, bricks and whatever came to hand. The soldiers ran inside. We kept throwing stones at the Fort. The soldiers fired their guns from inside, but no one was hurt.

"Then some people tore off the outer gate of the Fort and threw it into the sea. They tried to break into the fort, but the inner gate held fast. The soldiers fired their guns again, and this time I could hear the bullets flying by. We turned away from the Fort then and ran back into town."

"Were you scared, Grandpa?"

"No, Violet, not then. But I was scared when the fires started. First, the crowd broke up into many different groups. Some ran through the streets

of Frederiksted, burning shops and houses and everything inside. The Customs House was burned. The heat was something terrible! *Barrels* of rum and kerosene caught fire and burst with a noise like a cannon. The flaming liquids turned the streets of Frederiksted into rivers of fire. Praise God, Violet, I never saw anything like that, before or since!"

"Grandpa, didn't the fire trucks come out then?"

"We didn't have fire trucks then, Violet. It was a fire wagon, pulled by horses or men. They couldn't use the horses because there were too many fires. You know horses won't stay close to a fire. On that day in Frederiksted, the streets themselves were burning. The Fire *Brigade* men didn't dare come out because there were so many

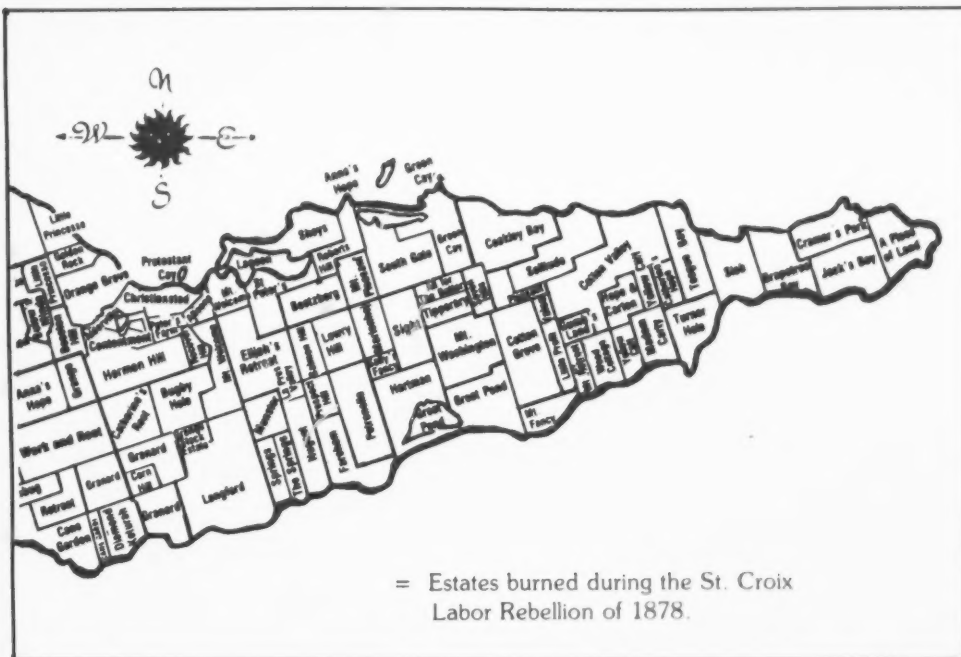
angry people in the streets setting the fires."

"Did anyone try to stop you, Grandpa?"

"Not yet, Violet, but later. You see, I didn't know it at the time, but Police Master Petersen was watching us. There must have been 700 of us, all angry. The Police Master saw the burning begin. At about six in the evening, he sent a messenger to the Fort in Christiansted, asking for soldiers to come to West End. The messenger, traveling on horseback and on foot, reached Bassin at 1:00 a.m. on Wednesday morning. Imagine, Violet, it took him seven hours to reach!"

Laughing, Violet said, "Now we can drive to Christiansted in forty minutes!"

"Yes, Violet, but your big brother drives too fast! Remember, this



mann and his soldiers left the Fort at 2:00 a.m. and reached Frederiksted at sunrise on Wednesday morning. Ostermann's soldiers forced the crowd to leave the town. My father and I went home then."

"Why did you go home, Grandpa?"



Rioters led by Queen Mary, shouting "Our side?" during the Fireburn of 1878.

Our Side?

"Well, Violet, I had been up all night, and I was tired. So we went home, but most people did not go home. Instead, they started burning fields and buildings on both sides of Centerline Road east of Frederiksted. When they met people on the road,

they asked 'Our side? Our side?' and more people joined with them. The people who were not on 'our side' hid when they saw the crowds coming.

"Many groups of laborers roamed all over St. Croix for about two weeks. More than fifty plantations were burned."

"Was Whim burned, too, Grandpa?" Violet wondered.

"Yes, fires destroyed Whim, and Carlton, Two Friends, Concordia, Good Hope, Lower Love and many others, both near and far. At the same time, soldiers roamed around the island, arresting any of us who were found on the roads without a pass from our estate managers. By the end of the Fireburn, more than one-hundred of our people had been killed and more than four-hundred had been arrested.



The three "Queens" of the Fireburn.

On October 31st, Governor-General
Garde declared the Labor Rebellion
was over."

Famous Women

"Tell me about the leaders, Grandpa. I like to hear about Queen Mary!"

"We had many leaders in the Fireburn. Three of the best were women. Mary Thomas, the most famous leader, was known as Queen Mary or Captain Thomas. Axelline Salomon was called Queen Agnes. Then there was Queen Matilda, who was called Bottom Belly. You know, Violet, some of the greatest leaders in our history have been women."

"Who else was a great leader, Grandpa?"

"I remember, in 1935, when Anna Marie Vessup, Edith Williams and Eulalie Stevens won the right to vote for women in the Virgin Islands. And don't forget Queen Coziah, who led the coal workers of St. Thomas during



"Queen Mary, 'tis where you going to burn?"

the Mexican silver crisis in 1892."

Queen Mary

"Tell me more about Queen Mary
now, Grandpa."

“Queen Mary may be the greatest *heroine* of our people, but we don’t know much about her. We have a legend that the Danish government honored Queen Mary more than 25 years after the Fireburn. People say they put her picture and the pictures of Queen Agnes and Bottom Belly on the 20¢ and 40¢ Danish West Indian coins. Other people say that the three women on the coins represent the three Virgin Islands.”

After the Fireburn

“What happened after the Fireburn, Grandpa?”

“Exactly one year after the Fireburn began, the Labor Act was repealed. The Crucian laborers showed in the Fireburn that they were not going to be treated like slaves any longer. After the

Fireburn, we continued to fight for more rights and a better way of life."

"Grandpa, do you think we could have another Fireburn today?"

"Today? Me child, the Fireburn was not a party. Many of our people died in those days. Do you think it was fun?"

"No, Grandpa, not exactly fun. But wasn't it exciting?"

Isaac sighed and said, "Violet, sometimes I wonder about the youth today. You like excitement, but you don't seem to realize the struggles we went through so you can be where you are today. You children have it too easy."

The Struggle Continues

Violet said, "Grandpa, we do realize. But you know, things aren't perfect yet, and our struggles are not

yet over. I wonder what stories I will be telling to my grandchildren when I am as old as you are, Grandpa!"

Today, Violet may be telling her own children or her grandchildren the stories of the Fireburn she heard from her grandfather Isaac. She may be telling them stories about the great leaders of the Virgin Islands—D. Hamilton Jackson, Rothschild Francis, David Canegata, Edward Wilmot Blyden, as well as Buddhoe, Kanta and Claes and many, many others.

Violet wants her children to remember the struggles of Virgin Islanders. The children have learned to be proud of their own history. They have heard about their West African ancestors, who never stopped struggling until they achieved their freedom. The children know that the

struggle for human rights and equality continued after Emancipation, and that it continues today.

This is our Virgin Islands heritage.



THINGS TO TALK ABOUT

1. In your own words, retell the story of the Fireburn.
 2. Why is the name "Fireburn" a good one for the events of October 1878?
 3. Why do you think Mary Thomas was called Queen Mary?
 4. Was the Fireburn a success for the laborers? For the planters? Why or why not?
 5. What did Virgin Islands laborers do about their jobs and living conditions after the Fireburn?
 6. What does the story of the Fireburn mean to you in relation to the lives of your ancestors?
-

Guero 2

Triangle

Tambourine Shake hit

Bongo

Heavily accented
and menacing

Virgin Islands Folk Song Collected & Arr. by Hugo Bornn

Queen Ma - ry 'tis- where you going to burn

Queen Ma - ry 'tis- where you going to burn Don't tell me

no-thing 't'all Just fetch the match and oil

Ba - sin jail- house, 'tis there I'm going to burn.

Words and music to "Queen Mary"
(Used by permission of Roy Bornn).

GLOSSARY

A

Abolition (*ab'ə·lish'ən*) *n.* The end.

Abridge (*ə·brɪj'*) *v.* To make something shorter, especially by using fewer words. With regard to civil, human or legal rights, to abridge is to cut off, or deprive.

Accustom (*ə·kʊs'·təm*) *v.t.* To make familiar by custom or habit; **accustomed** *adj.* In the habit of.

Adjoupa (*ə·joo'·pah*) *n.* The type of house in which the Carib women and their children lived.

Admire (*əd·mɪr'*) *v.* To look or think of with wonder, pleasure or satisfaction.

Africa (*Af'·rə·kə*) *n.* Continent south of Europe and east of the Atlantic Ocean.

Amina (*A·mee'·na*) *n.* People from a kingdom in Africa who were brought to St. John, and who started a rebellion there.

Amina Hill (*A·mee'·na Hill*) *n.* A place in St. John where some members of the Amina tribe may have jumped off a cliff rather than return to slavery.

Ancestor (*ən'·ses'·tər*) *n.* A person who comes before one in a family line, like a great-grandparent, or someone earlier.

Anchor (*ən'·kər*) *n.* A heavy object, usually iron, lowered by cable or chain to the bottom of water to keep a ship from drifting.

Ancient (*ən'·shənt*) *adj.* Belonging to times past.

Annato (*a·net'·tō*) *n.* A small tropical tree with pink and red flowers; the seeds are used for making a reddish dye.

Apprentice (*ə·pren'·tis*) *n.* A person who is learning a trade or an art by working with a skilled worker.

Archaeologist (*är'·kē·äl'·ə·jīs*) *n.* A person who studies the life and culture of ancient peoples.

Artisan (*är'·tə·zən*) *n.* A person skilled in a craft or trade; a craftsman.

Ashanti (Asante) (*A·shan'·tee*) *n.* Name of an African tribe.

Assemble (*ə·sem'·bəl*) *v.* To gather together; bring together.

Atlantic Ocean (*At·lan'·tik Ō·shən*) *n.* Ocean east of North and South America; it extends to Europe and Africa.

Auction (*ôk'·shən*) *n.* A public sale in which each thing is sold to the person who offers the most money for it.

Authority (*ə·thôr'·ə·tē*) *n.* Power; control.

Ay-Ay (*ī·ī*) *n.* The Tainos' name for St. Croix.

B

Bahamas (*bə·hā·məz*) *n.* A chain of about 3,000 coral islands and reefs that make up an independent nation which lies off the coast of Florida.

Bailiff (*Bā'·lif*) *n.* An officer of court having custody of prisoners; a sheriff's deputy.

Barrel (*Bar'·əl*) *n.* A large wooden, cylindrical container with flat, circular ends and sides that bulge outward.

Barren Spot (*Bar'ən Spot*) *n.* An estate on St. Croix between Kingshill and Sunny Isle.

Bassin (*Bah'zin*) *n.* A former name for Christiansted.

Battle (*bat'·l*) *n.* A fight between enemies or opposing forces.

Benye (*ben'·yay*) *n.* A sweet snack or breakfast food made by frying a batter made with ripe bananas.

Bidder (*bid'·ər*) *n.* A person who offers a price as in an auction.

Bill of Rights (*bil ov rīts*) *n.* An article found in the Constitution, written to protect individual liberties against possible unjust rule by the national government.

Blacksmith (*blak'·smith*) *n.* A person who makes and repairs iron objects by heating and hammering them into shape.

Bondage (*bon'·dij*) *n.* Lack of freedom; slavery.

Bordeaux, General (*Bôr·dō'*) *n.* A nickname for Moses Gottlieb, Buddhoe (see *Buddhoe*).

Borinquen (*bo·reen·kən'*) *n.* The former name of Puerto Rico; a name which the Tainos gave the island.

Bottom Belly *n.* Nickname for one of the women leaders of the Fireburn; also known as "Queen Matilda."

Brand (*brand*) *n.* The mark made by burning the skin with a hot iron.

Bredal, Erik (*er'ik brā·däl*) *n.* A Danish governor under whom the Danes made the first permanent settlement.

Brigade (*bri·gād'*) *n.* a group of people organized to function as a unit in some work; as Fire Brigade, for example.

British Virgin Islands *n.* A group of islands lying north and east of St. Thomas and St. John, and which are dependencies of the British West Indies.

Buddhoe (*Bud·ō'*) *n.* A leader of the 1848 rebellion for emancipation in the Danish West Indies; his Christian name was Moses Gottlieb.

C

Cabinet (*kab'·i·nət*) *n.* A wooden case or box with doors and shelves for holding and storing things.

Calabash (*kal'·ə·bash'*) *n.* Utensil made from the dried shell of the fruit of the tropical American tree.

Calico (*kal'·ə·kō*) *n.* a cotton cloth that usually has colored patterns printed on one side.

Calina (*ka·lee'·na*) *n.* The people who lived in the Guianas and throughout the Caribbean, and who are known today as Carib Indians.

Cannibal (*kan'·e·bəl*) *n.* A person who eats human flesh.

Canoe (*kan·ü')* *n.* A narrow, light boat moved with a paddle.

Captive (*kap'·tiv*) *n.* A person or an animal captured or held unwillingly.

Capture (*kap'·chər*) *v.* To make a prisoner of; to take by force.

Carbet (*kar'·bet*) *n.* The type of house in which Carib Indian men slept.

Cargo (*kär'·gō*) *n.* A load of goods carried by a ship.

Carib (*kar'·ib*) *n.* Indians who originally came from the Guianas in South America. They called themselves the Calina.

Caribbean (*kar'·ə·bē'·ən*) *n.* A part of the Atlantic Ocean bordered by the West Indies, Central America and South America.

Carving (*kär'·ving*) *n.* A cutting of wood, stone or other material to form a design.

Cassava (*kə·sä'·və*) *n.* A tropical plant having starchy roots, which can be used in making bread or tapioca.

Central Factory (*sen'·trəl fak'·tə·rē*) *n.* A building at Richmond, St. Croix, and a series of pipes and stations where cane juice was piped to be boiled and made into sugar.

Ceramic (*sə·ram'·ik*) *adj.* A pot or tile made of baked clay.

Chant (*chänt*) *n.* A simple song sung or uttered on one tone.

Character (*kar'·ik·tər*) *n.* Having a certain strength or discipline in behavior; behavior typical of a person or group.

Charter (*char'·tər*) *n.* A written grant with certain rights given by a ruler to his or her subjects, or to a company formed to do a special kind of business.

Christian VI (*Kris'·chē·ən*) *n.* A king of Denmark.

Christianity (*Kris'·chē·an'·ə·tē*) *n.* The religion based on the teachings of Christ as they appear in the bible.

Christiansted (*Kris'·chē·an·sted*) *n.* The major town of St. Croix.

Civilization (*siv'·ə·lə·zā'·shən*) *n.* The total culture of a particular people, nation, period, etc.

Claim (*klām*) *v.* To demand as one's own or one's right.

Clay (*klā*) *n.* A mud used to make bricks, pottery, and other ceramics.

Colony (*kol'·ə·nē*) *n.* A territory in which a group of settlers who come from another country live. This territory is usually ruled by another country.

Columbus, Christopher (*Kə·lum'·bəs*) *n.* An explorer from Spain.

Commit (*kə·mit'*) *v.* To do something; perform something.

Commotion (*kə·mō·shən*) *n.* Violent movement; noise; confusion.

Complaint (*kəm·plānt'*) *n.* A reason to find fault.

Compulsory (*kəm·pul'·sər·ē*) *adj.* A requirement in performing a certain act.

Concern (*kən·sɜrn'*) *n.* An interest in a person or thing.

Conch Shell (*konk shel*) *n.* A large spiral sea shell, used as a signal horn by blowing into the narrow end of the shell.

Condition (*kən·dɪsh'·ən*) *n.* The physical surroundings and situation.

Continent (*kon'·tə·nənt*) *n.* One of the seven great masses of land on earth.

Continue (*kən·tin'·yōō*) *v.i.* To go on again with an activity, story, etc.

Contract (*kön'·trakt*) *n.* An agreement that can be enforced by law.

Contract Day (*Kön'·trakt Dā*) *n.* The day, October 1, on which the laborers would negotiate new agreements with their employers.

Control (*kən·trōl'*) *v.* To have power or authority to rule.

Cooper (*koo·pər*) *n.* A skilled worker who makes barrels by hand.

Copenhagen (*Ko'·pən·hay·gun*) *n.* The capital and largest city of Denmark.

Coral (*kôr'·əl, kār'*) *n.* A hard red, pink or white material, made up of skeletons of tiny sea animals and often used for jewelry.

Coral Bay (*Kôr'·əl Bā*) *n.* A small village on the island of St. John.

Cowrie (*kou'·rē*) *n.* A bright colored, glossy shell found in warm seas.

Craftsman (*krafts'·man*) *n.* A person skilled in a trade, such as carpenter or blacksmith.

Crushing stations (*krush'·ing sta'·shəns*) *n.* Places where the cane was crushed.

Cruz Bay (*Krüz Bā*) *n.* The main town of the island of St. John.

Cudjo (*kud'·jō*) *n.* One of William Davis' followers who could not keep a secret about a planned revolt in 1759.

Culture (*kul'·cher*) *n.* The customs, arts, and way of life of a nation or people.

Curaçao (*kyoor·ə·so'*) *n.* An island just north of Venezuela, South America.

D

Danish West India Company (*Dā·nish West In'·dēa Kum'·pə·nē*) *n.* A company set up for trading and business, which controlled St. Thomas until the Danish Government took it over.

Davis, William (*Dā·vis*) *n.* A free black leader of a group which planned to overthrow the Danes on St. Croix in 1759.

Declare (*dī'·klər*) *v.* To state openly.

Debtor (*det'·ər*) *n.* A person who owes something to another.

Decline (*dē·klīn*) *v.* To become less in wealth, power or value.

Denmark (*Den'·mārk*) *n.* A small nation in northern Europe that is almost surrounded by water.

Descendant (*dī·send'·ənt*) *n.* A person who is an offspring of a certain family.

Determined (*de·ter'·mənd*) *adj.* With one's mind firmly made up.

Develop (*dē·vel'·əp*) *v.* To grow; bring or come into being.

Diary (*dī'·ə·rē*) *n.* A written daily record, especially of the writer's own experiences, thoughts, etc.

Diet (*dī'·ət*) *n.* What a person usually eats or drinks.

Disaster (*də·zas'·ter*) *n.* Any happening that causes great harm or damage.

Dominica (*Dō·me·nee'·ka*) *n.* A ruggedly beautiful island with thick green forests, south of the Virgin Islands between Guadeloupe and Martinique.

Drought (*Drout*) *n.* A long period of time in which there is little or no rain.

Dug-out (*dug out*) *n.* A boat made by hollowing out a log.

Dutch Creole (*Duch Kre'·ōl*) *n.* The language spoken by some of the West African slaves in the Danish West Indies.

E

Editor (*ed'·i·tər*) *n.* A person who prepares writing to be printed in a magazine, newspaper.

Egypt (*Ē'·jīpt*) *n.* A nation in the northeastern corner of Africa.

Elegant (*el'·ə·gənt*) *adj.* Having a richness of grace and design.

Emancipation Garden (*Ē·man'·sə·pā'·shən Gar'·den*) *n.* A place on St. Thomas where slaves were brought to be sold at market. There is a park at Emancipation Garden today.

Empire (*em'·pīr*) *n.* A group of nations or states under one ruler or government.

Enemy (*en'·ə·mē*) *n.* A person, group or country that hates or tries to harm another.

Engineer (*en'·jə·nīr*) *n.* A person who directs the construction of a building.

England (*Ing'·glənd*) *n.* A country in the North Atlantic which is the largest part of Great Britain.

Enslave (*en·slāv*) *v.* To take away freedom; to make a slave.

Equivalent (*ē·kwiv'·ə·lənt*) *adj.* Equal.

Estate (*es·tāt'*) *n.* A large piece of land where farming or harvesting a crop is done, usually the location of a plantation, slave quarters and greathouse.

Europe (*yu'·rep*) *n.* A continent west of Asia and east of the Atlantic Ocean.

Exchange (*eks·chānj'*) *v.* To give in return for something else.

Expedition (*ek'·spədi'·shən*) *n.* A journey by land or sea for a special purpose

Explorer (*ik·splôr'·ər*) *n.* A person who examines or travels to an unknown or little known place.

F

Fair Plain (*Fäer Plān*) *n.* One of the estates on St. Croix where a crushing station was built.

Ferdinand (*fer'·də·nand*) *n.* King of Spain during Columbus' voyages (1452-1516).

Feud (*fyood*) *n.* A long, bitter quarrel.

Fierce (*firs*) *adj.* Violent, cruel.

Fine (*fīn*) *n.* A sum of money paid to settle a matter.

Fireburn of 1878 (*Fīr·bern*) *n.* The name of the labor revolt in Frederiksted.

Flagship (*flag·ship*) *n.* The ship that carries the commander of the fleet, and that displays his flag.

Forbidden (*fər·bid'·'n*) *adj.* Not permitted, not allowed.

Fort Frederik (Frederiksvaern) (*Fort Fred'·rik*) *n.* Danish fort in Frederiksted.

Fort Christian (Christiansvaern) (*Fort Kris'·chē· n*)
n. Danish Fort in Charlotte Amalie.

France (*Frans*) n. A country in western Europe, on the Atlantic Ocean.

Frederik (*Fred'·rik*) n. King of Denmark.

Frederiksted (*Fred'·rik·sted*) n. The town on the west end of St. Croix.

Free Blacks (*frē blaks*) n. Those slaves who were given their freedom by their masters or who bought their freedom.

Free Colored (*frē kul'·əd*) n. A group of people who had white fathers and black mothers. They were born slaves because of their mothers, but received their freedom from their white fathers, or bought their freedom.

Freedom (*frē'·dəm*) n. Being able to act, move and choose as one wishes.

French West Indies (*French West In'·dēz*) n. Islands in the Caribbean, owned by France.

G

Germany (*Jur'·mənē*) n. A country in North Central Europe.

Ghana (*Ga'·na*) n. A country in West Africa; formerly, a prominent empire.

Glynn (*Glin*) n. An estate on St. Croix.

Goddess (*Gād'·is*) n. A female god; a woman greatly admired.

Golden Days (*Gōl'·den Dāz*) *n.* The term given by the planters to the years when the sugar crop was making huge profits (1754-1815).

Gottlieb, Moses (*Got'·leeb*) *n.* The Christian name of Buddhoe, or "General Bordeaux" (see *Buddhoe*).

Greater Antilles (*Grāt'·ər An·til·ēz*) *n.* A group of islands in the West Indies, including Cuba, Jamaica, Hispaniola and Puerto Rico.

Greathouse (*grāt houz*) *n.* A large house owned by a plantation owner.

Greece (*Grēs*) *n.* A country in the southern part of Europe.

Grievance (*grē'·vans*) *n.* A situation that is unjust. a complaint.

Guadeloupe (*Gwâ·də·loop'*) *n.* An island south of the Virgin Islands belonging to France, between Dominica and Montserrat.

Guianas (*Gē·an'·az*) *n.* A region in northern South America including Guyana, Surinam, and French Guiana.

Guinea (*Gin'·ē*) *n.* A coastal region of West Africa.

Gutter (*gut'·ər*) *n.* A narrow channel along the side of a road to carry off water.

H

Haiti (*Hā'·tē*) *n.* a country on the western portion of the island of Hispaniola.

Hammock (*ham'·ək*) *n.* A net or canvas held by ropes at both ends and used as a bed.

Ham's Bluff (*Hamz Bluf*) *n.* An estate north of Fred-
eriksted.

Hector, Sam (*Hek'·tər*) *n.* One of the leaders of a
rebellion on St. Croix that was stopped in the plan-
ning stages (1746).

Hemisphere (*hem'·es·fir*) *n.* Any of the halves of the
Earth: the Earth is divided by the equator into the
Northern and Southern hemispheres, and by a meri-
dian into the Eastern and Western hemispheres.

Heroine (*her'·ə·win*) *n.* A girl or woman of outstand-
ing courage.

Herring (*her'·in*) *n.* A small food fish, eaten cooked,
dried, salted or smoked.

Hispaniola (*His'·pan·yō·la*) *n.* An island in the West
Indies which consists of Haiti and the Dominican
Republic.

Hold (*hōld*) *n.* The inside of a ship, below the decks,
where the cargo is stored.

I

Iguana (*i·gwâ'·na*) *n.* A large harmless lizard.

Illegal (*i·lē'·gəl*) *adj.* Against the law.

Impact (*im·pakt'*) *n.* The power of an event or idea
to produce changes, move feelings.

Import (*im·pôrt'*) *v.* To bring goods in from another
country.

Incident (*in'·si·dənt*) *n.* Something that happens; an
event.

Indentured servant (*in·den'·churd ser'·vənt*) *n.* A
person who has made a contract to work for another
person for a period of time.

Independent (*in·də·pen'·dənt*) *adj.* Free from the control of someone else.

India (*in'·dē·ə*) *n.* A country in southern Asia; the Indian sub-continent.

Indian (*in'·dē·ən*) *n.* A person native to India, or any of the early people native to the West Indies or North America.

Indies (*in'·dēz*) *n.* Referring at first to India, but after Columbus' voyages, referring to the Caribbean area (West Indies).

Influence (*in'·floo·əns*) *n.* The power to act on or affect persons or things.

Invent (*in·vent'*) *v.t.* To make or think something new.

Isabella (*iz'·ə·bel'·ə*) *n.* Queen of Spain during Columbus' voyages (1451-1504).

Italy (*l'·təl'·ē*) *n.* A country in southern Europe.

Iversen, Jorgen (*ī'·ver·sən*) *n.* The first governor appointed by the Danish West India Company.

J

James, Felicia (*jāmz*) *n.* A woman who, on October 1, 1878, told the laborers that Henry Trotman was dead.

Jost Van Dyke (*Yōs Van Dīk*) *n.* One of the British Virgin Islands.

K

King Cross Street (*King Krōs Strēt*) *n.* A street in Frederiksted town.

Kingdom (*king'·dām*) *n.* A country headed by a king.

Knights of Malta (*Nīts ov Mal'·tə*) *n.* A religious and military order which owned St. Croix and other islands during the seventeenth century.

L

Labor (*lā'·bər*) *v.* To work or toil.

Labor Act of 1849 (*Lā'·bər Akt*) *n.* A law made after Emancipation, which limited the freedom of Danish West Indian laborers.

La Grange (*Lə Grānj*) *n.* An estate just outside of Frederiksted town limits.

Legend (*le'·jənd*) *n.* A story handed down for generations among a people, and believed to have a historical basis although that can not be proven.

Lesser Antilles (*Les'·ər An·tīl'·ēz*) *n.* A group of islands in the West Indies, southeast of Puerto Rico, including the Leeward Islands, the Windward Islands, and the islands off the coast of Venezuela.

Limited (*lim'·it·əd*) *adj.* Set within some bounds.

L'Ouverture, Toussaint (*Too·sān'·Loo·ver·tūr'*) *n.* Haitian general and liberator.

Luggage (*lug'·ij*) *n.* Suitcases, valises, trunks, etc.; baggage.

M

Maize (*māz*) *n.* Corn; Indian corn.

Malnutrition (*mal·noo·trish'·ən*) *n.* Not enough food; improper diet.

Manager (*man'·ə·jər*) *n.* A person who is in overall charge of a group of people, a building, or a business.

Manufacture (*man'·yə·fak'·cher*) *n.* The making of goods and articles by hand or machinery, often on a large scale.

Mariagalante (*Mä·rē'·ə·ga·länt*) *n.* A small island off the coast of Guadeloupe; now spelled "Marie Galante."

Maroon (*mə·roon'*) *n.* Runaway slaves who lived in a small hidden community in the hills, far away from plantations or towns.

Maroon's Hole (*Mə·roonz' Höl*) *n.* The name of a place in the hills near Frederiksted where runaway slaves hid and lived.

Martinique (*Mär'·tə·nēk'*) *n.* An island in the Windward group of the West Indies owned by France; located between Dominica and St. Lucia.

Mary Point (*Mər'·ē Point*) *n.* An estate on St. John with cliffs overlooking the spot where Africans from the Amina tribe may have jumped to their deaths in order not to return to slavery.

Mass (*mas*) *n.* A large area of land; a quantity of matter of indefinite shape and size.

Merchant (*mur'·chənt*) *n.* A person whose business is buying and selling goods for profit.

Mexico (*Mek'·si·kō*) *n.* A country south of the United States.

Michel (*Mi·shel'*) *n.* One of William Davis' three friends who helped him plan a rebellion in 1759.

Migrate (*mī'·grāt*) *v.* To move from one place to another, especially in order to make a new home.

Militia (*mə'lish'·ə*) *n.* An army composed of citizens rather than professional soldiers, called out in times of emergency.

Mission (*mish'·ən*) *n.* The headquarters of a group sent by a church to spread its religion, especially in a foreign land.

Missionary (*mish'·en·er'·ē*) *n.* A person sent by his church to preach and teach, especially in a foreign country.

Molasses (*mə'las'·iz*) *n.* Sweet brown syrup produced during the refining of sugar.

Monument (*män'·yū·mənt*) *n.* A structure set up to honor the memory of a person or event, such as a statue or a building.

Moravian (*Mō·rā·vē·ən*) *n.* A Protestant religion founded in Herrnhut, now East Germany.

Mother Country (*mu'·thər kun'·trē*) *n.* A person's native land or the land of his ancestors.

Mystery (*mis'·tər·ē*) *n.* A thing that is hidden, secret or unknown.

Myth (*mith*) *n.* A story whose purpose is to explain a mystery of nature or a custom. The story need not be true.

N

Nation (*nā·shun*) *n.* A group of people under the same government.

Navigator (*na'·və·gā'·lər*) *n.* A person who steers or directs a ship.

Netherlands (*Neth·ər·landz*) *n.* A country in western Europe.

O

Object (*öb'·jekt*) *n.* A thing that can be seen or touched.

Once Mil Virgenes (*On'·sā Mēl Vir·hen'·əs*) *n.* In Spanish: Eleven Thousand Virgins.

Orange Grove (*Or'·inj Grōv*) *n.* An estate just west of Christiansted.

Ørnen (*Or'·nən*) *n.* The ship in which Buddhoe sailed from St. Croix.

P

Packet (*Pa'·ket*) *n.* A boat that travels a regular route carrying passengers, freight and mail.

Paddle (*pa'·dəl*) *n.* A short oar with a wide blade at one or both ends. *v.* To move a canoe with light wooden, bladed instrument.

Papyrus (*pə·pt'·rəs*) *n.* A tall water plant which grows well in the Nile region of Egypt.

Participate (*pär·tis'·ə·pāt*) *v.* To have or to take part in some activity.

Passport (*pas'·port*) *n.* An official paper given to someone in order for him or her to travel.

Permanent (*pur'·mə·nənt*) *adj.* Lasting a long time without change.

Peter's Rest (*Pē'·tərz Rest*) *n.* An estate located in the center of St. Croix.

Petition (*pe·ti'·shan*) *n.* A formal request to someone in authority for some privilege, right or benefit.

Petroglyph (*pe'·trō·glif*) *n.* A rock carving, especially a prehistoric one.

Pierce (*pīrs*) *v.* To pass into or through as a pointed instrument does.

Pincers (*pin'·serz*) *n.* A tool used for gripping things.

Plantation (*plan·tā'·shan*) *n.* A large estate, usually in a warm climate, on which crops are grown by workers who live on the estate.

Plaza (*plā'·ze*) *n.* A public square or market place.

Population (*pāp'·yā·tā'·shan*) *n.* The number of all people in a country, region, etc.

Position (*pə·zī'·shan*) *n.* The way in which a person or thing is placed, arranged, especially a job or employment.

Possession (*po·ze'·shan*) *n.* Anything that is owned.

Port of Spain (*Pôrt ov Spān*) *n.* Capital of Trinidad and Tobago.

Portugal (*Pôr'·chu·gal*) *n.* A country in southwestern Europe, on the Atlantic Ocean.

Pottery (*Pä'·tər·ē*) *n.* Pots, bowls, dishes made out of clay and hardened by heat.

Prince Street (*Prins Strēt*) *n.* A street in Frederiksted town, St. Croix.

Princesse (*Prin'·səs*) *n.* An estate near Christiansted, St. Croix.

Prisoner (*pri'·zə·nər*) *n.* A person put in jail for some crime; a person captured or held captive.

Proclamation (*präk'·lə·mā'·shan*) *n.* A statement made by an official which will become a law.

Proclamation of 1847 *n.* A statement made by the Danish government which was to give freedom step-by-step to the slaves.

Product (*prō'·dukt*) *n.* Something made by man or nature.

Profit (*prā'fit*) *n.* Money left over after all the expenses have been subtracted from the money taken in.

Property (*prā'·pər·tē*) *n.* A thing or things owned.

Protect (*prō'·tekt*) *v.* To guard from injury, danger or loss.

Provision (*prō·vizh'·ən*) *n.* A vegetable which grows beneath the ground.

Psalm (*sām*) *n.* A book of the Bible.

Pyramid (*pir'·ə·mid*) *n.* Any huge structure with a square base and four sloping triangular sides meeting at the top, as those built in ancient Egypt.

Q

Quaco (*kwä'·kō*) *n.* One of William Davis' three friends who helped him plan the rebellion on St. Croix in 1759.

Quarter (*kwór'·tər*) *n.* A place to live.

Queen Agnes (*Kwēn Agnes*) *n.* One of three women prominent in the Fireburn of 1878, real name was Axelline Salomon.

Queen Mary (*Kwēn Mer'·ē*) *n.* One of three women prominent in the Fireburn of 1878, real name was Mary Thomas.

Queen Mathilda (*Kwēn Me·til'·de*) *n.* One of three women prominent in the Fireburn of 1878, also known as "Bottom Belly."

R

Raid (*rād*) *n.* A sudden, violent attack.

Ram's Head (*Ramz Hed*) *n.* An area in St. John where St. Johnians of the Amina Kingdom may have jumped to their deaths rather than return to slavery in 1734.

Rattan (*ra·tan'*) *n.* A switch used in punishing school children.

Rattle (*rat'·l*) *n.* A hollow gourd or pod filled with seeds or pebbles which makes a sharp, short sound when shaken.

Rebellion (*Rē·bel'·yan*) *n.* An attack on an established order or government.

Redress (*rē'·dres*) *n.* Remedy, compensation.

Reed (*rēd*) *n.* A tall, slender grass which grows in wet, marshy land.

Reef Bay Falls (*Rēf Bā Fāls*) *n.* A place in St. John where the petroglyphs are located.

Repeal (*rē·pēl'*) *v.* To stop officially; to cancel.

Representative (*rep·rē·zen'·tə·tiv*) *n.* Someone who comes to speak for another person at a meeting.

Resign (*rē·zīn'*) *v.* To give up a position.

Revised Organic Act (*Rē·vīzd' Or·gan'·ik Akt*) *n.* An official document, passed into law in 1954, which changed many of the rules of government of the Virgin Islands to those that are still being used today.

Revolt (*rē·vōlt'*) *n.* A rising up against a government or an established order.

Riches (*rich'·əz*) *n.* Valuable possessions, much money, property; wealth.

Richmond (*Rich'·mund*) *n.* An estate just outside of Christiansted Town limits. St. Croix.

Rigsdaler (*riks'·dāl·ər*) *n.* A Danish silver coin worth one U.S. Dollar.

Roam (*rōm*) *v.* To travel from place to place.

Rome (*Rōm*) *n.* The capital of Italy.

Rumor (*roo'·mer*) *n.* Gossip, talk not necessarily based on fact.

S

Saber (*sā·bər*) *n.* A sword with a slightly curved blade.

Salomon, Axelline *n.* One of the three women leaders of the Fireburn of 1878. Also known as "Queen Agnes."

Salt River (*Sôlt Ri'·ver*) *n.* The place where Columbus landed on the north shore of St. Croix.

Santa Cruz (*San'·ta Crooz*) *n.* Spanish name for St. Croix, meaning "Holy Cross."

Schmidt, Eric (*Shmit*) *n.* Led the first Danes to St. Thomas in 1666.

Schopen, John Wilhelm (*Shō'·pen*) *n.* Representative of the planters to the king of Denmark in 1754.

Section (*seck'·shən*) *n.* A part or division of a book or newspaper, etc.

Seize (*sēz*) *v.t.* To take legal possession of; to take forcibly and quickly.

Separate (*sep'·ə·rāt*) *v.* To keep apart.

Settlement (*set'·əl·mənt*) *n.* A place where people have gone to start a new community.

Shelter (*shel'·tər*) *n.* Protection by something that covers, as a roof or other structure.

Shortage (*shôr'·təj*) *n.* A lack of the needed amount of something.

Signal (*sig'·n'l*) *n.* A sign given by gesture, flashing light, etc. to communicate a certain action or response.

Slave (*slāv*) *n.* A person who is owned by another person and has no freedom.

Slave Market (*slāv mār'·kət*) *n.* A place where slaves were bought and sold.

Source (*sôrs*) *n.* A thing or place from which something comes or is gotten.

South America (*a·mer'·i·kə*) *n.* A southern continent in the western hemisphere.

Spain (*Spān*) *n.* A country in southern Europe.

Spice (*spīs*) *n.* A substance used to give a special flavor or smell to food.

Squash (*skwāsh*) *n.* A fleshy fruit of the gourd family eaten as a vegetable.

St. Croix (*Kroi*) *n.* Largest island in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

St. Croix Labor Rebellion (*Lā'·bər Rē·bel'·yun*) *n.* A protest made by the laborers because of dissatisfaction with the wages and contracts, 1878.

St. John (*Jön*) *n.* The smallest island of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

St. Kitts (*Kitz*) *n.* Popular name of St. Christopher, an independent island 140 miles south of St. Croix.

St. Thomas (*Tä·məs*) *n.* The second largest island in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Stonemason (*stōn'·mā·sən*) *n.* A person whose work is building with stone and brick.

Structure (*struk'·chər*) *n.* Something built or constructed.

Suicide (*soo'·ə·sīd*) *n.* The act of killing oneself intentionally.

Symbol (*sim'·bəl*) *n.* A mark or sign that stands for something else.

T

Taino (*Tā'·nō*) *n.* The Indians living on Puerto Rico and perhaps in the Virgin Islands at the same time the Caribs were living on St. Croix.

Talking Drums (*tōk'·ing drumz*) *n.* Drums used to beat out signals or messages.

Temple (*tem'·p'l*) *n.* A building for the worship of a god or gods.

Temporary (*tem'·pə·rer'·e*) *adj.* For a time only. Not permanent.

Thatch (*t'hac'h*) *n.* A roof of straw or palm leaves.

Thomas, Mary (*Tä·məs*) *n.* Leader of the Fireburn of 1878, also known as "Queen Mary."

Tortola (*Tôr·tō'·lə*) *n.* Chief island of the British Virgin Islands.

Trade (*trād*) *n.* The buying and selling of goods between nations and countries.

Tradesman (*trādz'·man*) *n.* A person who buys goods from different countries.

Tradition (*tra·dish'·ən*) *n.* Stories, beliefs, customs, proverbs, etc., handed down as a long-established custom or practice that has the effect of an unwritten law.

Trial (*tri'·əl*) *n.* A formal examination of the facts of a case by a court of law.

Triangular (*trī·ang'·ū·lar*) *adj.* Shaped like a triangle, having three sides.

Triangular Trade Route (*root*) *n.* An arrangement in which ships would leave their European home ports and go to Africa to buy slaves and then sail to America and the West Indies to sell the slaves. The ships would return to home port with sugar and tobacco from the colonies.

Trinidad (*Tri'·nə·dad*) *n.* An independent island in the West Indies, off the northeast coast of Venezuela.

Trotman, Henry (*Trät'·mən*) *n.* The man who was laying in the street of Frederiksted on October 1, 1878, before being taken to the hospital.

Trustworthy (*trust'·wūr·thē*) *adj.* Honest; loyal; dependable.

U

Unfamiliar (*un·fə·mil'·yər*) *adj.* Not well known.

Uninhabited (*un·in·hab'·it·əd*) *adj.* Not having been lived on or in.

Unity (*yōō'·ni·te*) *n.* A feeling or state of togetherness.

United States (*yoo·nīt'·əd Stātz*) *n.* A country in the western hemisphere.

Uprising (*up'·riz'·in*) *n.* An attempt to take the power from a government by force.

V

Vagrant (*vā'·grənt*) *n.* A person without a job.

Vieques (*Vē·ā'·kəs*) *n.* A small island off the coast of Puerto Rico.

Violence (*vi'·ə·ləns*) *n.* A physical force used to injure, damage or destroy.

Virgin Gorda (*Vur'·jin Gor'·də*) *n.* One of the British Virgin Islands.

Virgin Islands (*Vur'·jin I·landz*) *n.* A group of islands of the Leeward group in the West Indies, east of Puerto Rico.

Von Scholten, Peter (*Fôn Shōl'·tən*) *n.* Governor-General of the Danish West Indies during the slave revolt. He read the proclamation freeing the slaves.

Voyage (*voi'·əj*) *n.* A long journey either by land or by sea.

W

Wage (*wāj*) *n.* Money paid to an employee for work done

Warrior (*wôr'·ē·ər*) *n.* A person in a fight, especially a war; a soldier.

West Africa (*West Af'·rə·kə*) *n.* The western portion of the African continent, made up of several countries.

West End (*West End*) *n.* A familiar name for Frederiksted.

Western Hemisphere (*west'·urn hem'·is·fir*) *n.* That half of the earth which includes North and South America.

West Indies (*West In'·dēz*) *n.* Islands in the Caribbean. Columbus thought they were the East Indies when he visited them on his voyages and named them the Indies.

Wheelwright (*wēl'·rīt*) *n.* A person who makes or repairs wheels and wheeled vehicles.

Witness (*wit'·nəs*) *n.* A person who saw and heard, or who can give an account of an event or happening.

Worship (*wur'·ship*) *n.* To perform an act of religious devotion, such as attending church services.

Wound (*woond*) *n.* A cut on the body.

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