97-1278

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: **ST. THOMAS SYNAGOGUE**

Other Name/Site Number: *BERACHA VESHALOM VEGEMILUTH HASADIM* (BLESSING AND PEACE AND ACTS OF PIETY); THE SYNAGOGUE

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Crystal Gade #16AB, Queens Quarters Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Charlotte Amalie Vicinity: N/A

State: U.S. Virgin Islands County: St. Thomas Code: 030 Zip Code: 00804

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property		Category of Property	
Private:	X	Building(s):	X
Public-local:	___	District:	___
Public-State:	___	Site:	___
Public-Federal:	___	Structure:	___
		Object:	___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
2	___ buildings
___	___ sites
___	1 structures
___	___ objects
2	1 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 2

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Designated a
NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK on
SEP 25 1997
by the Secretary of the Interior

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this _X_ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

_____ _____
Signature of Certifying Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

_____ _____
Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I, hereby certify that this property is:

____ Entered in the National Register
____ Determined eligible for the National Register
____ Determined not eligible for the National Register
____ Removed from the National Register
____ Other (explain): _____

_____ _____
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	Religious	Sub:	Religious facility
Current:	Religious	Sub:	Religious facility

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Mid-19th century:
Greek Revival/Gothic Revival

MATERIALS:
Foundation: Stone
Walls: Stone, Brick around window and door openings
Roof: Metal
Other:

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Beracha Veshalom Vegemiluth Hasadim (Blessing and Peace and Acts of Piety) Synagogue (see Photo 1), referred to as the St. Thomas Synagogue, is located at Crystal Gade #16AB, on the southeastern slope of Denmark Hill in one of the older residential areas of Charlotte Amalie, to the north of the town's main business district. The Synagogue was built in 1833 on the same site as the first Synagogue erected in 1792. This is the fourth Synagogue to occupy this site. The first and third synagogues along with the surrounding residential area of Denmark Hill were razed by fires that devastated the area in 1804 and 1831. The second synagogue (1812-23) was torn down and expanded (Svensson 1965:20-23). A small brick and rubble masonry office building sits on the southwest corner of the lot in front of the Synagogue (see Photos 1 and 2). A wrought iron gate and fence extend from the office across the south side of the lot (see Photo 1). The Synagogue and Office Building were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1976 as contributing resources in the Charlotte Amalie Historic District.

St. Thomas Synagogue

A series of steps along the east side of the office lead up from the street to a wrought iron gate and fence that extends from the office across the south side of the lot. The gate, surmounted by a wrought iron Star of David, gives access to a paved terrace forecourt fronting the St. Thomas Synagogue and its entrance under a roofed porch, raised seven steps above the terrace level and paved in alternating black and white marble tiles.

The St. Thomas Synagogue (see Photos 1, 3-4) is a rectangular one-story rubble masonry building, 41 feet and three bays wide, by 46 feet and four bays deep. It almost covers the full width of the property (east-west measurement) with the west wall only 10 inches from the retaining wall of the neighboring property, and the east wall standing within a few inches of the retaining wall towards the lower elevation of the property to the east. The colonnaded temple front of the building depicts a Greek Revival influence and the Gothic shaped windows and doors indicate a Gothic Revival influence.

The walls of the Synagogue are constructed of rubble masonry using a mortar of lime, sand, and molasses. The framing of door and window openings is red brick and on the exterior it is faced with calcified sandstone laid in an ashlar pattern (see photo 3). The framing of doors and window openings on the interior are of red and yellow brick (see photo 5). All door and window openings are Gothic arches.

The hipped roof is constructed of wood and covered by corrugated metal roofing over wood sheathing. The roof gutters are carried behind a parapet wall on the front and sides of the building. A small shuttered dormer on the west slope of the roof provides access and outside ventilation to the attic space.

The roof of the porch fronting the entrance to the Synagogue is supported by two pairs of red brick columns that are duplicated by similar pairs of semi-detached red brick columns flanking the entrance centered in the south wall. The columns are Tuscan in style as is the plastered and white painted entablature they carry. This in turn provides the facing of the porch roof

construction. The main entrance, like all door and window openings of the Synagogue, is headed by a Gothic arch.

Two window openings are on the north and south walls, while the west and east walls, have four window openings. All window and door openings on the interior are splayed at the top from equilateral pointed arches on the outer surface of the wall to a wide segmented arch on the interior wall surface. All of the window openings have exterior wood shutters, and fixed interior louvered wooden shutters in the tympanum with adjustable louvered shutters below it with either two or four folding panels. There are projecting surrounds around the exterior window openings and doors. The two doors of the Synagogue are located on the north and south sides of the building between the window openings. The brick exterior surrounds for the windows have been exposed by removing the plaster covering in 1973-74.

The interior window louvered shutters and doors are crafted in pine. The shutters have been stained to match the interior mahogany woodwork, while the doors are painted white.

The exterior surrounds for the doors still retain their plaster covering. The corners of the building have wide projecting bands that extend from an articulated and molded base to the cornice and above to the crown molding of the parapet. All molding and profiles of the architectural features of the exterior are patterned on the Tuscan order.

The plastered exterior parapet walls, main cornice, corner bands and bases, and surrounds of the doorways are painted white. The plaster has been removed from the brick columns and window surrounds on the front of the Synagogue (see Photos 3 and 4), and the stone facing of the exterior has been painted a subdued ocher. The metal roof of the Synagogue has been painted an iron oxide red.

Behind the Synagogue, on the north side of the property was a former open courtyard, which in 1984 was enclosed with a two story wooden addition. The second floor provides space for a library and office for the rabbi, and the ground floor is an area for exhibits and overflow area for the congregation.

The interior of the Synagogue (see Photo 5) has an west-east orientation in accordance with ritual practices, with the Ark, currently holding six Torahs, centered against the east wall and the *Bimah* (or pulpit) against the west wall facing the Ark. To emphasize the east-west orientation of the interior space, the builders and designers of the Synagogue created a square area in the center defined by four Ionic columns resting on tall pedestals. About halfway up the Ionic columns are two-armed antique brass chandeliers, modernized for electric lights.

The 9-foot plus space between the column pedestals delineating the central area of the Synagogue and the north and south walls have broad masonry platforms two steps above and leading to the center floor area. The platforms on the south and north sides of the interior of the Synagogue support mahogany pews, or *bancas*, for the congregation.

Traditionally men sat in the first four rows of mahogany pews on the north and south sides of the central area of the Synagogue. Above the central area, on the broad masonry platforms,

which run the entire west-east length of the Synagogue, are additional rows of mahogany pews for women and children. The men and women seating areas are separated by 3-foot tall wooden partitions, or *m'chitzat* (see Photo 6).

The interior columns are said to represent the four mothers of Israel: Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah. The columns support a full entablature with an architrave, an elaborate frieze and a widely projecting cornice. This in turn supports a quadripartite vault with a rope molding in the arises of the vault and a boss design of the Star of David, 31 feet above the floor of the Synagogue. The vault interior is plastered and painted white.

The vault is a plaster shell over wood lath attached to rafters shaped to the curvature of the vault. The rafters are braced to the roof structure, and at their base are joined to the upper cord of the box girder between the interior columns that also supports the attic floor. A seven-inch high continuous open space between the floor and the shell of the vault is carried around the periphery at its base interrupted only by the widely spaced rafters. From the floor level of the interior this device is hidden from view by the wide projection of the cornice. In the daytime, the heated air of the attic escapes through the dormer and creates an updraft in the Synagogue and ventilation of the roof structure.

During evening services, the rise in temperature of the Synagogue creates a similar updraft and effects a cooling of the interior. Of equal importance is the equalizing of air pressure within the building during hurricane conditions that this design allows. The Synagogue has been through numerous violent hurricanes since its erection without any serious damage to its fabric.

Suspended from the center of the vault is an eighteen-armed brass chandelier of French design. Each of the arms supports a candle stand and Baccarat crystal hurricane shade (see Photo 5). The ceiling, between the outer walls of the Synagogue and the central area of the vault, is flat and plastered and painted white. This ceiling is slightly more than 18 feet above the floor. Six six-armed brass chandeliers with glass hurricane shades for candles are suspended from this ceiling over the central floor area. These chandeliers have been electrified. Four ceiling fans also are suspended from the ceiling.

The *Heikhal*, or area containing the Ark, is raised two steps above the floor of the central area on the east side of the interior of the Synagogue. On either side of the *Heikhal* are benches originally intended to seat the Synagogue's leaders (*parnasim*). Two pedestalled Tuscan columns, built into the central area of the south wall, support a scrolled broken pediment, all plastered and painted white. The columns flank the paneled mahogany doors of the Ark, containing six Torah scrolls. The Ark is also built into the wall of the Synagogue. Above the Ark are two blue tablets with the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) in gilded Hebrew letters resting on the lower cord of the pediment. The tablets are embraced by the scrolls of the upper cord of the broken pediment and surmounted by a smaller tablet depicting the closed crown. Suspended from the ceiling in front of the Ark is the Lamp of Perpetual Light, called the *Ner Tamid* (see Photo 7).

On the west side of the interior is the *Bimah*, from which the service is conducted. The *Bimah* area is on three stepped platforms above the central area. Along the west wall behind the reader's lectern on the highest platform is a mahogany wooden bench for the service's participants. In front of the bench is a mahogany lectern facing the Ark on the east wall. Access to the *Bimah* is on the north and south sides by paneled wooden rails with brass finials on the rear newels and tall brass candlesticks on the front newels. Two steps below the *Bimah* area is a smaller octagonal enclosure of the wooden reader's desk (see Photo 8).

The floor of the Synagogue is paved with ceramic tile. In accordance with Sephardic Jewish tradition, the central floor area of the congregation is covered with about an inch of sand.

The Synagogue Office and Fence

The St. Thomas Synagogue is situated on an irregularly shaped lot of approximately one-quarter acre on the north side of Crystal Gade, along with the Office of the Synagogue. The single story brick and rubble masonry Synagogue Office is built against the street (Crystal Gade) and the west borderline of the lot (see Photo 2). The office is trapezoid in plan with a width of 15 feet 2 inches and its parallel west and east walls measuring 24 feet 9 inches and 15 feet 10 inches, respectively.

The Synagogue Office is a single story freestanding brick and rubble masonry building located in the southwest corner of the property. It has two windows in the south wall facing the street, and two windows in the east wall. A door in the north wall facing St. Thomas Synagogue's terraced forecourt provides the sole access to the office. All four windows and door are headed by Gothic arches. They all have exterior double board shutters and the windows, in addition, have interior louvered wooden shutters.

The office has a projecting base with vertical banding of corners and surrounds of masonry openings in a yellow Danish brick generally referred to as Flensborg stone. A narrow cornice is crowned by a parapet wall. A nearly flat roof of three layers of brick set in mortar and supported by a web of wooden beams and purloins is hidden by the parapet wall. Except for the cornice and parapet wall that have retained their original plaster finish and are painted white, the plaster inside and out was removed in 1973-1974 to expose the stone and brickwork of the rubble masonry construction. The office building did not appear on the 1836 building survey of Charlotte Amalie (Woods 1992:64) but it does appear on a working drawing of the Synagogue that has the date of 1833. It is counted as a contributing building.

A wrought iron fence runs from the east wall of the Synagogue Office to the southeast corner of the property. The entrance is crowned with a Star of David (see Photo 1 and 3). The construction date of the iron fence has not been documented. It probably postdates the construction of the present St. Thomas Synagogue (1833), as they do not appear on the 1836 building survey of Charlotte Amalie (Woods 1992:64). In all probability it predates the economic decline of St. Thomas during the last quarter of the nineteenth century (pre-1875) (Taylor 1888:52). The fence was not counted in the 1976 National Register nomination but is counted as noncontributing because it post-dates the period of significance in this NHL nomination.

Integrity

Since their construction in the nineteenth century, the St. Thomas Synagogue, Synagogue Office, and iron fence have been well maintained by the congregation. Between 1973 and 1974, the gutters and roof of the Synagogue were repaired, and most of the chandeliers which once used candles for illumination were electrified. Deteriorated wooden shutters and doors were repaired or replaced in kind. All of the interior wood features, such as the Ark, *Bimah*, and pews of mahogany are original to the 1833 construction of the Synagogue.

The only departure from the original Synagogue integrity was the removal of the white painted plaster from interior walls of the Synagogue, the exterior porch columns, and the Office building. Plans are being considered for the replacement of the plaster to prevent damage from water infiltration. The enclosure of the rear courtyard with a two story addition has not diminished the integrity of the Synagogue as it is not visible to the public due to the confines of the building on a small lot surrounded by retaining walls and neighboring buildings. The general character of the building is still apparent, exterior as well as interior, and it remains one of the most impressive, inspiring, and notably gratifying religious structures in the West Indies.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
Nationally: X Statewide: ___ Locally: ___

Applicable National Register Criteria: A X B__ C__ D__

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A X B__ C__ D__ E__ F__ G__

NHL Criteria: 1

NHL Criteria Exclusion: 1

NHL Theme(s): I. Peopling Places
4. Community and Neighborhood

II. Creating Social Institutions and Movements
3. Religious Movements

Areas of Significance: Religion

Period(s) of Significance: 1833-ca. 1850

Significant Dates: 1833

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Unknown

NHL Comparative Categories:
XXX. American Ways of Life
E. Ethnic Communities

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

Summary Statement of Significance

The Synagogue of St. Thomas, called *Beracha Veshalom Vegemiluth Hasadim* (Blessing and Peace and Acts of Piety), built in 1833, is the second-oldest synagogue and longest in continuous use in the United States. The congregation, originally Spanish and Portuguese Sephardic Jews, came to the Caribbean Basin to finance trade between Europe and the New World. The St. Thomas congregation, founded in 1796, reached its zenith by the mid-nineteenth century. The congregation declined in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the fortunes of the Danish Virgin Islands, but today has the largest congregation in its history. The St. Thomas Synagogue is surpassed in age only by Touro Synagogue (1763), in Newport, Rhode Island, which was designated a National Historic Site on March 5, 1946, and is an affiliated unit of the National Park Service. Touro Synagogue, however, was only occasionally used for worship between the 1820s and 1880s, making the St. Thomas Synagogue the oldest synagogue building in continuous use in the United States. The congregation of *Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim* in Charleston, South Carolina was established in 1749 and erected its current house of worship in 1840. It was designated an NHL in 1980 in part in belief that the synagogue was the second oldest extant in the country and the oldest in continual use. The St. Thomas Synagogue predates *Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim* Synagogue by seven years. The St. Thomas Synagogue meets Criteria Exclusion 1 as a religious property that derives its primary national significance from its historic importance.

Historical Background

The Sephardic Jewish Synagogue and Congregation of St. Thomas may trace its roots through some two thousand years of the Hebrew Diaspora, starting with the destruction of the Jewish nation and the Great Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in the first century A.D. Some of these displaced Hebrew peoples ended up in the Iberian peninsula, where over some 1500 years under Roman, Visagothic, Muslim, and Christian rulers they worshiped in their synagogues, attended to their businesses, and raised their families according to religious tenets that over time evolved and came to identify them as Sephardic (Spanish and Portugese) Jewish peoples (Kedourie 1992:8).

During their time in Iberia, the Sephardic peoples were on occasion subjected to religious persecution, special taxation, and restrictions on where they could live and what occupations they could hold. However, the elite among the Sephardic peoples consisting of doctors, bureaucrats, financiers, and religious leaders often formed symbiotic relations with their non-Jewish rulers that proved of mutual benefit to both groups.

In the latter part of the fourteenth century, however, the same religious fervor that the Castilian Catholic kings used in their successful war of liberation, or *Reconquista*, of the Iberian peninsula from the Muslims also became directed at the Jews. In the past, Sephardic communities in Spanish towns were under the protection of Spanish kings who derived both financial and administrative benefit from their Jewish subjects. However, when a weak young king, Henry III ascended the throne in 1390, a series of pogroms occurred in Seville, Barcelona, Toledo, Burgos, and Valladolid the next year led by a fanatical administrator for

the archdiocese of Seville, Ferrant Martines. The general intent of the pogroms was to forcibly convert the Jews to Christianity, which affected tens of thousands of Jews living in the Christian controlled areas of Spain. Records indicate most Jews left the large urban centers of Spain for rural towns or elected to become "New Christians", or *conversos* (MacKay 1992:49).

The union by marriage of the two most powerful Christian rulers on the Iberian peninsula, Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, in 1469, meant the full might of the Spanish military was now united to complete the *Reconquista* of Spain. An important aspect of the *Reconquista* was that it was not just a war of conquest but a Christian crusade against non-Catholics, which meant it became a war against the faiths of Islam and Judaism. To pursue the religious front of this war, the Spanish Inquisition was founded by papal bull in 1478 at the request of Ferdinand and Isabella, with the Inquisition beginning its activities in 1480 under Tomas Torquemada as the first Inquisitor-General (Kamen 1992:74-75).

The official policy of the rulers of Spain was that the Jews should willingly accept conversion to Christianity. It was the Spanish Inquisition's job to see that *conversos* did not backslide into their original faith. In fact, during the last two decades of the fifteenth century these *conversos* were the main target of the Inquisition (Kamen 1992:76). During this time, Judaism quite literally moved underground as basements of houses became makeshift synagogues. According to Sephardic tradition, synagogues, like the St. Thomas Synagogue, have their floors covered with clean sand to commemorate this period of time when Jews covered their basement floors with sand to muffle the sounds of congregations practicing their faith (Rabbi B. Boxman, personal communication, 1995).

On March 31, 1492, three months after the conquest of Granada, ending the *Reconquista* of Spain, the king and queen of a united Spain issued a decree for the expulsion of all unconverted Jews from their realm. In their opinion, having unconverted Jews living in close proximity to *conversos* encouraged the latter to continue to follow their original faith (Kamen 1992:76). The Jews were given three months to settle their affairs and depart or become New Christians. It has been estimated that possibly half of Spain's Jews "converted" at this time, with the other half leaving Spain for nearby Portugal, while smaller numbers took boats to southern France, Italy, and areas of the Ottoman Empire in North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean where they sought refuge among established Jewish communities (Kamen 1992:84).

Later, due to a marriage of state between Spain and Portugal in 1496, a Jewish expulsion decree (1497) was generated for the latter country and many of the recently resettled Jews from Spain were again on the move, this time with their Portugese Sephardic Jewish cousins (Kamen 1992:83). In addition, pressure by the Inquisition on *conversos* who remained in Spain, but were practicing Judaism in secret, caused tens of thousands to flee Spain in the decade after the 1492 expulsion decree (Kamen 1992:85).

Under the Spanish expulsion decree, the prohibition on Judaism was rigorously enforced in Castile, Aragon, the Balearic Islands, Sicily, and Sardinia, but appears to have been less so in Spanish overseas territories such as Oran, in North Africa, Naples, Milan, the Spanish

Netherlands, and the New World which provided refuge for the displaced *conversos* (Kamen 1992:84, 90). The Portugese permitted *conversos* to emigrate to their colonies in India, Brazil, and the Atlantic Islands (Beinart 1992:119).

In a remarkable sense of historical irony, the very persecution and forced emigration inflicted on the Sephardic Spanish and Portugese Jews and *conversos*, became in the long run their source of strength that would help to keep their faith alive and cause their religion to prosper and spread throughout the world. Although there had been a Sephardic elite that served as counselors and financial administrators to Christian and Moslem rulers, the majority of the Jewish people made their living as small traders, farmers, shopkeepers, and money lenders. These were the trades and crafts most needed as European countries entered the Age of Exploration and established colonies in parts of the globe that were vaguely or completely unknown to them at the time of the 1492 expulsion.

Throughout the sixteenth century Sephardic Jews in the Spanish Netherlands financed trade in northern European goods, such as iron, wood, grain, and cloth, for southern European and colonial goods, such as wool, rock salt, sugar, spices, tobacco, coffee, and cocoa beans. This trade was founded on trading connections with *conversos*, often family members, still residing in Spain and Portugal and the overseas possessions in the New World, Africa, and the Far East. In addition, some of these goods were also being carried in ships captained by *conversos* (Beinart 1992:120). According to John Lynch, in *Spain After the Expulsion*, Sephardic Jews played significant roles in the financing of Spanish kings, and the development of trade with the Indies,

> For the New Christian [or *converso*] elite . . . the characteristic vocation was finance. Spanish imperial finance had long depended on Italian bankers, who had the capacity to handle the transfer of funds from Spain to the Low Countries [Spanish Netherlands]. Anxious to escape the hard settlements imposed by the Genoese . . . Philip II's government was ready to consider an alternative set of bankers, even if they were Jews and were accumulating their capital on the margin of legality. The union of the [Spanish and Portugese] crowns in 1580 and the surge in transatlantic traffic in the late sixteenth century opened up commercial opportunities that the Portuguese New Christians were quick to exploit. Some made vast fortunes trading in Asian products, investing in the Brazilian sugar industry, and supplying slaves to both Brazil and Spanish America; others reexported commodities from northern Europe to America [1992:147].

By 1550, transoceanic commerce and investment were the basis for the economic and social existence of *conversos* in Portugal and Spain. In order to support international trade with the New World, Africa, and Asia, outlying colonies of trading partners of *conversos* were established in northern European towns, particularly Antwerp, which "was the general store-house and emporium for all Spanish and Portuguese colonial commodities in northern Europe" (Israel 1992:191).

By the 1570s, however, the Sephardic traders of Antwerp were leaving for Amsterdam to avoid the religious warfare between the Catholic Spanish crown and the Dutch Lutheran rebels, in the southern portion of the Spanish Netherlands. However, an additional incentive for Jewish emigration was the issuance of the Union of Utrecht (1579), the founding constitutional document of the Dutch republic, which guaranteed that no one would be investigated or prosecuted on the basis of their religion (Israel 1992:192).

The Sephardic Jews were allowed by the Dutch government to build their first synagogue in 1597, and in 1657 all resident Jews were recognized as Dutch nationals. Although they did not receive full citizenship rights until 1796 (Boxer 1990:144-145). As a result of this movement of Sephardic Jewish merchants and traders to Amsterdam, by the 1590s it had become "northern Europe's foremost emporium for sugar, spices, and all other products from the Iberian colonial empires" (Israel 1992:194).

Under the liberal atmosphere of Holland the Sephardic Jews could openly worship in their own synagogues for the first time since their expulsion from Spain in 1492. The Jewish community in Holland served as a magnet for Sephardic Jews from Muslim countries and Venice, as well as a continuing emigration from Iberia (Israel 1992:197). By the 1620s, there were over 1000 Jews in Amsterdam in three congregations. Not only did this community engage in trade it also was a major European center of Jewish religious training and publishing of books in Hebrew (Israel 1992:200).

As the Sephardic Jews managed most of the trade in New World products that passed through Holland via the Iberian ports, it was natural that when the Dutch developed their own overseas empire that Jews would play an important role (Bloom 1937:128). In particular, when the Dutch seized the northern coast of Brazil in the 1630s, "a large number of Dutch Sephardim emigrated to Brazil, mainly to Recife, and captured a large share in the sugar export business" under the auspices of the Dutch West India Company (Israel 1992:203).

According to Jonathan Israel, in his article "The Sephardim in the Netherlands", the Brazilian experience was significant in getting large numbers of Sephardic Jews into the New World,

> . . . the West India Company granted Jewish emigrants who settled in Brazil much greater economic as well as religious and personal freedom than yet existed for Jews in the Dutch republic itself, the rush to Brazil assumed what for Dutch Sephardi Jewry were enormous proportions. By 1644 there were 1450 Sephardim living as Jews in Netherlands Brazil, a figure not much less than the total then living in Holland itself, and although a proportion of those in Brazil were former New Christians who had reverted to normative Judaism in Brazil, most had emigrated from, or at least via, the Netherlands [1992:203].

Major innovations in the processing of sugar were introduced by the Dutch and the Sephardic Jews between 1638 and 1645, which saw Brazil export an average of 23,300 tons of sugar per year (Watts 1986:182).

> Under the Dutch occupancy of Pernambuco, between 1636 and 1645, Sephardic Jews had been sent out from Europe [to Brazil] generally to enhance trading facilities and to rationalise the importation of slave labour for sugar estates. They also introduced some significant milling innovations, which raised both the quality and efficiency of cane production . . . Although the origins of the three-roller mill are still unclear, there seems to be little doubt that it was first employed widely within the Pernambuco region at this time [Watts 1986:179].

Unfortunately for the Dutch, a Portuguese military expedition retook the Pernambuco region, in 1645, once again forcing a relocation of Jews with expertise in sugar cultivation and capital, this time to English Barbados. The English, who had settled Barbados in the 1630s, had previously developed good relations with the Dutch who were their main supplier of enslaved Africans, and would now provide capital for investment in establishing sugar plantations (Mintz 1985:53; Bloom 1937:144).

With Sephardic Jewish financing from Holland, Portugal had been supplying nearly all of Europe with sugar. However, within a generation England was able to drive Portugal out of the northern European trade in sugar, from its own plantations on Barbados, thanks to Jewish emigres from Brazil (Mintz 1985:39). The English on Barbados profited greatly from the Sephardic Jewish experience with sugar plantations in Brazil's Pernambuco province. By 1645,

> . . . techniques of cane production and processing could be gained as well from a group of Sephardic Jews, formerly residents in Pernambuco and skilled in sugar refining, who trickled into Barbados following their expulsion on religious grounds from Brazil, as Portuguese-Catholic control over that territory was regained . . . By 1650, the sale of sugar cane products [from Barbados] had raised the value of exports from the island to over £3 million [Watts 1986:183].

By the 1650s there were Dutch Sephardic communities on Curacao, in Surinam, and Jamaica, in addition to Barbados (Israel 1992:205). It is interesting to note that Danish Virgin Islands plantations in the Caribbean "had been financed almost entirely by Dutch [i.e., Sephardic Jewish] capital" in the eighteenth century in a repeat of what had occurred in Brazil and on Barbados (Watts 1986:247).

A Jewish presence on St. Thomas may be traced back to the last two decades of the seventeenth century, when the Danish first undertook the colonization of the island. The fourth Governor of the Danish Virgin Islands, Gabriel Milan (1684-86) was from a Jewish family with trading connections in Portugal, the Netherlands, and Hamburg. To curry the favor of the Danish crown, Milan accepted the Lutheran faith in 1682 in order to improve his prospects of being employed by the Danish state (Westergaard 1917:58-59). However, even before his appointment, a few Jewish families and individuals from other areas of the West Indies had moved to the Caribbean Danish colony on St. Thomas (Boxman 1983:22).

The Danish West India Company that settled St. Thomas in 1672 received its charter from King Christian V in March 1671. It spelled out the Company's rights and limitations, the

extent of the home government's assistance in the colonization of St. Thomas, taxes, customs duties, and judiciary matters. The charter did not specifically mention the Lutheran Church, but since it was the state religion of the United Kingdom of Denmark-Norway and the Company was to employ its ministers, it is clear the intent was to make it the official religion of the colony. The Charter stated "the Company was established for the benefit of commerce and for the general welfare which thereon depends." It also stated that foreigners who entered the service of the Company "shall enjoy the same treatment that His Majesty's subjects enjoy" (Westergaard 1917:294).

During the early years of the Danish colony, the Caribbean environment led to a high mortality rate for Northern European emigrants, which produced a critical shortage of manpower (Westergaard 1917:30). To relieve this situation the Company's administrators welcomed settlers from other areas of the Caribbean, including the Portuguese colony of Brazil. To encourage immigrants who did not embrace the Augsburg Confession (Lutheran faith), the Company adopted the concept of freedom of conscience as a policy.

In 1685 this policy of religious tolerance was formalized in a trade treaty between the Danish West India Company and the Prussian Brandenburger Company which would control the slave trade between Guinea, Africa and St. Thomas. The trade treaty between Prussia and Denmark stipulated the terms of a lease of lands on St. Thomas to the Brandenburger African Company as well as the terms under which it would be allowed to do business on St. Thomas. It included the conditions that Calvinists and Lutherans should have full freedom to exercise their rites and practices, while Jews and Catholics were allowed to hold private services "provided they did not provoke a scandal" (Westergaard 1917:76).

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Danish colonial records contain references to Jewish merchants involved in trade between Europe, Guinea, and St. Thomas (Paiewonsky 1959:6-7). The records note the Jewish residents of St. Thomas as coming from Brazil, and being Portuguese, which identifies them as Sephardic Jews (Boyer 1987:11). The records do not mention the existence of a Jewish congregation and freedom of worship under the Danes was not legalized until the mid-eighteenth century. It would appear the Jews on St. Thomas, at this time, worshiped in their homes (Oldendorp 1777:156). The records that would have pertained to an early Jewish congregation were most likely lost in the early nineteenth-century fires that twice destroyed the Synagogue.

In June of 1734 the Danish West India Company's ship *Unity* arrived in St. Thomas with the news that Denmark's treaty with France for the purchase of St. Croix had been ratified. It brought the orders from Louis XV of France to his governor and lieutenant general of the French Windward Islands, the Marquis de Champigny, to transfer the ownership of St. Croix to the Danish West India Company with the appropriate formalities. The *Unity* arrived at St. Thomas on the 11th of June and on the 23rd of the same month Governor Gardelin sent a delegation to Martinique with Emanuel Vass, a Jewish merchant of St. Thomas, as the official representative for the Danish West India Company (Westergaard 1917:210). It was a position of trust and an appointment that would only have been made based on a prior relationship of mutual respect. Later, it was noted that Sephardic "Jews originating from Brazil, Portugal, and Spain" were among the first to establish sugar plantations on St. Croix (Boyer 1983:11).

Christian G.A. Oldendorp, in his history of the Moravian Missions in the Danish West Indies, published in 1777, and based on his observations made during his visit to the islands in 1767-68, notes that, "There is a considerable number of Jews particularly in St. Croix" (Oldendorp 1777:138). He also mentions, "The Jews have no regular synagogue, but rather observe their worship services in private residences" (Oldendorp 1777:156), apparently referring to Jewish residents on both St. Thomas and St. Croix.

The real growth of the Jewish population of the Danish West Indies occurred during the late eighteenth century as a result of the British attack on the Dutch West Indies island of St. Eustatius. During the American War of Independence, St. Eustatius was a major source of military supplies for the North American colonies. The flow of contraband to the Americans had been a long-standing source of friction between Holland and England. In late December 1780, Great Britain declared war on Holland and ordered Admiral Sir George Rodney to attack St. Eustatius (Goslinga 1985:197). On February 3, 1781 he arrived in Oranjestad Harbor with an overwhelming force of 14 ships of the line, 3 frigates and some minor ships, as well as 3,000 soldiers. An officer was sent ashore to demand the surrender of the island within an hour (Boxman 1983:7-8).

The British invasion came as a complete surprise to the Dutch authorities and citizens of St. Eustatius since word of the English declaration of war had not reached the Caribbean. For the defense of the island, it had a garrison of 60 men and two Dutch men-of-war. There was a brief exchange of shots, but resistance was futile, and Commander Johannes deGraaff signed the act of surrender.

All together Rodney seized 150 ships, including 60 belonging to Americans, and captured more than 2,000 American merchants and sailors which he sent with their agents to England as prisoners of war. Rodney then turned his attention to the merchants of St. Eustatius. English and Danish merchants were extradited to their homelands. Toward the French the attitude was somewhat more lenient, perhaps because of the presence of a powerful French fleet in the Caribbean. They were shipped to Guadeloupe and Martinique. Worse was the fate of the Jews. All male Jews, one hundred of them, were robbed of all their personal possessions, some were beaten, while 30 more were deported to St. Kitts. The remainder were allowed to witness the public sale of their properties.

In May of 1781 Admiral Rodney left St. Eustatius in the hands of a British garrison of 670 men. Following his departure, many of the inhabitants fled the island, and a number of them sought refuge in the neutral Danish West Indies. The increase in numbers of Sephardic Jews in both St. Croix and St. Thomas resulted in the formation of a congregation in Christiansted in 1784 (Larsen 1950:96), and in 1796 the first Synagogue on St. Thomas with the appellation of "Blessing and Peace," was built (Knox 1922:161-163; Boxman 1983:5).

The synagogue started with a small congregation of nine families that seven years later (1803) had increased to 22 families. The first synagogue was destroyed in the fire of November 1804 that burned large sections of western and central Charlotte Amalie. By 1812, there was a second synagogue, on the same site, but by 1823 this building was too small to adequately serve the growing congregation. In 1823, it was taken down and replaced by a larger wooden

synagogue, on the same site, named "Blessing and Peace and Loving Deeds" to accommodate a congregation of 64 families (Boxman 1983:5). On New Year's Eve 1831, a fire started in the Commandant Gade section of Queens Quarter, the central part of Charlotte Amalie. Before it burned itself out New Year's Day 1832, it had destroyed about 800 buildings, among them the wooden synagogue built in 1823 (Svensson 1965:23; Boxman 1983:9).

The first half of the nineteenth century was a period of growing prosperity for St. Thomas. The excellence and size of its harbor and its location midway between North and South America and within cruising range of the new steam-powered ships from Europe made St. Thomas an ideal transhipment point. The island was not only prospering, it also was optimistically predicting further growth and development. In such an atmosphere solicitations for the means to rebuild the St. Thomas Synagogue were met with generous responses in funds and materials, not only from the members of the congregation, but also the non-Jews of St. Thomas, as well as from Jewish congregations from abroad (Boxman 1983:9-11). The present St. Thomas Synagogue (see Figure 1 and Photos 1-4), designed by an unknown French architect, was built in 1833, and has served the Jewish congregation ever since. The working drawings of the St. Thomas Synagogue are still extant (Boxman 1983:12).

The following account of consecration of the synagogue appeared in the *St. Thomas Tidende* newspaper of September 14, 1833,

> We are happy to have in our power to congratulate our friends of the Hebrew religion on the early completion of the New Synagogue. About six o'clock on Thursday evening the congregation assembled in their temporary place of worship, and shortly thereafter proceeded to the New Synagogue in the usual ceremonial order.
>
> At 7:00 [PM], His Excellency the Governor, and many respectable persons entered the building and immediately thereafter the Consecration Service commenced. The Lamp of Perpetual Light borne by the eldest member of the Congregation followed by six sacred Rolls of the Pentateuch carried by members, appeared at the entrance, which the elder Priest received. He lighted the Lamp, pronounced the Benediction, and the Lamp was then handed to a younger Priest, who placed it on the stand appropriate for it. During the performance of these offices, the Reader returned thanks for being permitted to witness this solemn and impressive ceremony - the choir, consisting of young ladies and gentlemen, sang the 24th verse of the 118th Psalm.
>
> The Reader then accompanied by the Rulers received the sacred Rolls, the choir singing the 26, 27, 28, and 29th verses of the 118th Psalm, while the same were introduced by a circuitous route to the Reader's desk - after which, commenced the Prayer for Our Beloved Sovereign and the Royal Family, as also for their Excellencies, the Governor-General, the Governor and all the other Magistrates - the same was also implored for all the congregation present. The choristers then sang the 10th verse of the 146 and the 29th Psalm - during which the Rolls of the Pentateuch were deposited in the Ark. The Reader then returned to his

> of the Pentateuch were deposited in the Ark. The Reader then returned to his Desk, and the choir singing from the 21st to the 29th verse of the 118th Psalm.
>
> An excellent discourse taken from the first of Kings, Chapter 8, verse 13, written expressly for the occasion by Mr. Isaac Lindo, was most emphatically delivered by that gentleman, which made the congregation deeply impressed with the most pathetic feelings of reverence and devotion. Offerings were afterwards made, in which the liberality of the assembly was apparent.
>
> The service of the Consecration was terminated by the choir chanting a Hymn for the occasion. In concluding our account of this memorable ceremony, it is only to say, the whole of which was conducted in a manner worthy of a people who were the first worshippers of the "true and living GOD" [Gjessing 1966:100-103].

The first half of the nineteenth century was also a time of great change within the Jewish religion. Prior to this time, Gentiles imposed restrictions on where Jews could live and their livelihoods. These strictures served to reinforce Jewish orthodoxy by which their religion created a cohesive society able to maintain its traditions in the face of changes imposed by a sometimes hostile outside world. On March 24, 1814, Denmark became one of the first European nations to enact a royal ordinance for extending full citizenship rights to Jews (Boxman 1983:25).

By 1833, as the congregation of St. Thomas was celebrating the completion of its new synagogue, most European countries had enfranchised their Jewish populations with full citizenship and civil rights. These changes engendered a schism within Jewish communities between those who desired to maintain their Orthodox traditions and those who wished to reform Jewish ceremonies to accommodate their new citizenship status. The religious debates ultimately saw many synagogues split into Orthodox and Reform groups, which set up separate synagogues (S. Hordes, personal communication, 1995).

The Jewish congregation on St. Thomas was not isolated from these debates. Indeed, its members found themselves in the forefront of the Reform movement with the appointment, in the early 1840s, of Rabbi Carillon to their synagogue. Rabbi Carillon, who appears to have been an advocate of the Reform movement, instituted Confirmation ceremonies for 14 year old boys and girls of the congregation, which were intended to compliment the traditional coming of age ceremonies, or *Bar Mitzvah* and *Bat Mitzvah*, for 13 year old boys and girls, respectively.

This new Confirmation ceremony was similar to the Confirmation ceremonies of Gentile religions, and adopted by Reform synagogues with the conscious intent of drawing themselves closer to the countries that granted them full citizenship and to promote religious tolerance. As one anonymous writer of St. Thomas noted, in the case of Denmark and its colonies, the Confirmation ceremony was enforced by law.

> Confirmation for boys and girls of 14 years was ordered by the king for the Jews, in the mother country (Denmark), since 1814, and has now been extended to our island. I anticipate the happiest results from this measure, as the preparatory form of Catechism etc., will prevent, in my opinion, conversion. A severe penalty is attached to those who neglect it, they are not permitted to become citizens, hold office, marry, control the property they may get by inheritance, follow any trade, nor are their oaths taken in court. [Plaut n.d.:583].

The first Confirmation ceremony at the St. Thomas Synagogue, held on October 14, 1843, was the first of its kind ever held in the New World (Plaut n.d.:583). As noted in an article, entitled "History of the Jews in America", written by Rabbi M.D. Sasso, and submitted to the *American Jewish Archives Journal* by Rabbi Gunther Plaut,

> Confirmation. We learn from a private letter from St. Thomas that the first confirmation among American Israelites took place on the Sabbath *Hol ha-Moed Sukkoth* [Feast of Tabernacles] in the Synagogue under the charge of the Rev. [Rabbi] Mr. Carillon. The ceremony is represented as having been very imposing. The names of the confirmed are, Mrs. Daniel Wolff, Misses Miriam and Rebecca Wolff, Miss D[eborah Simha] Cortissos, Miss [Esther] De Meza, Alexander Wolff, and Jacob Benjamin [Plaut n.d.:583].

Rabbi Carillon would perform two other Confirmation ceremonies on February 24 and April 14, 1844, for ten other 14 year olds of the St. Thomas Synagogue congregation. And, the tradition he started would be continued by succeeding Rabbis (Plaut n.d.:584-585).

In all probability, the cosmopolitan nature of the St. Thomas Hebrew Congregation disposed them to a Reform type of Judaism. Religious tolerance on St. Thomas was extended by Danish Governor General Peter von Scholten and several of his administrators who were prominent contributors to the construction fund for the 1833 Synagogue (Boxman 1983:10-11). According to one 1852 source,

> Jews, Gentiles and sects of various names are very amicable in St. Thomas. Great good feeling prevails. Thousands of dollars can be readily raised for any object of general charity [Boxman 1983:27].

However, it would appear that not all of the congregation were happy with the changes instituted by Rabbi Carillon. In 1844,

> A segment of the Congregation led by Judah Sasso and Mashed Mara refused to attend Synagogue services. "Immediately after the return of the Sefer Torah to the Hechal," they charged, "Rabbi Carillon proceeded with the wrong prayers and the Musaph was completely omitted." J. Fidanque, Act.[ing] President Jacob Haim Osorio, J. Levy Maduro, Moses Piza, and Jeudah Piza formed a committee to investigate. They reported that the charges were well founded.

> Ritual was rearranged and harmony was restored to the Congregation. Rabbi Carillon left St. Thomas shortly afterwards for Jamaica [Boxman 1983:27].

In the two decades following the building of the new synagogue, the membership of the Hebrew Congregation increased, with the census records of 1835 showing a population of 467 Jews living in St. Thomas. By 1851, however, the Jewish population had declined to 372 persons (Paiewonsky 1959:12). As the prosperity of St. Thomas began to taper off in the last half of the nineteenth century, so did the Hebrew Congregation. The year 1867 was a disastrous one for St. Thomas. In October a devastating hurricane hit the island, followed in November by a tidal wave. The two natural catastrophes did great damage to the town, the harbor, shipping facilities, and St. Thomas' reputation as a safe harbor (Brønsted 1952:299).

Improvements in the steamships of the period eliminated the need for using St. Thomas as a coaling station for ships from North America and Europe on their way to South America. St. Thomas' transit trade and usefulness as a coaling station was coming to an end. The gradual loss of population that resulted from the declining economy of the island also affected the Jewish community. The Synagogue, however, continued to serve the spiritual needs of the diminished congregation, which only numbered 141 in 1890 (Boxman 1983:28).

Following World War II, with the increase in air transportation and the development of tourism, the congregation has again grown in numbers. As the congregation has reached the second century of its founding (1796-1996) it is larger than it has ever been in the history of the St. Thomas Jewish community (Boxman 1983:28-32).

During the flourishing period of the first half of the nineteenth century, two people of national and one of international fame belonged to the Synagogue's congregation. David Levi Yulee, born on St. Thomas June 12, 1810, went to Florida as a young man where he became the chosen territorial delegate to Congress from the Territory of Florida in 1841, and later in 1845 when Florida was admitted to the Union, was elected as a United States Senator to Congress. Jacob Mendes da Costa was born on St. Thomas January 7, 1833, and became a noted American physician and writer. His numerous books on medicine and diagnosis were translated into several languages. Finally, the famed Impressionist painter Camille Pissarro was born on St. Thomas July 10, 1830 where he spent his early years. As a teenager he already showed an interest and aptitude for painting and later when he moved to Paris, he dedicated himself to art and he changed his name from Jacob Pizzarro to Camille Pissarro. It was in France his genius was first acknowledged, and he became known as the "Father of Impressionism" (Paiewonsky 1959:9-10; Boxman 1983:24-26).

Summary

The expulsion of the Sephardic Jews from Spain and Portugal, in 1492 and 1497, respectively, forced them to settle in Holland and northern Europe where existing guilds excluded them from earning a living in their traditional roles of middlemen who bought local goods and resold them to people within their community. By 1550, they had created an important new commercial niche -- as merchants facilitating the movement of goods between northern and southern Europe and later the movement and processing of New World products, such as sugar, tobacco, diamonds, and silver.

The Sephardic Jews of Amsterdam were tied to the fortunes of their adopted homeland of Holland. During the seventeenth century expansion of that country's overseas empire, Sephardic Jews settled in Brazil and later Dutch-held islands in the Caribbean Basin. When the Dutch overseas trading system began to wane in the eighteenth century, so too did the influence of these Jewish merchants. During the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780-84), Great Britain attacked Holland for aiding the Americans in the Revolutionary War. Most of the Jewish financed Dutch-shipping was swept from the seas, and Dutch colonies in the Caribbean were seized. The seizure of St. Eustatius was a great blow to the Jewish traders in the Caribbean Basin, many of whom moved to the Danish colony of St. Thomas.

Here, this resilient community supported the founding and financing of sugar plantations in the Danish Virgin Islands and, later in the early nineteenth century, also in southern Puerto Rico. They also profited by the selling of coal to steamships traveling to South America from Europe and North America.

The St. Thomas congregation, founded in 1796, reached its zenith by the mid-nineteenth century. The congregation declined in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the fortunes of the Danish Virgin Islands, but today has the largest congregation in its history. The St. Thomas synagogue, built in 1833, is the second oldest Jewish synagogue in the United States. It is surpassed in age only by Touro Synagogue (1763), in Newport, Rhode Island, which was designated a National Historic Site on March 5, 1946, and is an affiliated unit of the National Park Service. Touro Synagogue, however, was only occasionally used for worship between the 1820s and 1880s, making the St. Thomas Synagogue the oldest synagogue building in continuous use in the United States. The congregation of *Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim* in Charleston, South Carolina was established in 1749 and erected its current house of worship in 1840. It was designated an NHL in 1980 in part in recognition of the synagogue being the second oldest extant in the country and the oldest in continual use. The St. Thomas Synagogue predates *Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim* Synagogue by seven years.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

___ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_X_ Previously Listed in the National Register. **Charlotte Amalie Historic District (7/19/76)**
___ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
___ Designated a National Historic Landmark.
___ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #_____
___ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #_____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

_x_ State Historic Preservation Office **U.S. Virgin Islands**
___ Other State Agency
___ Federal Agency
___ Local Government
___ University
__ Other(Specify Repository): Rabbi Stephen A. Schafer
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(809) 774-4312

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 0.23 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	20	295730	2029290

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary for the St. Thomas Synagogue and Synagogue Office consists of the parcel of land at #16AB Crystal Gade, in the Queens Quarters of Charlotte Amalie. It is bounded on the south by Crystal Gade (the name of the street), on the east by Crystal Gade #16C, on the west by Crystal Gade #15, and on the north by Lille Gronne Gade #3B.

Boundary Justification:

The Boundary for the St. Thomas Synagogue, Synagogue Office, and fence is the town lot at No. 16AB Crystal Gade, in the Queens Quarter of Charlotte Amalie. This has been the site of the three previous Jewish synagogues built by the St. Thomas Congregation.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Frederik C. Gjessing, Architect, AIA

Org.: N/A

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P.O. Box 1844

City/Town: Charlotte Amalie

State: St. Thomas, United States Virgin Islands

ZIP: 00803

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Photos for the St. Thomas Synagogue and Cemeteries

Photograph 1
1. St. Thomas Synagogue
2. Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, USVI
3. M. Barnes
4. May 1995
5. Negative - NPS, Atlanta
6. View of front of Synagogue
7. Photo 1

Photograph 2
1. St. Thomas Synagogue
2. Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, USVI
3. Unknown
4. Unknown
5. Negative - NPS, Atlanta
6. View of front of Synagogue, with Synagogue Office on left
7. Photo 2

Photograph 3
1. St. Thomas Synagogue
2. Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, USVI
3. M. Barnes
4. May 1995
5. Negative - NPS, Atlanta
6. View of southeast corner of Synagogue, showing building details
7. Photo 3

Photograph 4
1. St. Thomas Synagogue
2. Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, USVI
3. Unknown
4. Unknown
5. Negative - NPS, Atlanta
6. Interior view of Synagogue, from the northwest looking southeast. Bimah in right foreground and Ark containing the Torahs on east walls.
7. Photo 4

Photograph 5
1. Old or Savan Jewish Cemetery
2. Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, USVI
3. M. Barnes
4. May 1995
5. Negative - NPS, Atlanta
6. View from south of cemetery area showing memorials, cemetery wall and gate
7. Photo 5

Photograph 6
1. Old or Savan Jewish Cemetery
2. Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, USVI
3. M. Barnes
4. May 1995
5. Negative - NPS, Atlanta
6. View of typcial brick and stone memorial. Marble fragments are left on memorial by visitors to the grave
7. Photo 6

Photograph 7
1. Old or Savan Jewish Cemetery
2. Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, USVI
3. M. Barnes
4. May 1995
5. Negative - NPS, Atlanta
6. View of Aron Pardo memorial. Pardo is Sephardic (Spanish-Portugese) name
7. Photo 7

Photograph 8
1. New or Altona Jewish Cemetery
2. Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, USVI
3. M. Barnes
4. May 1995
5. Negative - NPS, Atlanta
6. View of cemetery from outside showing the House of Life and enclosure wall
7. Photo 8

Photograph 9
1. New or Altona Jewish Cemetery
2. Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, USVI
3. M. Barnes
4. May 1995
5. Negative - NPS, Atlanta
6. Overiew of cemetery showing the House of Life in background, older stone and brick memorials on left and newer concrete ones on right
7. Photo 9

Photograph 10
1. New or Altona Jewish Cemetery
2. Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, USVI
3. M. Barnes
4. May 1995
5. Negative - NPS, Atlanta
6. Typical last half of 19th century memorial
7. Photo 10

Photograph 11
1. New or Altona Jewish Cemetery
2. Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, USVI
3. M. Barnes
4. May 1995
5. Negative - NPS, Atlanta
6. Typical 20th century concrete memorials
7. Photo 11

Photograph 12
1. New or Altona Jewish Cemetery
2. Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, USVI
3. M. Barnes
4. May 1995
5. Negative - NPS, Atlanta
6. Example of post-1850s memorial - Hannah Julien - probably part of the 18th c. Jewith immigration from St. Eustatius to St. Thomas
7. Photo 12

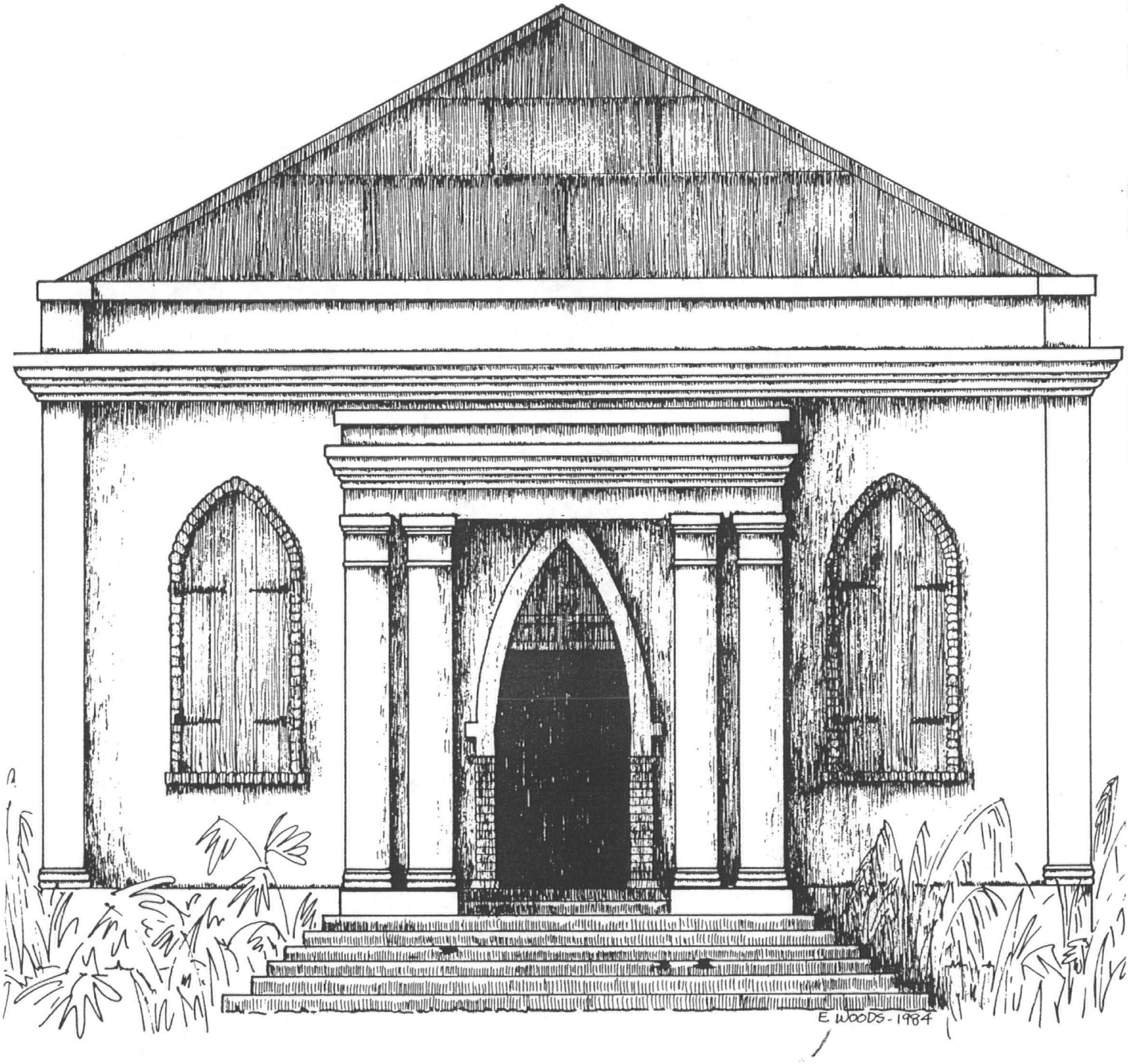


Figure 1. 1984 sketch of the front of St. Thomas Synagogue, showing how it appeared prior to the removal of plaster from the exterior columns (from Woods 1992:65).



A view of Charlotte Amalie in the late 1800's, with Crystal Gade (also known as Synagogue Hill) in the lower left quadrant of the picture. As you look up Crystal Gade, you can spot the Synagogue as the first building with arched windows on the right side of the street.

Figure 2. Nineteenth century view of Charlotte Amalie showing the St. Thomas Synagogue (from Boxman 1983:4)

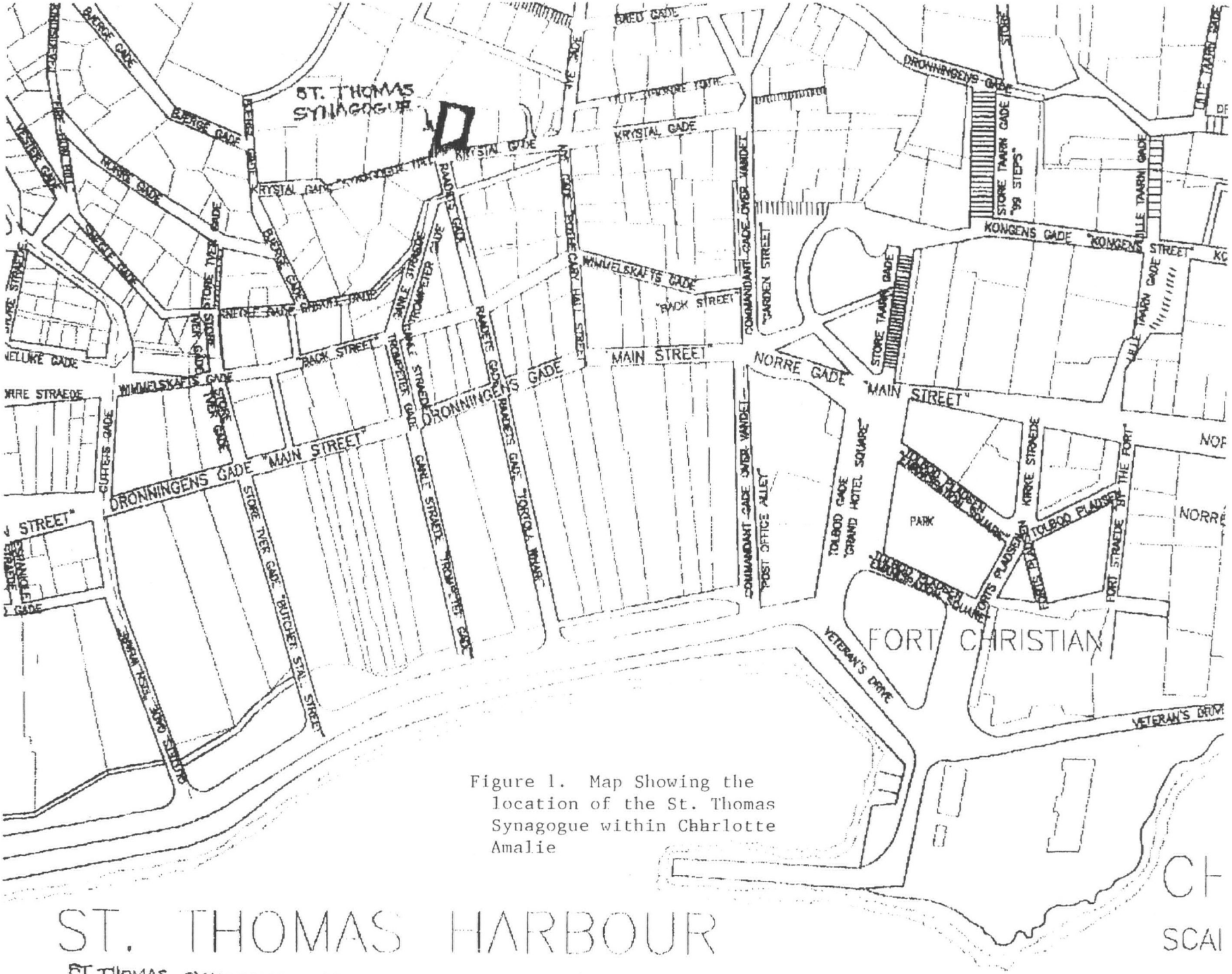


Figure 1. Map Showing the location of the St. Thomas Synagogue within Charlotte Amalie

ST. THOMAS SYNAGOGUE, ST. THOMAS, V.I. SCALE 1" = 200'



Figure 2. Map showing location of Old Jewish Cemetery

JEWISH BURIAL GROUND
IN SAVAN, ST. THOMAS, V.I. SCALE: 1" = 200'



ST. THOMAS SYNAGOGUE
Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands
Front of Synagogue facing North, with view of Office on left
Photo: Unknown; Date, unknown, Photo #1



ST. THOMAS SYNAGOGUE
Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands
Front of Synagogue Office, facing Northeast
Photo: Sean Krigger, 1996, Photo #2



ST. THOMAS SYNAGOGUE
Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands
Front of Synagogue, showing gate detail, facing North
Photo: Mark Barnes, 1995, Photo #3



ST. THOMAS SYNAGOGUE
Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands
Southeast corner of Synagogue, facing Northwest
Photo: Mark Barnes, 1995, Photo #4



ST. THOMAS SYNAGOGUE
Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands
Interior of Synagogue, from NW facing Southeast
Photo: Unknown, Date, unknown, Photo #5



ST. THOMAS SYNAGOGUE
Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands
Interior, southeast corner
Photo: Sean Krigger, 1996, Photo #6



ST. THOMAS SYNAGOGUE
Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands
Interior, facing east, looking at Ark
Photo: Sean Krigger, 1996, Photo #7



ST. THOMAS SYNAGOGUE
Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands
Interior, facing west, looking at *Bimah* area
Photo: Sean Krigger, 1996, Photo #8





HERE LIE
THE REMAINS OF
ON PARDO
ON THE
1822
AND DIED
13 NOV
84






LIFE'S RACE WELL RUN
LIFE'S WORK WELL DONE
LIFE'S CROWN WELL WON


In
Loving Memory
— of —
OUR BELOVED MOTHER
GRACE CARDOZE DELVALLE.
BORN JUNE 2ND 1857.
DIED JUNE 13TH 1914.
"INTO HIS HANDS MY SPIRIT I CONSIGN"
SAMUEL.
SYDNEY ST.
LONDON. E.


IN MEMORY OF
HANNAH JULIEN
NATIVE OF
SAINT EUSTATIUS
AGED 87
DIED 30TH JUNE 1872
24 SIVAN 5632
תנצבה







UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

CENTRAL ST. THOMAS QUADRANGLE
VIRGIN ISLANDS
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

ATLANTIC OCEAN

CARIBBEAN SEA

LEEWARD PASSAGE

MAGENS BAY

BRASS CHANNEL

WEST GREGERIE CHANNEL

EAST GREGERIE CHANNEL

ST THOMAS HARBOR

SOUTHWEST ROAD

Pelican Cay
Little Hans Lollik Island
Hans Lollik Island
Coconut Bay
Hans Lollik Rock
Rough Pt
Out
Cave Cove
Outer Brass Island
Inner Brass Island
Lizard Rocks
Ornen Rock
Picara Pt
Tropaco Pt
Vluck Pt
Caret Pt
Konink Pt
Kastel Pt
Caret Bay
Mail Bay
Neltjeberg Bay
Ruy Pt
Dorothea Bay
Dorothea Pt
Hull Bay
Ensomned
Reseau Bay
Lovenlund Bay
Hendrik Bay
Santa Maria Bay
Sorgenfri
Neltjeberg
Caret Bay Estate
Barrett
Lerkenlund Bay
Enighed
Lovenlund
John Oley
WEST END
LITTLE NORTH SIDE
Santa Maria Estate
Crown Mtn
Zambee
Dorothea
Lerkenlund
Canaan
Bonne Esperance
Hawk Hill
St Peter
Lilliendahl
Resolution
Signal Hill
Misgen
GREAT NORTH SIDE
Drakes Seat
Rosendal
Mafolie
Lee Hill
Loisenhoj
Adelphi
SOUTH SIDE
Perseverance Bay
Brewers Bay
Black Pt
Solberg
Bunker Hill
Wintberg Peak
Catchment Basin
Radio Towers
Brommer Hill
Nana Hill
Mill
Contant
French Hill
CHARLOTTE AMALIE
KRONPRINDSENS
QUEENS
KINGS
Berg Hill
Government Hill
Hospital
Park
High Sch
Fort Christian
Bluebeard Hill
Race Track
Cem
Estate Thomas
NEW
Range Cay
Harry S Truman Airport
Altona
Frenchtown
Pearson Gardens
Sara Hill
Nisky Mission
Crown Bay
Careen Hill
Radio Tower (WSTA)
Raphune
Cabritaberg
Red Pt
Airway Beacon
Banana Pt
Havensight Pt
Flag Hill
Rupert Rock
Lisenlund Hill
Nullberg
Havenrece Hill
Grambokola Hill
Regis Pt
Carolina Pt
Ruyter Cove
Carenning Cove
Hassel Island
Cowell Battery
Cowell Pt
Scorpion Rock Lt
Mosquito Pt
Elephant Bay
Water Island
Limestone Bay
Sprat Bay
Carol Pt
Sprat Pt
Providence Pt
Druif Bay
Flamingo Bay
Flamingo Pt
Tower
Muhlenfels Pt
Lighthouse
Morningstar Bay
FRENCHMANS BAY
Barrel of Beef
Frenchman Bay
Green Cay
Little Cocolus Bay
Triangle
Flat Cays
Porpoise Rocks
Saba Island

ST. THOMAS SYNAGOGUE
Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, VI

Zone 20
E 295730 N 2029290

St Thomas Synagogue
Zone 20
E 295730
N 2029290

1522 I SE (WESTERN ST. THOMAS)
1622 IV SE (EASTERN ST. THOMAS)

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey in cooperation with Office of Territories, U. S. Department of the Interior

Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA, USCE, and U. S. Dept. of Public Roads

Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1954. Field checked 1954–1955

Selected hydrographic data compiled from NOS chart 905 (1952) This information is not intended for navigational purposes

Polyconic projection. Puerto Rican Datum, 1940 adjustment 10,000-foot grid ticks based on Puerto Rican coordinate system, Virgin Islands extension. 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 20

Red tint indicates area in which only landmark buildings are shown

There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map

MN GN
10½° 187 MILS
0°37' 11 MILS
UTM GRID AND 1982 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

SCALE 1:24000
1 0 1 MILE
1000 0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000 7000 FEET
1 .5 0 1 KILOMETER

CONTOUR INTERVAL 40 FEET
DOTTED LINES REPRESENT 20-FOOT CONTOURS
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET—DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO DATUMS IS VARIABLE
SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER
THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 0.8 FEET

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

VIRGIN ISLANDS
QUADRANGLE LOCATION

ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Heavy-duty — Light-duty
Medium-duty — Unimproved dirt
Insular Route

Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled from aerial photographs taken 1977–1978 and other sources. This information not field checked. Map edited 1982

Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas

CENTRAL ST. THOMAS, V. I.
18064–C8-TF-024

1955
PHOTOREVISED 1982
DMA 1622 IV SW–SERIES E836

INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA—1987

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: **ST. THOMAS SYNAGOGUE AND CEMETERIES - BERACHA VESHALOM VEGEMILUTH HASADIM (BLESSING AND PEACE AND ACTS OF PIETY)**

Other Name/Site Number: **St. Thomas Synagogue, The Synagogue, Old or Savan Cemetery, New or Altona Cemetery**

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: **St. Thomas Synagogue - Krystal Gade #16AB, Queens Quarters; Old Cemetery - Southwest Corner of Silke Gade and Jode Gade, Savan Gut area; New Cemetery - northside of Dronningens Gade, Kronsprindsens Area** Not for publication:___

City/Town: **Charlotte Amalie** Vicinity:___

State: **U.S. Virgin Islands** County: **St. Thomas** Code: **030** Zip Code: **00804**

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property
Private: _X_
Public-local:___
Public-State:___
Public-Federal:___

Category of Property
Building(s): _X_
District:___
Site: _X_
Structure:___
Object:___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing		Noncontributing	
__2__	**Synagogue and Synagogue Office**	_____	buildings
__2__	**Old and New Cemeteries**	_____	sites
_____		_____	structures
_____		_____	objects
__4__		__0__	Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: __2__

Name of related multiple property listing: **Charlotte Amalie Historic District**

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

_____ _____
Signature of Certifying Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

_____ _____
Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I, hereby certify that this property is:

____ Entered in the National Register _____
____ Determined eligible for the _____
National Register
____ Determined not eligible for the _____
National Register
____ Removed from the National Register _____
____ Other (explain): _____

_____ _____ _____
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: **Religious** Sub: **Synagogue**

Current: **Religious** Sub: **Synagogue**

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: **Gothic Revival**

MATERIALS:
Foundation: **Rubble Masonry**
Walls: **Rubble Masonry, Brick around window and door openings**
Roof: **Metal**
Other:

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Beracha Veshalom Vegemiluth Hasadim (Blessing and Peace and Acts of Piety) Synagogue (see Photo 1), referred to as the St. Thomas Synagogue, is located at Krystal Gade #16AB, on the southeastern slope of Denmark Hill in one of the older residential areas of Charlotte Amalie, to the north of the town's main business district. The Synagogue was built in 1833 on the same site as first Synagogue erected in 1792. This is the fourth Synagogue to occupy this site. The first and third synagogues along with the surrounding residential area of Denmark Hill were razed by fires that devastated the area in 1804 and 1831. The second synagogue (1812-23) was torned down and expanded (Svensson 1965:20-23). The Old or Savan Cemetery and New or Altona Cemetery are located in Savan Gut and Kronprindsens areas of Charlotte Amalie, respectively. Cemeteries are enclosed by rubble masonry walls.

The Synagogue Office

The St. Thomas Synagogue (see Figure 1 and Photo 2) is situated on an irregularly shaped lot of approximately one-quarter acre on the north side of Krystal Gade, along with the Office of the Synagogue. The single story brick and rubble masonry Synagogue Office is built against the street (Crystal Gade) and the west borderline of the lot. The office is trapezoid in plan with a width of 15 feet 2 inches and its parallel west and east walls measuring 24 feet 9 inches and 15 feet 10 inches, respectively.

The Synagogue Office is a single story freestanding brick and rubble masonry building located in the southwest corner of the property. It has two windows in the south wall facing the street, and two windows in the east wall. A door in the north wall facing St. Thomas Synagogue's terraced forecourt provides the sole access to the office. All four windows and door are headed by Gothic arches. They all have exterior double board shutters and the windows, in addition, have interior louvered wooden shutters.

The office has a projecting base with vertical banding of corners and surrounds of masonry openings in a yellow Danish brick generally referred to a Flensborg stone. A narrow cornice is crowned by a parapet wall. A nearly flat roof of three layers of brick set in mortar and supported by a web of wooden beams and purloins is hidden by the parapet wall. Except for the cornice and parapet wall that have retained their original plaster finish and are painted white, the plaster inside and out has been removed to expose the stone and brickwork of the rubble masonry construction.

The construction date of the office has not been documented. It probably postdates the construction of the present St. Thomas Synagogue (1833). In all probability it predates the economic decline of St. Thomas during the last quarter of the nineteenth century (pre-1875) (Taylor 1888:52).

St. Thomas Synagogue

A series of steps along the east side of the office lead up from the street to a wrought iron gate and fence that extends from the office across the south side of the lot. The gate, surmounted by a wrought iron Star of David, gives access to a paved terrace forecourt fronting the St. Thomas Synagogue and its entrance under a roofed porch, raised seven steps above the terrace level and paved in alternating black and white marble tiles.

The St. Thomas Synagogue (see Photos 1-3) is a rectangular one-story rubble masonry building, 41 feet and three bays wide, by 46 feet and four bays deep. It almost covers the full width of the property (east-west measurement) with the west wall only 10 inches from the retaining wall of the neighboring property, and the east wall standing within a few inches of the retaining wall towards the lower elevation of the property to the east.

Behind the Synagogue, on the north side of the property was a former open courtyard, which in recent years has been enclosed with a two story wooden structure. The second floor provides space for a library and office for the rabbi, and the ground floor is an area for exhibits and overflow area for the congregation.

The walls of the Synagogue are constructed of rubble masonry using a mortar of lime, sand, and molasses. The framing of door and window openings is red brick and on the exterior it is faced with calcified sandstone laid in an ashlar pattern. The framing of doors and window openings on the interior are of red and yellow brick. All door and window openings are Gothic arches.

The hipped roof is constructed of wood and covered by corrugated metal roofing over wood sheathing. The roof gutters are carried behind a parapet wall on the front and sides of the building. A small shuttered dormer on the west slope of the roof provides access and outside ventilation to the attic space.

The roof of the porch fronting the entrance to the Synagogue is supported by two pairs of red brick columns that are duplicated by similar pairs of semi-detached red brick columns flanking the entrance centered in the south wall. The columns are Tuscan in style as is the plastered and white painted entablature they carry. This in turn provides the facing of the porch roof construction. The main entrance, like all door and window openings of the Synagogue, is headed by a Gothic arch.

Two window openings are on north and south walls, while the west and east walls, have four window openings. All window and door openings on the interior are splayed at the top from equilateral pointed arches on the outer surface of the wall to a wide segmented arch on the interior wall surface. All of the window openings have exterior wood shutters, and fixed interior louvered wooden shutters in the tympanum with adjustable louvered shutters below it with either two or four folding panels. There are projecting surrounds around the exterior window openings and

doors. The two doors of the Synagogue are located on the north and south sides of the building between the window openings. The brick exterior surrounds for the windows have been exposed by removing the plaster covering.

The interior window louvered shutters and doors are crafted in pine. The shutters have been stained to match the interior mahogany woodwork, while the doors are painted white.

The exterior surrounds for the doors still retain their plaster covering. The corners of the building have wide projecting bands that extend from an articulated and molded base to the cornice and above to the crown molding of the parapet. All molding and profiles of the architectural features of the exterior are patterned on the Tuscan order.

The plastered exterior parapet walls, main cornice, corner bands and bases, and surrounds of the doorways are painted white. Brick columns and window surrounds on the front of the Synagogue are left exposed, and the stone facing of the exterior has been painted a subdued ocher. The metal roof of the Synagogue has been painted an iron oxide red.

The interior of the Synagogue (see Photo 4) has an west-east orientation in accordance with ritual practices, with the Ark, holding five Torahs, centered against the east wall and the Bimah (or pulpit) against the west wall facing the Ark. To emphasize the east-west orientation of the interior space, the builders and designers of the Synagogue created a square area in the center of the interior defined by four Ionic columns resting on tall pedestals. About halfway up the Ionic columns are two-armed antique brass chandeliers, modernized for electric lights.

The 9-foot plus space between the column pedestals delineating the central area of the Synagogue and the north and south walls have broad masonry platforms two steps above and leading to the center floor area. The platforms on the south and north sides of the interior of the Synagogue support mahogany pews, or bancas, for the congregation.

Traditionally men sat in the first four rows of mahogany pews on the north and south sides of the central area of the Synagogue. Above the central area, on the broad masonry platforms, which run the entire west-east length of the Synagogue, are additional rows of mahogany pews for women and children. The men and women seating areas are separated by 3-foot tall wooden partitions, or m'chitzat.

The interior columns are said to represent the four mothers of Israel: Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah. The columns support a full entablature with an architrave, a elaborate frieze and a widely projecting cornice. This in turn supports a quadripartite vault with a rope molding in the arises of the vault and a boss design of the Star of David, 31 feet above the floor of the Synagogue. The vault interior is plastered and painted white.

The vault is a plaster shell over wood lath attached to rafters shaped to the curvature of the vault. The rafters are braced to the roof structure, and at their base are joined to the upper cord of the box girder between the interior columns that also supports the attic floor. A seven-inch high continuous open space between the floor and the shell of the vault is carried around the periphery at its base interrupted only by the widely spaced rafters. From the floor level of the interior this device is hidden from view by the wide projection of the cornice. In the daytime, the heated air of the attic escapes through the dormer and creates an updraft in the Synagogue and ventilation of the roof structure.

During evening services, the rise in temperature of the Synagogue creates a similar updraft and effects a cooling of the interior. Of equal importance is the equalizing of air pressure within the structure during hurricane conditions that this design allows. The Synagogue has been through numerous violent hurricanes since its erection without any serious damage to its fabric.

Suspended from the center of the vault is an eighteen-armed brass chandelier of French design. Each of the arms supports a candle stand and Baccarat crystal hurricane shade. The ceiling, between the outer walls of the Synagogue and the central area of the vault, is flat and plastered and painted white. This ceiling is slightly more than 18 feet above the floor. Six six-armed brass chandeliers with glass hurricane shades for candles are suspended from this ceiling over the central floor area. These chandeliers have been electrified. Four ceiling fans also are suspended from the ceiling.

The Heikhal, or area containing the Ark, is raised two steps above the floor of the central area on the east side of the interior of the Synagogue. On either side of the Heikhal are benches originally intended to seat the Synagogue's leaders (parnasim). Two pedestalled Tuscan columns, built into the central area of the south wall of the interior of the Synagogue, support a scrolled broken pediment, all plastered and painted white. The columns flank the paneled mahogany doors of the Ark, containing the Synagogue's six Torah scrolls. The Ark is also built into the walls of the Synagogue. Above the Ark are two blue tablets with the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) in gilded Hebrew letters resting on the lower cord of the pediment. The tablets are embraced by the scrolls of the upper cord of the broken pediment and surmounted by a smaller tablet depicting the closed crown. Suspended from the ceiling in front of the Ark is the Lamp of Perpetual Light, called the Ner Tamid.

On the west side of the interior of the Synagogue is the Bimah, from which the service is conducted. The Bimah area is on three stepped platforms above the central area. Along the west wall behind the reader's lectern on the highest platform area is a mahogany wooden bench for the service's participants. In front of the bench is a mahogany lectern facing the Ark on the east wall. Access to the Bimah is on the north and south sides by paneled wooden rails with brass finials on the rear newels and

tall brass candlesticks on the front newels. Two steps below the Bimah area is a smaller octagonal enclosure of the wooden reader's desk.

The floor of the Synagogue is paved with ceramic tile. In accordance with local Sephardic Jewish tradition, the central floor area and the raised platforms of the congregation are covered with about an inch of sand.

Old (Savan) and New (Altona) Cemeteries

Throughout the life of the Jewish community on St. Thomas just two cemeteries have served as a final resting place for the congregation. The Old or Savan Cemetery is located about a quarter of a mile northwest of the St. Thomas Synagogue in what had been an area outside the town of Charlotte Amalie, until it was incorporated within the town in 1766. It is likely that the cemetery pre-dates the 1796 founding of congregation, as one memorial notes a burial date of 1792, and the earliest, but unmarked, interments may date from the late seventeenth century.

The Savan Cemetery (see Figure 2 and Photos 5-7) measures 75 feet by 125 feet and is enclosed by a rubble masonry wall about six feet high. Access to the cemetery is by a wrought iron gate on the north side of the cemetery. Today about fifty plus burial memorials are visible. Although a 1992 ground penetrating radar survey indicates the presence of at least 273 burials with no above ground memorials. The memorials consist of rectangular brick vaults about two feet in height surmounted by an incribed stone slab. Adult memorials measure 6 feet by 3 feet, with memorials for children being generally 4 feet by 3 feet. There appears to have been an effort to group married couples, young children, and single people into separate areas of the cemetery.

The early burials of the New or Altona Cemetery (see USGS Map and Photos 9-12), located about half a mile from the St. Thomas Synagagoue, also appear to preserve the separation of individuals into age or marriage groups, with the burial memorials again consisting of rectangular brick vaults topped with incribed stone slabs. However, by the mid-nineteenth century there is a visible shift in the placement of burials. Areas within the cemetery contain burials now grouped by specific families with married couples surrounded by their children. At the same time, there is a change in the burial memorials. The memorials consist of vertical incribed stone slabs, iron fences around burials, and cast concrete memorials indistinguishable from burial memorials in non-Jewish cemeteries. During the twentieth century the main type of burial memorial consists of a rectangular concrete vault, topped with an incribed concrete slab. The slab is sometimes slanted, with the head being higher than the foot of the burial memorial.

The Altona or New Cemetery area measures about 90 feet by 180 feet, and is enclosed within a rubble masonry wall, about four feet high. Access is by a wrought iron gate on the south side of the cemetery. Directly in front of the gate is Beth Ha-Haim

(House of Life) or the burial house, a six sided plastered rubble masonry structure with a wooden roof covered with a metal roof. The walls are painted yellow, and the roof is painted green, inside and outside. The burial house is where the body is prepared for burial in accordance with Sephardic Jewish tradition and rites.

Several of the burial memorials in both the Old and New Cemeteries have stones, pieces of other memorials, and nineteenth century artifacts of ceramic, glass and metal on them. It is a Hebrew tradition to leave stone or rock on the memorial as a sign of a visit to the burial.

Integrity: Since their construction in the nineteenth century, the St. Thomas Synagogue and Office have been well maintained by the congregation. In the early 1970s, the gutters and roof were repaired, and most of the chandeliers which once used candles for illumination were electrified. Deteriorated wooden shutters and doors were repaired or replaced in kind. All of the interior wood features, such as the Ark, Bimah, and pews of mahogany are original to the 1833 construction of the Synagogue.

The only departure from the original Synagogue integrity was the removal of the white painted plaster from interior walls of the Synagogue, the exterior porch columns, and the office building. Nonetheless, the general character of the building is still apparent, exterior as well as interior, and it remains one of the most impressive, inspiring, and notably gratifying religious structures in the West Indies.

Both the Savan and Altona (or Old and New) Cemeteries are intact and maintained by the congregation of the St. Thomas Synagogue and part of this nomination because they are integral parts of the Jewish religious community of the island of St. Thomas.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally: X Statewide:___ Locally:___

Applicable National Register Criteria: A X B___ C___ D___

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A___ B___ C___ D___ E___ F___ G___

NHL Criteria: Criterion 1

NHL Theme(s):

XXX. AMERICAN WAYS OF LIFE
E. Ethnic Communities

Areas of Significance: **Religion**

Period(s) of Significance: ~~**Nineteenth century**~~ 1833 - 1850(s) ? when cong reached its peak?

Significant Dates: **1833**

Significant Person(s): **N/A**

Cultural Affiliation: ~~**Sephardic Jewish**~~ N/A

Architect/Builder: **N/A**

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

Summary Statement of Significance: The Synagogue of St. Thomas, called Beracha Veshalom Vegemiluth Hasadim (Blessing and Peace and Acts of Piety), built in 1833, is the second-oldest and longest in continuous use synagogue in the United States. The congregation, originally Spanish and Portugese Sephardic Jews, came to the Caribbean Basin to finance trade between the Europe and the New World. Before they came to St. Thomas this congregation played a significant role in supplying war materiel to the Continental Army from Dutch St. Eustatius. ~~The first Reform Confirmation ceremony in the New World was held at this Synagogue, October 14, 1843.~~ ? This does not contribute to Nat'l Sig

XXX. AMERICAN WAYS OF LIFE
E. Ethnic Communities

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Sephardic Jewish Synagogue and Congregation of St. Thomas may trace its roots through some two thousand years of the Hebrew Diaspora, starting with the destruction of the Jewish nation and the Great Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in the first century A.D. Some of these displaced Hebrew peoples ended up in the Iberian peninsula, where over some 1500 years under Roman, Visagothic, Muslim, and Christian rulers they worshiped in their synagogues, attended to their businesses, and raised their families according to religious tenets that over time evolved and came to identify them as Sephardic (Spanish and Portugese) Jewish peoples (Kedourie 1992:8).

During their time in Iberia, the Sephardic peoples were on occasion subjected to religious persecution, special taxation, and restrictions on where they could live and what occupations they could hold. However, the elite among the Sephardic peoples consisting of doctors, bureaucrats, financiers, and religious leaders often formed symbiotic relations with their non-Jewish rulers that proved of mutual benefit to both groups.

In the latter part of the fourteeenth century, however, the same religious fervor that the Castilian Catholic kings used in their successful war of liberation, or Reconquista, of the Iberian peninsula from the Muslims also became directed at the Jews. In the past, Sephardic communities in Spanish towns were under the protection of Spanish kings who derived both financial and administrative benefit from their Jewish subjects. However, when a weak young king, Henry III ascended the throne in 1390, a series of pogroms occurred in Seville, Barcelona, Toledo, Burgos, and Valladolid the next year led by a fanatical administrator for the archdiocese of Seville, Ferrant Martines. The general intent of the pogroms were to forcibly convert the Jews to Christianity, and affected literally tens of thousands of Jews living in the Christian controlled areas of Spain. Records indicate most Jews left the large urban centers of Spain for rural towns or elected to become "New Christians", or conversos (MacKay 1992:49).

The union by marriage of the two most powerful Christian rulers on the Iberian peninsula, Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, in 1469, meant the full might of the Spanish military was now united to complete the Reconquista of Spain. An important aspect of the Reconquista was that it was not just a war of conquest but a Christian crusade against non-Catholics, which meant it became a war against the faiths of Islam and Judaism. To pursue the religious front of this war, the Spanish Inquisition was founded by papal bull in 1478 at the request of Ferdinand and Isabella, with the Inquisition beginning its activities in 1480 under Tomas Torquemada as the first Inquisitor-General (Kamen 1992:74-75).

The official policy of the rulers of Spain were that the Jews should willingly accept conversion to Christianity. It was the Spanish Inquisition's job to see that conversos did not backslide into their original faith. In fact, during the last two decades of the fifteenth century these conversos were the main target of the Inquisition (Kamen 1992:76). During this time, Judaism quite literally moved underground as basements of houses became makeshift synagogues. According to Sephardic tradition, synagogues, like the St. Thomas Synagogue, have their floors covered with clean sand to commemorate this period of time when Jews covered their basement floors with sand to muffle the sounds of congregations practicing their faith (Rabbi B. Boxman, personal communication, 1995).

On March 31, 1492, three months after the conquest of Granada, ending the Reconquista of Spain, the king and queen of a united Spain issued a decree for the expulsion of all unconverted Jews from their realm. In their opinion, having unconverted Jews living in close proximity to conversos encouraged the latter to continue to follow their original faith (Kamen 1992:76). The Jews were given three months to settle their affairs and depart or become New Christians. It has been estimated that possibly half of Spain's Jews "converted" at this time, with the other half leaving Spain for nearby Portugal, while smaller numbers took boats to southern France, Italy, and areas of the Ottoman Empire in North Africa and the eastern Mediterrean where they sought refuge among established Jewish communities (Kamen 1992:84).

Later, due to a marriage of state between Spain and Portugal in 1496, a Jewish expulsion decree (1497) was generated for the latter country and many of the recently resettled Jews from Spain were again on the move, this time with their Portugese Sephardic Jewish cousins (Kamen 1992:83). In addition, pressure by the Inquisition on conversos who remained in Spain, but were practicing Judaism in secret, caused tens of thousands to flee Spain in the decade after the 1492 expulsion decree (Kamen 1992:85).

Under the Spanish expulsion decree, the prohibition on Judaism was rigorously enforced in Castile, Aragon, the Baleric Islands, Sicily, and Sardinia, but appears to have been less so in Spanish overseas territories such as Oran, in North Africa, Naples,

Milan, the Spanish Netherlands, and the New World which provided refuge for the displaced conversos (Kamen 1992:84, 90). The Portugese permitted conversos to emigrate to their colonies in India, Brazil, and the Atlantic Islands (Beinart 1992:119).

In a remarkable sense of historical irony, the very persecution and forced emigration inflicted on the Sephardic Spanish and Portugese Jews and conversos, became in the long run their source of strength that would help to keep their faith alive and cause their religion to prosper and spread throughout the world. Although there had been a Sephardic elite that served as counselors and financial administrators to Christian and Moslem rulers, the majority of the Jewish people made their living as small traders, farmers, shopkeepers, and money lenders. These were the trades and crafts most needed as European countries entered the Age of Exploration and established colonies in parts of the globe that were vaguely or completely unknown to them at the time of the 1492 expulsion.

Throughout the sixteenth century Sephardic Jews in the Spanish Netherlands financed trade in northern European goods, such as iron, wood, grain, and cloth, for southern European and colonial goods, such as wool, rock salt, sugar, spices, tobacco, coffee, and cocoa beans. This trade was founded on trading connections with conversos, often family members, still residing in Spain and Portugal and the overseas possessions in the New World, Africa, and the Far East. In addition, some these goods were also being carried in ships captained by conversos (Beinart 1992:120). According to John Lynch, in Spain After the Expulsion, Sephardic Jews played significant roles in the financing of Spanish kings, and the development of trade with the Indies,

> For the New Christian [or converso] elite . . . the characteristic vocation was finance. Spanish imperial finance had long depended on Italian bankers, who had the capacity to handle the transfer of funds from Spain to the Low Countries [Spanish Netherlands]. Anxious to escape the hard settlements imposed by the Genoese . . . Philip II's government was ready to consider an alternative set of bankers, even if they were Jews and were accumulating their capital on the margin of legality. The union of the [Spanish and Portugese] crowns in 1580 and the surge in transatlantic traffic in the late sixteenth century opened up commercial opportunities that the Portuguese New Christians were quick to exploit. Some made vast fortunes trading in Asian products, investing in the Brazilian sugar industry, and supplying slaves to both Brazil and Spanish America; others reexported commodities from northern Europe to America [1992:147].

By 1550, transoceanic commerce and investment was the basis for economic and social existence of conversos in Portugal and Spain. In order to support international trade with the New World, Africa, and Asia, outlying colonies of trading partners of conversos were established in northern European towns,

particularly Antwerp, which "was the general store-house and emporium for all Spanish and Portuguese colonial commodities in northern Europe" (Israel 1992:191).

By the 1570s, however, the Sephardic traders of Antwerp were leaving for Amsterdam to avoid the religious warfare between the Catholic Spanish crown and the Dutch Lutheran rebels, in the southern portion of the Spanish Netherlands. However, an additional incentive for Jewish emigration was the issuance of the Union of Utrecht (1579), the founding constitutional document of the Dutch republic, which guaranteed that no one would be investigated or prosecuted on the basis of their religion (Israel 1992:192).

The Sephardic Jews were allowed by the Dutch government to build their first synagogue in 1597, and in 1657 all resident Jews were recognized as Dutch nationals. Although they did not receive full citizenship rights until 1796 (Boxer 1990:144-145). As a result of this movement of Sephardic Jewish merchants and traders to Amsterdam, by the 1590s it had become "northern Europe's foremost emporium for sugar, spices, and all other products from the Iberian colonial empires" (Israel 1992:194).

Under the liberal atmosphere of Holland the Sephardic Jews could openly worship in their own synagogues for the first time since their expulsion from Spain in 1492. The Jewish community in Holland served as a magnet for Sephardic Jews from Muslim countries and Venice, as well as a continuing emigration from Iberia (Israel 1992:197). By the 1620s, there were over 1000 Jews in Amsterdam in three congregations. Not only did this community engage in trade it also was a major European center of Jewish religious training and publishing of books in Hebrew (Israel 1992:200).

As the Sephardic Jews managed most of the trade in New World products that passed through Holland via the Iberian ports, it was natural that when the Dutch developed their own overseas empire that Jews would play an important role (Bloom 1937:128). In particular, when the Dutch seized the northern coast of Brazil in the 1630s, "a large number of Dutch Sephardim emigrated to Brazil, mainly to Recife, and captured a large share in the sugar export business" under the auspices of the Dutch West India Company (Israel 1992:203).

According to Jonathan Israel, in his article The Sephardim in the Netherlands, the Brazilian experience was significant in getting large numbers of Sephardic Jews into the New World,

> . . . the West India Company granted Jewish emigrants who settled in Brazil much greater economic as well as religious and personal freedom than yet existed for Jews in the Dutch republic itself, the rush to Brazil assumed what for Dutch Sephardi Jewry were enormous proportions. By 1644 there were 1450 Sephardim living as Jews in Netherlands Brazil, a figure not much less than the total then living in Holland itself, and

> although a proportion of those in Brazil were former New Christians who had reverted to normative Judaism in Brazil, most had emigrated from, or at least via, the Netherlands [1992:203].

Major innovations in the processing of sugar were introduced by the Dutch and the Sephardic Jews between 1638 and 1645, which saw Brazil export an average of 23,300 tons of sugar per year (Watts 1986:182).

> Under the Dutch occupancy of Pernambuco, between 1636 and 1645, Sephardic Jews had been sent out from Europe [to Brazil] generally to enhance trading facilities and to rationalise the importation of slave labour for sugar estates. They also introduced some significant milling innovations, which raised both the quality and efficiency of cane production . . . Although the origins of the three-roller mill are still unclear, there seems to be little doubt that it was first employed widely within the Pernambuco region at this time [Watts 1986:179].

Unfortunately for the Dutch, a Portuguese military expedition retook the Pernambuco region, in 1645, once again forcing a relocation of Jews with expertise in sugar cultivation and capital, this time to English Barbados. The English, who had settled Barbados in the 1630s, had previously developed good relations with the Dutch who were their main supplier of enslaved Africans, and would now provide capital for investment in establishing sugar plantations (Mintz 1985:53; Bloom 1937:144).

With Sephardic Jewish financing from Holland, Portugal had been supplying nearly all of Europe with sugar. However, within a generation England was able to drive Portugal out of the northern European trade in sugar, from its own plantations on Barbados, thanks to Jewish emigrees from Brazil (Mintz 1985:39). The English on Barbados profitted greatly from the Sephardic Jewish experience with sugar plantations in Brazil's Pernambuco province. By 1645,

> . . . techniques of cane production and processing could be gained as well from a group of Sephardic Jews, formerly residents in Pernambuco and skilled in sugar refining, who trickled into Barbados following their expulsion on religious grounds from Brazil, as Portuguese-Catholic control over that territory was regained . . . By 1650, the sale of sugar cane products [from Barbados] had raised the value of exports from the island to over £3 million [Watts 1986:183].

By the late seventeenth century the layout of a typical Lesser Antilles sugar plantation was developed on Barbados as derived from the Pernambuco region of Brazil. The plantation layout developed into three distinct areas: 1) the plantation house area with domestic structures, such as the great house, house servants quarters, and associated domestic structures (Watts 1986:191-

192); 2) the mill complex with the "Dutch sugar mill introduced from Pernambuco . . . with its three vertical rollers" (Watts 1986:192) powered by animals or the trade winds when placed in a windmill and a sugar boiling building where the cane juice was reduced by heat to a crystalline form, from which raw sugar, molasses, and rum were made; and, 3) a slave village, "placed at some distance away from the plantation house and mill complex, servants and slaves who were not on household duties lived in a third set of estate buildings, consisting most frequently of wattle or stick huts, which were roofed with palm thatch" (Watts 1986:193).

This English Barbadian sugar plantation layout, which came into being in the latter part of the seventeenth century, typified all the sugar plantations throughout the Lesser Antilles, whether on English, French, Dutch, or Danish owned islands. By the 1650s there were Dutch Sephardic communities on Curacao, in Surinam, and Jamaica, in addition to Barbados (Israel 1992:205). It is interesting to note that Danish Virgin Islands plantations in the Caribbean "had been financed almost entirely by Dutch [i.e., Sephardic Jewish] capital" in the eighteenth century in a repeat of what had occurred in Brazil and on Barbados (Watts 1986:247).

A Jewish presence on St. Thomas may be trace back to the last two decades of the seventeenth century, when the Danish first undertook the colonization of the island. The fourth Governor of the Danish Virgin Islands, Gabriel Milan (1684-86) was from a Jewish family with trading connections in Portugal, the Netherlands, and Hamburg. To curry the favor of the Danish crown, Milan accepted the Lutheran faith in 1682 in order to improve his prospects of being employed by the Danish state (Westergaard 1917:58-59). However, even before his appointment, a few Jewish families and individuals from other areas of the West Indies had moved to the Caribbean Danish colony on St. Thomas (Boxman 1983:22).

The Danish West India Company that settled St. Thomas in 1672 received its charter from King Christian V in March 1671. It spelled out the Company's rights and limitations, the extent of the home government's assistance in the colonization of St. Thomas, taxes, customs duties, and judiciary matters. The charter did not specifically mention the Lutheran Church, but since it was the state religion of the United Kingdom of Denmark-Norway and the Company was to employ its ministers, it is clear the intent was to make it the official religion of the colony. The Charter stated "the Company was established for the benefit of commerce and for the general welfare which thereon depends." It also stated that foreigners who entered the service of the Company "shall enjoy the same treatment that His Majesty's subjects enjoy" (Westergaard 1917:294).

During the early years of the Danish colony, the Caribbean environment led to a high mortality rate for Northern European emigrants, which produced a critical shortage of manpower (Westergaard 1917:30). To relieve this situation the Company's administrators welcomed settlers from other areas of the

Caribbean, including the Portuguese colony of Brazil. To encourage immigrants who did not embrace the Augsburg Confession (Lutheran faith), the Company adopted the concept of freedom of conscience as a policy.

In 1685 this policy of religious tolerance was formalized in a trade treaty between the Danish West India Company and the Prussian Brandenburger Company which would control the slave trade between Guinea, Africa and St. Thomas. The trade treaty between Prussia and Denmark stipulated the terms of a lease of lands on St. Thomas to the Brandenburger African Company as well as the terms under which it would be allowed to do business on St. Thomas. It included the conditions that Calvinists and Lutherans should have full freedom to exercise their rites and practices, while Jews and Catholics were allowed to hold private services "provided they did not provoke a scandal" (Westergaard 1917:76).

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Danish colonial records contain references to Jewish merchants involved in trade between Europe, Guinea, and St. Thomas (Paiewonsky 1959:6-7). The records note the Jewish residents of St. Thomas as coming from Brazil, and being Portugese, which identifies them as Sephardic Jews (Boyer 1987:11). The records do not mention the existence of a Jewish congregation and freedom of worship under the Danes was not legalized until the mid-eighteenth century. It would appear the Jews on St. Thomas, at this time, worshiped in their homes (Oldendorp 1777:156).

The records that would have pertained to an early Jewish congregation were most likely lost in the early nineteenth-century fires that twice destroyed the Synagogue. The lack of records also leaves in doubt the date of the establishment of the Old Jewish Cemetery in Savan. The importance of burial in consecrated ground to persons of the Judaic faith is such that in any new Jewish settlement the designation of a burial ground has the first priority and the second priority is the formation of a Burial Society to oversee the adherence to customary burial rites. Both take precedence over the establishment of a congregation, or minyan, that requires not less than ten men of the faith (Rabbi B. Boxman, Personal Communication, 1994).

The date of the consecration of the Old Jewish Cemetery (see Photos 5-7) may never be ascertained. Most likely it predates 1766, and may be much earlier. For in that year Savan was laid out for settlement by the free-colored and thus included within the city limits (Svensson 1965:275) It was customary in the past centuries to place burial grounds outside the city and all datable cemeteries that now are within Charlotte Amalie were once beyond its boundaries. In all probability this also applies to the Old Jewish Cemetery. It may date back to the last decade of the seventeenth century as several Jews are known to have resided within the Danish colony of St. Thomas at that time.

A 1992 Ground Penetrating Radar Survey of the Savan Cemetery located buried anomalies indicating there are at least 273

probable burials in the Savan cemetery which do not have above ground stone or brick burial memorials. The large number of burials found in this survey, in addition to the fifty plus above ground stone and brick memorials, indicates the Savan cemetery served the Jewish community for a long time (Wrightman and Windschauer 1993).

In June of 1734 the Danish West India Company's ship Unity arrived in St. Thomas with the news that Denmark's treaty with France for the purchase of St. Croix had been ratified. It brought the orders from Louis XV of France to his governor and lieutenant general of the French Windward Islands, the Marquis de Champigny, to transfer the ownership of St. Croix to the Danish West India Company with the appropriate formalities. The Unity arrived at St. Thomas on the 11th of June and on the 23rd of the same month Governor Gardelin sent a delegation to Martinique with Emanuel Vass, a Jewish merchant of St. Thomas, as the official representative for the Danish West India Company (Westergaard 1917:210). It was a position of trust and an appointment that would only have been made based on a prior relationship of mutual respect. Later, it was noted that Sephardic "Jews originating from Brazil, Portugal, and Spain" were among the first to establish sugar plantations on St. Croix (Boyer 1983:11).

Christian G.A. Oldendorp, in his history of the Moravian Missions in the Danish West Indies, published in 1777, and based on his observations made during his visit to the islands in 1767-68, notes that, "There is a considerable number of Jews particularly in St. Croix" (Oldendorp 1777:138). He also mentions, "The Jews have no regular synagogue, but rather observe their worship services in private residences" (Oldendorp 1777:156), apparently referring to Jews residents on both St. Thomas and St. Croix.

The real growth of the Jewish population of the Danish West Indies occurred during the late eighteenth century as a result of the British attack on the Dutch West Indies island of St. Eustatius. This small volcanic island north of St. Kitts was claimed by Holland in the 1630s. In 1740 it became a free port, and for four decades was an important harbor with the transit trade in the Caribbean -- a distinction that St. Thomas harbor would achieve in the following century. The island had attracted a large population of industrious traders from Holland and elsewhere, among them many Jews, mostly of Sephardic origin. Here, they traded European goods for horses from the British North American colonies, which were used to power sugar grinding mills in the Caribbean (Bloom 1937:149; Boxman 1983:7).

During the American War of Independence, St. Eustatius was a major source of military supplies for the North American colonies. The flow of contraband to the Americans had been a long-standing source of friction between Holland and England. In late December 1780, Great Britain declared war on Holland and ordered Admiral Sir George Rodney to attack St. Eustatius (Goslinga 1985:197). On February 3, 1781 he arrived in Orangestad Harbor with an overwhelming force of 14 ships of the line, 3 frigates and some minor ships, as well as 3,000 soldiers.

An officer was sent ashore to demand the surrender of the island within an hour (Boxman 1983:7-8).

The British invasion came as a complete surprise to the Dutch authorities and citizens of St. Eustatius since word of the English declaration of war had not as yet reached the Caribbean. For the defense of the island, it had a garrison of 60 men and two Dutch men-of-war. There was a brief exchange of shots, but resistance was futile, and Commander Johannes deGraaff signed the act of surrender.

The aim of the English invasion was to wreck the economy of the island and to eliminate St. Eustatius as a transit trading port and supplier of war materiel to the Continental Army. The warehouses were sealed and all shops closed. All property, both public and private, was confiscated and the inhabitants were forced to hand in their cash, jewelry, and precious metals. They were frequently searched and harassed. In an act of wanton vandalism, the island archives were destroyed. By leaving the Dutch flag flying for over a month, Rodney was able to lure many more ships into the port, which he seized. Eventually, Rodney would set fire to all the trader houses and shops on St. Eustatius (Boxman 1983:8).

Rodney called to the merchants on St. Eustatius "a nest of vipers." In a letter, to his wife Rodney stated "this rock had done England more harm than all the arms of her most potent enemies" (Boxman 1983:9). Rodney believed his treatment of the inhabitants was justified when he wrote, "had it not been for this infamous island, the American Rebellion could not possibly have subsisted" (Boxman 1983:8-9).

All together Rodney seized 150 ships, including 60 belonging to Americans, and captured more than 2,000 American merchants and sailors which he sent with their agents to England as prisoners of war. Rodney then turned his attention to the merchants of St. Eustatius. English and Danish merchants were extradited to their homelands. Toward the French the attitude was somewhat more lenient, perhaps because of the presence of a powerful French fleet in the Caribbean. They were shipped to Guadeloupe and Martinique. Worse was the fate of the Jews. All male Jews, one hundred of them, were robbed of all their personal possessions, some were beaten, while 30 more were deported to St. Kitts. The remainder were allowed to witness the public sale of their properties.

By mid-March, public auctions were started. The Jews were not allowed to bid on their confiscated goods. Everything was sold to foreigners who were given free trade permits of arrival and departure. This arrangement, however, invited manipulation and many confiscated items came into the hands of North Americans traders. Some Statians did regain their property with the help of Danish citizens, but also with the assistance of some English bidders (Goslinga 1985:151).

In May of 1781 Admiral Rodney left St. Eustatius in the hands of a British garrison of 670 men. Following his departure, many of the inhabitants fled the island, and a number of them sought refuge in the neutral Danish West Indies. The increase in numbers of Sephardic Jews in both St. Croix and St. Thomas resulted in the formation of a congregation in Christiansted in 1784 (Larsen 1950:96), and in 1796 the first Synagogue on St. Thomas with the appellation of "Blessing and Peace," was built (Knox 1922:161-163; Boxman 1983:5).

The synagogue started with a small congregation of nine families that seven years later (1803) had increased to 22 families. The first synagogue was destroyed in the fire of November 1804 that burned large sections of western and central Charlotte Amalie. By 1812, there was a second synagogue, on the same site, but by 1823 this building was too small to adequately serve the growing congregation. In 1823, it was taken down and replaced by a larger wooden synagogue, on the same site, named "Blessing and Peace and Loving Deeds" to accommodate a congregation of 64 families (Boxman 1983:5).

On New Year's Eve 1831, a fire started in the Commandant Gade section of Queens Quarter, the central part of Charlotte Amalie. Before it burned itself out New Year's Day 1832, it had destroyed about 800 buildings, among them the wooden synagogue built in 1823 (Svensson 1965:23; Boxman 1983:9).

The first half of the nineteenth century was a period of growing prosperity for St. Thomas. The excellence and size of its harbor and the location of St. Thomas, midway between North and South America, and within cruising range of the new steam-powered ships from Europe, made St. Thomas an ideal transhipment point. The island was not only prospering, it was also optimistically predicting further growth and development. In such an atmosphere solicitations for the means to rebuild the St. Thomas Synagogue were met with generous responses in funds and materials, not only from the members of the congregation, but also the non-Jews of St. Thomas, as well from as Jewish congregations from abroad (Boxman 1983:9-11). The present St. Thomas Synagogue (see Figure 3 and Photos 1-4), designed by an unknown French architect, was built in 1833, and has served the Jewish congregation ever since. The working drawings of the St. Thomas Synagogue are still extant (Boxman 1983:12).

The following account of consecration of the synagogue appeared in the St. Thomas Tidende newspaper of September 14, 1833,

> We are happy to have in our power to congratulate our friends of the Hebrew religion on the early completion of the New Synagogue. About six o'clock on Thursday evening the congregation assembled in their temporary place of worship, and shortly thereafter proceeded to the New Synagogue in the usual ceremonial order.
>
> At 7:00 [PM], His Excellency the Governor, and many respectable persons entered the building and

immediately thereafter the Consecration Service commenced. The Lamp of Perpetual Light borne by the eldest member of the Congregation followed by six sacred Rolls of the Pentateuch carried by members, appeared at the entrance, which the elder Priest received. He lighted the Lamp, pronounced the Benediction, and the Lamp was then handed to a younger Priest, who placed it on the stand appropriate for it. During the performance of these offices, the Reader returned thanks for being permitted to witness this solemn and impressive ceremony - the choir, consisting of young ladies and gentlemen, sang the 24th verse of the 118th Psalm.

The Reader then accompanied by the Rulers received the sacred Rolls, the choir singing the 26, 27, 28, and 29th verses of the 118th Psalm, while the same were introduced by a circuitous route to the Reader's desk - after which, commenced the Prayer for Our Beloved Sovereign and the Royal Family, as also for their Excellencies, the Governor-General, the Governor and all the other Magistrates - the same was also implored for all the congregation present. The choristers then sang the 10th verse of the 146 and the 29th Psalm - during which the Rolls of the Pentateuch were deposited in the Ark. The Reader then returned to his Desk, and the choir singing from the 21st to the 29th verse of the 118th Psalm.

An excellent discourse taken from the first of Kings, Chapter 8, verse 13, written expressly for the occasion by Mr. Isaac Lindo, was most emphatically delivered by that gentleman, which made the congregation deeply impressed with the most pathetic feelings of reverence and devotion. Offerings were afterwards made, in which the liberality of the assembly was apparent.

The service of the Consecration was terminated by the choir chanting a Hymn for the occasion. In concluding our account of this memorable ceremony, it is only to say, the whole of which was conducted in a manner worthy of a people who were the first worshippers of the "true and living GOD" [Gjessing 1966:100-103].

In 1836 the Old Jewish Cemetery in Savan was closed, as all remaining plots had been reserved for spouses or other family members (Coulianos 1993:1). Except for a few burials in the reserved plots of the Old Jewish Cemetery which occurred into the 1850s, all other burials of the members of the Jewish congregation have been in the New Cemetery established in 1836. The new consecrated ground with hexagonal-shaped burial house was established in the western suburbs of Charlotte Amalie, and continues to serve the present congregation (see Photos 9-12).

Names on the headstones in both cemeteries include Pardo, Azevedo, Benjamin, Cardoze, De Castro, Da Costa, Devalle,

Fidanque, Fonseca, Henriques, Lindo, Maduro, Moron, Piereira, Pissarro, Piza, Robles, Sasso, Toledano, and Valencia, with memorial text incribed in French, Spanish, English, and Hebrew (Boxman 1983:8). Some headstones mention the birthplaces of the deceased as St. Eustatius, St. Thomas, Curacao, Barbados, Jamaica, Amsterdam, London, New York, and Hamburg, which testify to the historical wanderings of the St. Thomas Sephardic congregation (Boxman 1983:30).

The earliest burials in the New or Altona Cemetery were similar to the ones from the Old or Savan Cemetery and consisting of rectangular brick vaults topped with an incribed stone slab. Later nineteenth century burials have vertical headstones, iron fences, and cast concrete memorials or vaults similar to those found in Gentile cemeteries of the same time. The change in the design of the memorials at the New Cemetery may be related to the Reform movement within the Sephardic faith at that time.

The first half of the nineteenth century was also a time of great change within the Jewish religion. Prior to this time, Gentiles imposed restrictions on where Jews could live and their livelihoods. These strictures served to reinforce Jewish orthodoxy by which their religion created a cohesive society able to maintain its traditions in the face of changes imposed by a sometimes hostile outside world. On March 24, 1814, Denmark became one of the first European nations to enact a royal ordinance for extending full citizenship rights to Jews (Boxman 1983:25).

By 1833, as the congregation of St. Thomas was celebrating the completion of their new synagogue, most European countries had enfranchised their Jewish populations with full citizenship and civil rights. These changes engendered a schism within Jewish communities between those who desired to maintain their Orthodox traditions and those who wished to reform Jewish ceremonies to accomodate their new citizenship status. The religious debates ultimately saw many synagogues split into Orthodox and Reform groups, which set up separate synagogues (S. Hordes, personal communication, 1995).

The Jewish congregation on St. Thomas was not isolated from these debates. Indeed, they found themselves in the forefront of the Reform movement with the appointment, in the early 1840s, of Rabbi Carillon to their synagogue. Rabbi Carillon, who appears to have been an advocate of the Reform movement, instituted Confirmation ceremonies for 14 years old boys and girls of the congregation, which were intended to compliment the traditional coming of age ceremonies, or Bar Mitzvah and Ba Mitzvah, for 13 year old boys and girls, respectively.

This new Confirmation ceremony was similar to the Confirmation ceremonies of Gentile religions, and adopted by Reform synagogues with the conscious intent of drawing themselves closer to the countries that granted them full citizenship and to promote religious tolerance. As one anonymous writer of St. Thomas

noted, in the case of Denmark and its colonies, the Confirmation ceremony was enforced by law.

> Confirmation for boys and girls of 14 years was ordered by the king for the Jews, in the mother country (Denmark), since 1814, and has now been extended to our island. I anticipate the happiest results from this measure, as the preparatory form of Catechism etc., will prevent, in my opinion, conversion. A severe penalty is attached to those who neglect it, they are not permitted to become citizens, hold office, marry, control the property they may get by inheritance, follow any trade, nor are their oaths taken in court . [Plaut n.d.:583].

The first Confirmation ceremony at the St. Thomas Synagogue, held on October 14, 1843, was the first of its kind ever held in the New World (Plaut n.d.:583). As noted in an article, entitled History of the Jews in America, written by Rabbi M.D. Sasso, and submitted to the American Jewish Archives Journal by Rabbi Gunther Plaut,

> Confirmation. We learn from a private letter from St. Thomas that the first confirmation among American Israelites took place on the Sabbath Hol ha-Moed Sukkoth [Feast of Tabernacles] in the Synagogue under the charge of the Rev. [Rabbi] Mr. Carillon. The ceremony is represented as having been very imposing. The names of the confirmed are, Mrs. Daniel Wolff, Misses Miriam and Rebecca Wolff, Miss D[eborah Simha] Cortissos, Miss [Esther] De Meza, Alexander Wolff, and Jacob Benjamin [Plaut n.d.:583].

Rabbi Carillon would perform two other Confirmation ceremonies on February 24 and April 14, 1844, for ten other 14 year olds of the St. Thomas Synagogue congregation. And, the tradition he started would be continued by succeeding Rabbis (Plaut n.d.:584-585).

In all probability, the cosmopolitan nature of the St. Thomas Hebrew Congregation disposed them to a Reform type of Judaism. Religious tolerance on St. Thomas was extended by Danish Governor General Peter von Scholten and several of his administrators who were prominent contributors to the construction fund for the 1833 Synagogue (Boxman 1983:10-11). According to one 1852 source,

> Jews, Gentiles and sects of various names are very amicable in St. Thomas. Great good feeling prevails. Thousands of dollars can be readily raised for any object of general charity [Boxman 1983:27].

However, it would appear that not all of the congregation were happy with the changes instituted by Rabbi Carillon. In 1844,

> A segment of the Congregation led by Judah Sasso and Mashed Mara refused to attend Synagogue services. "Immediately after the return of the Sefer Torah to the

> Hechal," they charged, "Rabbi Carillon proceeded with the wrong prayers and the Musaph was completely omitted." J. Fidanque, Act.[ing] President Jacob Haim Osorio, J. Levy Maduro, Moses Piza, and Jeudah Piza formed a committee to investigate. They reported that the charges were well founded. Ritual was rearranged and harmony was restored to the Congregation. Rabbi Carillon left St. Thomas shortly afterwards for Jamaica [Boxman 1983:27].

In the three decades following the building of the new synagogue, the membership of the Hebrew Congregation increased, with the census records of 1835 showing a population of 467 Jews living in St. Thomas. By 1851, however, the Jewish population had declined to 372 persons (Paiewonsky 1959:12). As the prosperity of St. Thomas began to taper off in the last half of the nineteenth century, so did the Hebrew Congregation. 1867 was a year of disaster for St. Thomas. In October a devastating hurricane hit the island, followed in November by a tidal wave. The two natural catastrophes did great damage to the town, the harbor, shipping facilities, and St. Thomas' reputation as a safe harbor (Brønsted 1952:299).

Advances in the improvements of the steamships of the period, would eliminate the need for using St. Thomas as a coaling station for ships from North America and Europe on their way to South America. St. Thomas' transit trade and usefulness as a coaling station was coming to an end. The gradual loss of population that resulted from the declining economy of the island also affected the Jewish community. The Synagogue, however, continued to serve the spiritual needs of the diminished congregation, which only numbered 141 in 1890 (Boxman 1983:28).

Following World War II, with the increase in air transportation and the development of tourism, the congregation has again grown in numbers. As the congregation approaches the second century of its founding (1796-1996) the congregation is larger than it has ever been in the history of the St. Thomas Jewish community (Boxman 1983:28-32).

During the flourishing period of the first half of the nineteenth century, two people of National and one of International fame belonged to the Synagogue's congregation. David Levi Yulee, born on St. Thomas June 12, 1810, went to Florida as a young man where he became the chosen territorial delegate to Congress from the Territory of Florida in 1841, and later in 1845 when Florida was admitted to the Union, was elected as a United States Senator to Congress. Jacob Mendes da Costa, was also born on St. Thomas January 7, 1833, and became a noted American physican and writer. His numerous books on medicine and diagnosis were translated into several languages. Finally, the famed Impressionist painter Camille Pissarro was born on St. Thomas July 10, 1830 where he spent his early years. As a teenager he already showed an interest and aptitude for painting and later when he moved to Paris, he dedicated himself to art and he changed his name from Jacob Pizzarro to Camille Pissarro. It was in France his genius

was first acknowledged, and he became known as the "Father of Impressionism" (Paiewonsky 1959:9-10; Boxman 1983:24-26).

SUMMARY

The expulsion of the Sephardic Jews from Spain and Portugal, in 1492 and 1497, respectively, forced them to settle in Holland and northern Europe where existing guilds excluded them from earning a living in their traditional roles of middlemen who bought local goods and resold them to people within their community. By 1550, they had created an important new commercial niche -- as merchants facilitating the movement of goods between northern and southern Europe and later the movement and processing of New World products, such as sugar, tobacco, diamonds, and silver.

The Sephardic Jews of Amsterdam were tied to the fortunes of their adopted homeland of Holland. During the seventeenth century expansion of that country's overseas empire, Sephardic Jews settled in Brazil and later Dutch-held islands in the Caribbean Basin. When the Dutch overseas trading system began to wane, in the eighteenth century, so too did the influence of these Jewish merchants. During the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780-84), Great Britain attacked Holland for aiding the Americans in the Revolutionary War. Most of the Jewish financed Dutch-shipping was swept from the seas, and Dutch colonies in the Caribbean were seized. The seizure of St. Eustatius was a great blow to the Jewish traders in the Caribbean Basin, many of whom moved to the Danish colony of St. Thomas.

Here, this resilent community supported the founding and financing of sugar plantations in the Danish Virgin Islands and, later in the early nineteenth century, also in southern Puerto Rico. They also profited by the selling of coal to steamships traveling to South America from Europe and North America.

The St. Thomas congregation, founded in 1796, reached its zenith by the mid-nineteenth century. The congregation declined in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the fortunes of the Danish Virgin Islands, but today has the largest congregation in its history. The St. Thomas synagogue, built in 1833, is the second oldest Jewish synagogue in the United States. It is surpassed in age only by Touro Synagogue (1763), in Newport, Rhode Island, which was designated a National Historic Site on March 5, 1946, and is an affiliated unit of the National Park Service. Touro Synagogue, however, was only occasionally used for worship between the 1820s and 1880s, making the St. Thomas Synagogue the oldest synagogue building in continuous use in the United States. In addition, the St. Thomas Synagogue was the site of the first Confirmation ceremony (October 14, 1843) performed in the New World under the Reform Rabbi Carillon.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

___ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_X_ Previously Listed in the National Register. **Charlotte Amalie Historic District (7/19/76)**
___ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
___ Designated a National Historic Landmark.
___ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #_____
___ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #_____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

_X_ State Historic Preservation Office **U.S. Virgin Islands**
___ Other State Agency
___ Federal Agency
___ Local Government
___ University
_X_ Other(Specify Repository): **Rabbi Bradd H. Boxman**
The Hebrew Congregation of St. Thomas
P.O. Box 266
St. Thomas, USVI 00804
(809) 774-4312

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: **0.23 acres - St. Thomas Synagogue**
0.25 acres - Old Cemetery
0.50 acres - New Cemetery

UTM References: Zone Northing Easting Zone Northing Easting

St. Thomas Synagogue - 20 2029290 395740
Old Jewish Cemetery - 20 2029310 395430
New Jewish Cemetery - 20 2029100 394720

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary for the St. Thomas Synagogue and Synagogue Office consists of just the parcel of land at No. 16AB Krystal Gade, in the Queens Quarter of Charlotte Amalie.

The boundary for the Old Jewish Cemetery consists of a walled enclosure at the southwest corner of Silke Gade and Jode Gade in the Savan Gut area of Charlotte Amalie. The parcel measures 75 feet by 125 feet.

The boundary for the New Jewish Cemetery consists of a walled enclosure along the north side of Dronningens Gade "Main Street" in the Kronprindsens area of Charlotte Amalie. The parcel measures 90 feet by 180 feet.

Boundary Justification:

The Boundary for the St. Thomas Synagogue and Synagogue Office is the town lot at No. 16AB Krystal Gade, in the Queens Quarter of Charlotte Amalie. This has been the site of the three previous Jewish synagogues built by the St. Thomas Congregation.

The Old and New Jewish Cemeteries are parcels of land in the Savan Gut area, at the southwest corner of Silke Gade and Jode Gade, and along the north side of Dronningens Gade "Main Street" in the Kronprindsens area, respectively. The boundaries for both cemeteries are delineated by walled enclosures.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: **Mr. Frederik Gjessing**

Org.: **N/A**

Street/#: **Veteran's Drive Station**
P.O. Box 1844

City/Town: **Charlotte Amalie**

State: **St. Thomas, United States Virgin Islands**

ZIP: **00803**

Telephone: **(809) 775-5674**

Date: **August 9, 1995**

Revised by:

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1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: ST. THOMAS SYNAGOGUE

Other Name/Site Number: *Beracha Veshalom Vegemiluth Hasadim* (Blessing and Peace and Acts of Piety); The Synagogue

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Krystal Gade #16AB, Queens Quarters Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Charlotte Amalie Vicinity: N/A

State: U.S. Virgin Islands County: St. Thomas Code: 030 Zip Code: 00804

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property		Category of Property	
Private:	X	Building(s):	X
Public-local:		District:	
Public-State:		Site:	
Public-Federal:		Structure:	
		Object:	

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2		buildings
		sites
1		structures
		objects
3	0	Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 2

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

_____ _____
Signature of Certifying Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

_____ _____
Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I, hereby certify that this property is:

____ Entered in the National Register _____
____ Determined eligible for the National Register _____
____ Determined not eligible for the National Register _____
____ Removed from the National Register _____
____ Other (explain): _____

_____ _____
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Religious Sub: Religious facility

Current: Religious Sub: Religious facility

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Mid-19th century:
Greek Revival/Gothic Revival

MATERIALS:
Foundation: Stone
Walls: Stone, Brick around window and door openings
Roof: Metal
Other:

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Beracha Veshalom Vegemiluth Hasadim (Blessing and Peace and Acts of Piety) Synagogue (see Photo 1), referred to as the St. Thomas Synagogue, is located at Krystal Gade #16AB, on the southeastern slope of Denmark Hill in one of the older residential areas of Charlotte Amalie, to the north of the town's main business district. The Synagogue was built in 1833 on the same site as the first Synagogue erected in 1792. This is the fourth Synagogue to occupy this site. The first and third synagogues along with the surrounding residential area of Denmark Hill were razed by fires that devastated the area in 1804 and 1831. The second synagogue (1812-23) was torn down and expanded (Svensson 1965:20-23). A small brick and rubble masonry office building sits on the southwest corner of the lot in front of the Synagogue. A wrought iron gate and fence extends from the office across the south side of the lot. The Synagogue and Office Building were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1976 as contributing resources in the Charlotte Amalie Historic District.

The Synagogue Office

The St. Thomas Synagogue (see Figure 1 and Photo 2) is situated on an irregularly shaped lot of approximately one-quarter acre on the north side of Krystal Gade, along with the Office of the Synagogue. The single story brick and rubble masonry Synagogue Office is built against the street (Crystal Gade) and the west borderline of the lot. The office is trapezoid in plan with a width of 15 feet 2 inches and its parallel west and east walls measuring 24 feet 9 inches and 15 feet 10 inches, respectively.

The Synagogue Office is a single story freestanding brick and rubble masonry building located in the southwest corner of the property. It has two windows in the south wall facing the street, and two windows in the east wall. A door in the north wall facing St. Thomas Synagogue's terraced forecourt provides the sole access to the office. All four windows and door are headed by Gothic arches. They all have exterior double board shutters and the windows, in addition, have interior louvered wooden shutters.

The office has a projecting base with vertical banding of corners and surrounds of masonry openings in a yellow Danish brick generally referred to as Flensborg stone. A narrow cornice is crowned by a parapet wall. A nearly flat roof of three layers of

brick set in mortar and supported by a web of wooden beams and purloins is hidden by the parapet wall. Except for the cornice and parapet wall that have retained their original plaster finish and are painted white, the plaster inside and out has been removed to expose the stone and brickwork of the rubble masonry construction.

The construction date of the office has not been documented. It probably postdates the construction of the present St. Thomas Synagogue (1833). In all probability it predates the economic decline of St. Thomas during the last quarter of the nineteenth century (pre-1875) (Taylor 1888:52).

St. Thomas Synagogue

A series of steps along the east side of the office lead up from the street to a wrought iron gate and fence that extends from the office across the south side of the lot. The gate, surmounted by a wrought iron Star of David, gives access to a paved terrace forecourt fronting the St. Thomas Synagogue and its entrance under a roofed porch, raised seven steps above the terrace level and paved in alternating black and white marble tiles.

The St. Thomas Synagogue (see Photos 1-3) is a rectangular one-story rubble masonry building, 41 feet and three bays wide, by 46 feet and four bays deep. It almost covers the full width of the property (east-west measurement) with the west wall only 10 inches from the retaining wall of the neighboring property, and the east wall standing within a few inches of the retaining wall towards the lower elevation of the property to the east. The colonnaded temple front of the building depicts a Greek Revival influence and the Gothic shaped windows and doors indicate a Gothic Revival influence.

The walls of the Synagogue are constructed of rubble masonry using a mortar of lime, sand, and molasses. The framing of door and window openings is red brick and on the exterior it is faced with calcified sandstone laid in an ashlar pattern. The framing of doors and window openings on the interior are of red and yellow brick. All door and window openings are Gothic arches.

The hipped roof is constructed of wood and covered by corrugated metal roofing over wood sheathing. The roof gutters are carried behind a parapet wall on the front and sides of the building. A small shuttered dormer on the west slope of the roof provides access and outside ventilation to the attic space.

The roof of the porch fronting the entrance to the Synagogue is supported by two pairs of red brick columns that are duplicated by similar pairs of semi-detached red brick columns flanking the entrance centered in the south wall. The columns are Tuscan in style as is the plastered and white painted entablature they carry. This in turn provides the facing of the porch roof construction. The main entrance, like all door and window openings of the Synagogue, is headed by a Gothic arch.

Two window openings are on north and south walls, while the west and east walls, have four window openings. All window and door openings on the interior are splayed at the top from equilateral pointed arches on the outer surface of the wall to a wide segmented arch on the interior wall surface. All of the window openings have exterior wood shutters, and fixed interior louvered wooden shutters in the tympanum with adjustable louvered shutters below it with either two or four folding panels. There are projecting surrounds around the exterior window openings and doors. The two doors of the Synagogue are located on the north and south sides of the building between the window openings. The brick exterior surrounds for the windows have been exposed by removing the plaster covering.

The interior window louvered shutters and doors are crafted in pine. The shutters have been stained to match the interior mahogany woodwork, while the doors are painted white.

The exterior surrounds for the doors still retain their plaster covering. The corners of the building have wide projecting bands that extend from an articulated and molded base to the cornice and above to the crown molding of the parapet. All molding and profiles of the architectural features of the exterior are patterned on the Tuscan order.

The plastered exterior parapet walls, main cornice, corner bands and bases, and surrounds of the doorways are painted white. The plaster has been removed from the brick columns and window surrounds on the front of the Synagogue, and the stone facing of the exterior has been painted a subdued ocher. The metal roof of the Synagogue has been painted an iron oxide red.

Behind the Synagogue, on the north side of the property was a former open courtyard, which in recent years has been enclosed with a two story wooden structure. The second floor provides space for a library and office for the rabbi, and the ground floor is an area for exhibits and overflow area for the

congregation.

The interior of the Synagogue (see Photo 4) has an west-east orientation in accordance with ritual practices, with the Ark, holding five Torahs, centered against the east wall and the *Bimah* (or pulpit) against the west wall facing the Ark. To emphasize the east-west orientation of the interior space, the builders and designers of the Synagogue created a square area in the center of the interior defined by four Ionic columns resting on tall pedestals. About halfway up the Ionic columns are two-armed antique brass chandeliers, modernized for electric lights.

The 9-foot plus space between the column pedestals delineating the central area of the Synagogue and the north and south walls have broad masonry platforms two steps above and leading to the center floor area. The platforms on the south and north sides of the interior of the Synagogue support mahogany pews, or *bancas*, for the congregation.

Traditionally men sat in the first four rows of mahogany pews on the north and south sides of the central area of the Synagogue. Above the central area, on the broad masonry platforms, which run the entire west-east length of the Synagogue, are additional rows of mahogany pews for women and children. The men and women seating areas are separated by 3-foot tall wooden partitions, or *m'chitzat*.

The interior columns are said to represent the four mothers of Israel: Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah. The columns support a full entablature with an architrave, an elaborate frieze and a widely projecting cornice. This in turn supports a quadripartite vault with a rope molding in the arises of the vault and a boss design of the Star of David, 31 feet above the floor of the Synagogue. The vault interior is plastered and painted white.

The vault is a plaster shell over wood lath attached to rafters shaped to the curvature of the vault. The rafters are braced to the roof structure, and at their base are joined to the upper cord of the box girder between the interior columns that also supports the attic floor. A seven-inch high continuous open space between the floor and the shell of the vault is carried around the periphery at its base interrupted only by the widely spaced rafters. From the floor level of the interior this device is hidden from view by the wide projection of the cornice. In the daytime, the heated air of the attic escapes through the dormer and creates an updraft in the Synagogue and ventilation of

the roof structure.

During evening services, the rise in temperature of the Synagogue creates a similar updraft and effects a cooling of the interior. Of equal importance is the equalizing of air pressure within the structure during hurricane conditions that this design allows. The Synagogue has been through numerous violent hurricanes since its erection without any serious damage to its fabric.

Suspended from the center of the vault is an eighteen-armed brass chandelier of French design. Each of the arms supports a candle stand and Baccarat crystal hurricane shade. The ceiling, between the outer walls of the Synagogue and the central area of the vault, is flat and plastered and painted white. This ceiling is slightly more than 18 feet above the floor. Six six-armed brass chandeliers with glass hurricane shades for candles are suspended from this ceiling over the central floor area. These chandeliers have been electrified. Four ceiling fans also are suspended from the ceiling.

The *Heikhal*, or area containing the Ark, is raised two steps above the floor of the central area on the east side of the interior of the Synagogue. On either side of the *Heikhal* are benches originally intended to seat the Synagogue's leaders (*parnasim*). Two pedestalled Tuscan columns, built into the central area of the south wall of the interior of the Synagogue, support a scrolled broken pediment, all plastered and painted white. The columns flank the paneled mahogany doors of the Ark, containing the Synagogue's six Torah scrolls. The Ark is also built into the walls of the Synagogue. Above the Ark are two blue tablets with the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) in gilded Hebrew letters resting on the lower cord of the pediment. The tablets are embraced by the scrolls of the upper cord of the broken pediment and surmounted by a smaller tablet depicting the closed crown. Suspended from the ceiling in front of the Ark is the Lamp of Perpetual Light, called the *Ner Tamid*.

On the west side of the interior of the Synagogue is the *Bimah*, from which the service is conducted. The *Bimah* area is on three stepped platforms above the central area. Along the west wall behind the reader's lectern on the highest platform area is a mahogany wooden bench for the service's participants. In front of the bench is a mahogany lectern facing the Ark on the east wall. Access to the *Bimah* is on the north and south sides by paneled wooden rails with brass finials on the rear newels and tall brass candlesticks on the front newels. Two steps below the

Bimah area is a smaller octagonal enclosure of the wooden reader's desk.

The floor of the Synagogue is paved with ceramic tile. In accordance with local Sephardic Jewish tradition, the central floor area and the raised platforms of the congregation are covered with about an inch of sand.

Integrity: Since their construction in the nineteenth century, the St. Thomas Synagogue and Office have been well maintained by the congregation. In the early 1970s, the gutters and roof were repaired, and most of the chandeliers which once used candles for illumination were electrified. Deteriorated wooden shutters and doors were repaired or replaced in kind. All of the interior wood features, such as the Ark, *Bimah*, and pews of mahogany are original to the 1833 construction of the Synagogue.

The only departure from the original Synagogue integrity was the removal of the white painted plaster from interior walls of the Synagogue, the exterior porch columns, and the office building. Nonetheless, the general character of the building is still apparent, exterior as well as interior, and it remains one of the most impressive, inspiring, and notably gratifying religious structures in the West Indies.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally: X Statewide: ___ Locally: ___

Applicable National Register Criteria: A X B ___ C ___ D ___

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G ___

NHL Criteria: Criterion 1

NHL Criteria Exception: 1

NHL Theme(s):

I. Peopling Places
4. Community and Neighborhood

II. Creating Social Institutions and Movements
3. Religious Movements

Areas of Significance: Religion

Period(s) of Significance: 1833-ca. 1850

Significant Dates: 1833

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Unknown

NHL Comparative Categories:

XXX. American Ways of Life
E. Ethnic Communities

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

Summary Statement of Significance: The Synagogue of St. Thomas, called *Beracha Veshalom Vegemiluth Hasadim* (Blessing and Peace and Acts of Piety), built in 1833, is the second-oldest synagogue and longest in continuous use in the United States. The congregation, originally Spanish and Portuguese Sephardic Jews, came to the Caribbean Basin to finance trade between Europe and the New World. The St. Thomas congregation, founded in 1796, reached its zenith by the mid-nineteenth century. The congregation declined in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the fortunes of the Danish Virgin Islands, but today has the largest congregation in its history. The St. Thomas synagogue is surpassed in age only by Touro Synagogue (1763), in Newport, Rhode Island, which was designated a National Historic Site on March 5, 1946, and is an affiliated unit of the National Park Service. Touro Synagogue, however, was only occasionally used for worship between the 1820s and 1880s, making the St. Thomas Synagogue the oldest synagogue building in continuous use in the United States. The congregation of *Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim* in Charleston, South Carolina was established in 1749 and erected its current house of worship in 1840. It was designated an NHL 1980 in part in belief that the synagogue was the second oldest extant in the country and the oldest in continual use. The St. Thomas Synagogue predates *Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim* Synagogue by seven years. The St. Thomas Synagogue meets Criteria Exception 1 as a religious property that derives its primary national significance from its historic importance.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Sephardic Jewish Synagogue and Congregation of St. Thomas may trace its roots through some two thousand years of the Hebrew Diaspora, starting with the destruction of the Jewish nation and the Great Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in the first century A.D. Some of these displaced Hebrew peoples ended up in the Iberian peninsula, where over some 1500 years under Roman, Visagothic, Muslim, and Christian rulers they worshiped in their synagogues, attended to their businesses, and raised their families according to religious tenets that over time evolved and came to identify them as Sephardic (Spanish and Portugese) Jewish peoples (Kedourie 1992:8).

During their time in Iberia, the Sephardic peoples were on occasion subjected to religious persecution, special taxation,

and restrictions on where they could live and what occupations they could hold. However, the elite among the Sephardic peoples consisting of doctors, bureaucrats, financiers, and religious leaders often formed symbiotic relations with their non-Jewish rulers that proved of mutual benefit to both groups.

In the latter part of the fourteenth century, however, the same religious fervor that the Castilian Catholic kings used in their successful war of liberation, or *Reconquista*, of the Iberian peninsula from the Muslims also became directed at the Jews. In the past, Sephardic communities in Spanish towns were under the protection of Spanish kings who derived both financial and administrative benefit from their Jewish subjects. However, when a weak young king, Henry III ascended the throne in 1390, a series of pogroms occurred in Seville, Barcelona, Toledo, Burgos, and Valladolid the next year led by a fanatical administrator for the archdiocese of Seville, Ferrant Martines. The general intent of the pogroms was to forcibly convert the Jews to Christianity, which affected tens of thousands of Jews living in the Christian controlled areas of Spain. Records indicate most Jews left the large urban centers of Spain for rural towns or elected to become "New Christians", or *conversos* (MacKay 1992:49).

The union by marriage of the two most powerful Christian rulers on the Iberian peninsula, Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, in 1469, meant the full might of the Spanish military was now united to complete the *Reconquista* of Spain. An important aspect of the *Reconquista* was that it was not just a war of conquest but a Christian crusade against non-Catholics, which meant it became a war against the faiths of Islam and Judaism. To pursue the religious front of this war, the Spanish Inquisition was founded by papal bull in 1478 at the request of Ferdinand and Isabella, with the Inquisition beginning its activities in 1480 under Tomas Torquemada as the first Inquisitor-General (Kamen 1992:74-75).

The official policy of the rulers of Spain was that the Jews should willingly accept conversion to Christianity. It was the Spanish Inquisition's job to see that *conversos* did not backslide into their original faith. In fact, during the last two decades of the fifteenth century these *conversos* were the main target of the Inquisition (Kamen 1992:76). During this time, Judaism quite literally moved underground as basements of houses became makeshift synagogues. According to Sephardic tradition, synagogues, like the St. Thomas Synagogue, have their floors covered with clean sand to commemorate this period of time when

Jews covered their basement floors with sand to muffle the sounds of congregations practicing their faith (Rabbi B. Boxman, personal communication, 1995).

On March 31, 1492, three months after the conquest of Granada, ending the *Reconquista* of Spain, the king and queen of a united Spain issued a decree for the expulsion of all unconverted Jews from their realm. In their opinion, having unconverted Jews living in close proximity to *conversos* encouraged the latter to continue to follow their original faith (Kamen 1992:76). The Jews were given three months to settle their affairs and depart or become New Christians. It has been estimated that possibly half of Spain's Jews "converted" at this time, with the other half leaving Spain for nearby Portugal, while smaller numbers took boats to southern France, Italy, and areas of the Ottoman Empire in North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean where they sought refuge among established Jewish communities (Kamen 1992:84).

Later, due to a marriage of state between Spain and Portugal in 1496, a Jewish expulsion decree (1497) was generated for the latter country and many of the recently resettled Jews from Spain were again on the move, this time with their Portugese Sephardic Jewish cousins (Kamen 1992:83). In addition, pressure by the Inquisition on *conversos* who remained in Spain, but were practicing Judaism in secret, caused tens of thousands to flee Spain in the decade after the 1492 expulsion decree (Kamen 1992:85).

Under the Spanish expulsion decree, the prohibition on Judaism was rigorously enforced in Castile, Aragon, the Balearic Islands, Sicily, and Sardinia, but appears to have been less so in Spanish overseas territories such as Oran, in North Africa, Naples, Milan, the Spanish Netherlands, and the New World which provided refuge for the displaced *conversos* (Kamen 1992:84, 90). The Portugese permitted *conversos* to emigrate to their colonies in India, Brazil, and the Atlantic Islands (Beinart 1992:119).

In a remarkable sense of historical irony, the very persecution and forced emigration inflicted on the Sephardic Spanish and Portugese Jews and *conversos*, became in the long run their source of strength that would help to keep their faith alive and cause their religion to prosper and spread throughout the world. Although there had been a Sephardic elite that served as counselors and financial administrators to Christian and Moslem rulers, the majority of the Jewish people made their living as

small traders, farmers, shopkeepers, and money lenders. These were the trades and crafts most needed as European countries entered the Age of Exploration and established colonies in parts of the globe that were vaguely or completely unknown to them at the time of the 1492 expulsion.

Throughout the sixteenth century Sephardic Jews in the Spanish Netherlands financed trade in northern European goods, such as iron, wood, grain, and cloth, for southern European and colonial goods, such as wool, rock salt, sugar, spices, tobacco, coffee, and cocoa beans. This trade was founded on trading connections with *conversos*, often family members, still residing in Spain and Portugal and the overseas possessions in the New World, Africa, and the Far East. In addition, some of these goods were also being carried in ships captained by *conversos* (Beinart 1992:120). According to John Lynch, in *Spain After the Expulsion*, Sephardic Jews played significant roles in the financing of Spanish kings, and the development of trade with the Indies,

> For the New Christian [or *converso*] elite . . . the characteristic vocation was finance. Spanish imperial finance had long depended on Italian bankers, who had the capacity to handle the transfer of funds from Spain to the Low Countries [Spanish Netherlands]. Anxious to escape the hard settlements imposed by the Genoese . . . Philip II's government was ready to consider an alternative set of bankers, even if they were Jews and were accumulating their capital on the margin of legality. The union of the [Spanish and Portugese] crowns in 1580 and the surge in transatlantic traffic in the late sixteenth century opened up commercial opportunities that the Portuguese New Christians were quick to exploit. Some made vast fortunes trading in Asian products, investing in the Brazilian sugar industry, and supplying slaves to both Brazil and Spanish America; others reexported commodities from northern Europe to America [1992:147].

By 1550, transoceanic commerce and investment were the basis for the economic and social existence of *conversos* in Portugal and Spain. In order to support international trade with the New World, Africa, and Asia, outlying colonies of trading partners of *conversos* were established in northern European towns, particularly Antwerp, which "was the general store-house and emporium for all Spanish and Portuguese colonial commodities in northern Europe" (Israel 1992:191).

By the 1570s, however, the Sephardic traders of Antwerp were leaving for Amsterdam to avoid the religious warfare between the Catholic Spanish crown and the Dutch Lutheran rebels, in the southern portion of the Spanish Netherlands. However, an additional incentive for Jewish emigration was the issuance of the Union of Utrecht (1579), the founding constitutional document of the Dutch republic, which guaranteed that no one would be investigated or prosecuted on the basis of their religion (Israel 1992:192).

The Sephardic Jews were allowed by the Dutch government to build their first synagogue in 1597, and in 1657 all resident Jews were recognized as Dutch nationals. Although they did not receive full citizenship rights until 1796 (Boxer 1990:144-145). As a result of this movement of Sephardic Jewish merchants and traders to Amsterdam, by the 1590s it had become "northern Europe's foremost emporium for sugar, spices, and all other products from the Iberian colonial empires" (Israel 1992:194).

Under the liberal atmosphere of Holland the Sephardic Jews could openly worship in their own synagogues for the first time since their expulsion from Spain in 1492. The Jewish community in Holland served as a magnet for Sephardic Jews from Muslim countries and Venice, as well as a continuing emigration from Iberia (Israel 1992:197). By the 1620s, there were over 1000 Jews in Amsterdam in three congregations. Not only did this community engage in trade it also was a major European center of Jewish religious training and publishing of books in Hebrew (Israel 1992:200).

As the Sephardic Jews managed most of the trade in New World products that passed through Holland via the Iberian ports, it was natural that when the Dutch developed their own overseas empire that Jews would play an important role (Bloom 1937:128). In particular, when the Dutch seized the northern coast of Brazil in the 1630s, "a large number of Dutch Sephardim emigrated to Brazil, mainly to Recife, and captured a large share in the sugar export business" under the auspices of the Dutch West India Company (Israel 1992:203).

According to Jonathan Israel, in his article "The Sephardim in the Netherlands", the Brazilian experience was significant in getting large numbers of Sephardic Jews into the New World,

> . . . the West India Company granted Jewish emigrants who settled in Brazil much greater economic as well as

> religious and personal freedom than yet existed for Jews in the Dutch republic itself, the rush to Brazil assumed what for Dutch Sephardi Jewry were enormous proportions. By 1644 there were 1450 Sephardim living as Jews in Netherlands Brazil, a figure not much less than the total then living in Holland itself, and although a proportion of those in Brazil were former New Christians who had reverted to normative Judaism in Brazil, most had emigrated from, or at least via, the Netherlands [1992:203].

Major innovations in the processing of sugar were introduced by the Dutch and the Sephardic Jews between 1638 and 1645, which saw Brazil export an average of 23,300 tons of sugar per year (Watts 1986:182).

> Under the Dutch occupancy of Pernambuco, between 1636 and 1645, Sephardic Jews had been sent out from Europe [to Brazil] generally to enhance trading facilities and to rationalise the importation of slave labour for sugar estates. They also introduced some significant milling innovations, which raised both the quality and efficiency of cane production . . . Although the origins of the three-roller mill are still unclear, there seems to be little doubt that it was first employed widely within the Pernambuco region at this time [Watts 1986:179].

Unfortunately for the Dutch, a Portuguese military expedition retook the Pernambuco region, in 1645, once again forcing a relocation of Jews with expertise in sugar cultivation and capital, this time to English Barbados. The English, who had settled Barbados in the 1630s, had previously developed good relations with the Dutch who were their main supplier of enslaved Africans, and would now provide capital for investment in establishing sugar plantations (Mintz 1985:53; Bloom 1937:144).

With Sephardic Jewish financing from Holland, Portugal had been supplying nearly all of Europe with sugar. However, within a generation England was able to drive Portugal out of the northern European trade in sugar, from its own plantations on Barbados, thanks to Jewish emigres from Brazil (Mintz 1985:39). The English on Barbados profited greatly from the Sephardic Jewish experience with sugar plantations in Brazil's Pernambuco province. By 1645,

> . . . techniques of cane production and processing could be gained as well from a group of Sephardic Jews, formerly residents in Pernambuco and skilled in sugar refining, who trickled into Barbados following their expulsion on religious grounds from Brazil, as Portuguese-Catholic control over that territory was regained . . . By 1650, the sale of sugar cane products [from Barbados] had raised the value of exports from the island to over £3 million [Watts 1986:183].

By the 1650s there were Dutch Sephardic communities on Curacao, in Surinam, and Jamaica, in addition to Barbados (Israel 1992:205). It is interesting to note that Danish Virgin Islands plantations in the Caribbean "had been financed almost entirely by Dutch [i.e., Sephardic Jewish] capital" in the eighteenth century in a repeat of what had occurred in Brazil and on Barbados (Watts 1986:247).

A Jewish presence on St. Thomas may be traced back to the last two decades of the seventeenth century, when the Danish first undertook the colonization of the island. The fourth Governor of the Danish Virgin Islands, Gabriel Milan (1684-86) was from a Jewish family with trading connections in Portugal, the Netherlands, and Hamburg. To curry the favor of the Danish crown, Milan accepted the Lutheran faith in 1682 in order to improve his prospects of being employed by the Danish state (Westergaard 1917:58-59). However, even before his appointment, a few Jewish families and individuals from other areas of the West Indies had moved to the Caribbean Danish colony on St. Thomas (Boxman 1983:22).

The Danish West India Company that settled St. Thomas in 1672 received its charter from King Christian V in March 1671. It spelled out the Company's rights and limitations, the extent of the home government's assistance in the colonization of St. Thomas, taxes, customs duties, and judiciary matters. The charter did not specifically mention the Lutheran Church, but since it was the state religion of the United Kingdom of Denmark-Norway and the Company was to employ its ministers, it is clear the intent was to make it the official religion of the colony. The Charter stated "the Company was established for the benefit of commerce and for the general welfare which thereon depends." It also stated that foreigners who entered the service of the Company "shall enjoy the same treatment that His Majesty's subjects enjoy" (Westergaard 1917:294).

During the early years of the Danish colony, the Caribbean environment led to a high mortality rate for Northern European emigrants, which produced a critical shortage of manpower (Westergaard 1917:30). To relieve this situation the Company's administrators welcomed settlers from other areas of the Caribbean, including the Portuguese colony of Brazil. To encourage immigrants who did not embrace the Augsburg Confession (Lutheran faith), the Company adopted the concept of freedom of conscience as a policy.

In 1685 this policy of religious tolerance was formalized in a trade treaty between the Danish West India Company and the Prussian Brandenburger Company which would control the slave trade between Guinea, Africa and St. Thomas. The trade treaty between Prussia and Denmark stipulated the terms of a lease of lands on St. Thomas to the Brandenburger African Company as well as the terms under which it would be allowed to do business on St. Thomas. It included the conditions that Calvinists and Lutherans should have full freedom to exercise their rites and practices, while Jews and Catholics were allowed to hold private services "provided they did not provoke a scandal" (Westergaard 1917:76).

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Danish colonial records contain references to Jewish merchants involved in trade between Europe, Guinea, and St. Thomas (Paiewonsky 1959:6-7). The records note the Jewish residents of St. Thomas as coming from Brazil, and being Portuguese, which identifies them as Sephardic Jews (Boyer 1987:11). The records do not mention the existence of a Jewish congregation and freedom of worship under the Danes was not legalized until the mid-eighteenth century. It would appear the Jews on St. Thomas, at this time, worshiped in their homes (Oldendorp 1777:156). The records that would have pertained to an early Jewish congregation were most likely lost in the early nineteenth-century fires that twice destroyed the Synagogue.

In June of 1734 the Danish West India Company's ship *Unity* arrived in St. Thomas with the news that Denmark's treaty with France for the purchase of St. Croix had been ratified. It brought the orders from Louis XV of France to his governor and lieutenant general of the French Windward Islands, the Marquis de Champigny, to transfer the ownership of St. Croix to the Danish West India Company with the appropriate formalities. The *Unity* arrived at St. Thomas on the 11th of June and on the 23rd of the same month Governor Gardelin sent a delegation to Martinique with

Emanuel Vass, a Jewish merchant of St. Thomas, as the official representative for the Danish West India Company (Westergaard 1917:210). It was a position of trust and an appointment that would only have been made based on a prior relationship of mutual respect. Later, it was noted that Sephardic "Jews originating from Brazil, Portugal, and Spain" were among the first to establish sugar plantations on St. Croix (Boyer 1983:11).

Christian G.A. Oldendorp, in his history of the Moravian Missions in the Danish West Indies, published in 1777, and based on his observations made during his visit to the islands in 1767-68, notes that, "There is a considerable number of Jews particularly in St. Croix" (Oldendorp 1777:138). He also mentions, "The Jews have no regular synagogue, but rather observe their worship services in private residences" (Oldendorp 1777:156), apparently referring to Jewish residents on both St. Thomas and St. Croix.

The real growth of the Jewish population of the Danish West Indies occurred during the late eighteenth century as a result of the British attack on the Dutch West Indies island of St. Eustatius. During the American War of Independence, St. Eustatius was a major source of military supplies for the North American colonies. The flow of contraband to the Americans had been a long-standing source of friction between Holland and England. In late December 1780, Great Britain declared war on Holland and ordered Admiral Sir George Rodney to attack St. Eustatius (Goslinga 1985:197). On February 3, 1781 he arrived in Orangestad Harbor with an overwhelming force of 14 ships of the line, 3 frigates and some minor ships, as well as 3,000 soldiers. An officer was sent ashore to demand the surrender of the island within an hour (Boxman 1983:7-8).

The British invasion came as a complete surprise to the Dutch authorities and citizens of St. Eustatius since word of the English declaration of war had not reached the Caribbean. For the defense of the island, it had a garrison of 60 men and two Dutch men-of-war. There was a brief exchange of shots, but resistance was futile, and Commander Johannes deGraaff signed the act of surrender.

All together Rodney seized 150 ships, including 60 belonging to Americans, and captured more than 2,000 American merchants and sailors which he sent with their agents to England as prisoners of war. Rodney then turned his attention to the merchants of St. Eustatius. English and Danish merchants were extradited to their homelands. Toward the French the attitude was somewhat more

lenient, perhaps because of the presence of a powerful French fleet in the Caribbean. They were shipped to Guadeloupe and Martinique. Worse was the fate of the Jews. All male Jews, one hundred of them, were robbed of all their personal possessions, some were beaten, while 30 more were deported to St. Kitts. The remainder were allowed to witness the public sale of their properties.

In May of 1781 Admiral Rodney left St. Eustatius in the hands of a British garrison of 670 men. Following his departure, many of the inhabitants fled the island, and a number of them sought refuge in the neutral Danish West Indies. The increase in numbers of Sephardic Jews in both St. Croix and St. Thomas resulted in the formation of a congregation in Christiansted in 1784 (Larsen 1950:96), and in 1796 the first Synagogue on St. Thomas with the appellation of "Blessing and Peace," was built (Knox 1922:161-163; Boxman 1983:5).

The synagogue started with a small congregation of nine families that seven years later (1803) had increased to 22 families. The first synagogue was destroyed in the fire of November 1804 that burned large sections of western and central Charlotte Amalie. By 1812, there was a second synagogue, on the same site, but by 1823 this building was too small to adequately serve the growing congregation. In 1823, it was taken down and replaced by a larger wooden synagogue, on the same site, named "Blessing and Peace and Loving Deeds" to accommodate a congregation of 64 families (Boxman 1983:5).

On New Year's Eve 1831, a fire started in the Commandant Gade section of Queens Quarter, the central part of Charlotte Amalie. Before it burned itself out New Year's Day 1832, it had destroyed about 800 buildings, among them the wooden synagogue built in 1823 (Svensson 1965:23; Boxman 1983:9).

The first half of the nineteenth century was a period of growing prosperity for St. Thomas. The excellence and size of its harbor and its location midway between North and South America and within cruising range of the new steam-powered ships from Europe made St. Thomas an ideal transhipment point. The island was not only prospering, it also was optimistically predicting further growth and development. In such an atmosphere solicitations for the means to rebuild the St. Thomas Synagogue were met with generous responses in funds and materials, not only from the members of the congregation, but also the non-Jews of St. Thomas, as well as from Jewish congregations from abroad (Boxman 1983:9-

11). The present St. Thomas Synagogue (see Figure 3 and Photos 1-4), designed by an unknown French architect, was built in 1833, and has served the Jewish congregation ever since. The working drawings of the St. Thomas Synagogue are still extant (Boxman 1983:12).

The following account of consecration of the synagogue appeared in the *St. Thomas Tidende* newspaper of September 14, 1833,

> We are happy to have in our power to congratulate our friends of the Hebrew religion on the early completion of the New Synagogue. About six o'clock on Thursday evening the congregation assembled in their temporary place of worship, and shortly thereafter proceeded to the New Synagogue in the usual ceremonial order.
>
> At 7:00 [PM], His Excellency the Governor, and many respectable persons entered the building and immediately thereafter the Consecration Service commenced. The Lamp of Perpetual Light borne by the eldest member of the Congregation followed by six sacred Rolls of the Pentateuch carried by members, appeared at the entrance, which the elder Priest received. He lighted the Lamp, pronounced the Benediction, and the Lamp was then handed to a younger Priest, who placed it on the stand appropriate for it. During the performance of these offices, the Reader returned thanks for being permitted to witness this solemn and impressive ceremony - the choir, consisting of young ladies and gentlemen, sang the 24th verse of the 118th Psalm.
>
> The Reader then accompanied by the Rulers received the sacred Rolls, the choir singing the 26, 27, 28, and 29th verses of the 118th Psalm, while the same were introduced by a circuitous route to the Reader's desk - after which, commenced the Prayer for Our Beloved Sovereign and the Royal Family, as also for their Excellencies, the Governor-General, the Governor and all the other Magistrates - the same was also implored for all the congregation present. The choristers then sang the 10th verse of the 146 and the 29th Psalm - during which the Rolls of the Pentateuch were deposited in the Ark. The Reader then returned to his Desk, and the choir singing from the 21st to the 29th verse of the 118th Psalm.

> An excellent discourse taken from the first of Kings, Chapter 8, verse 13, written expressly for the occasion by Mr. Isaac Lindo, was most emphatically delivered by that gentleman, which made the congregation deeply impressed with the most pathetic feelings of reverence and devotion. Offerings were afterwards made, in which the liberality of the assembly was apparent.
>
> The service of the Consecration was terminated by the choir chanting a Hymn for the occasion. In concluding our account of this memorable ceremony, it is only to say, the whole of which was conducted in a manner worthy of a people who were the first worshippers of the "true and living GOD" [Gjessing 1966:100-103].

The first half of the nineteenth century was also a time of great change within the Jewish religion. Prior to this time, Gentiles imposed restrictions on where Jews could live and their livelihoods. These strictures served to reinforce Jewish orthodoxy by which their religion created a cohesive society able to maintain its traditions in the face of changes imposed by a sometimes hostile outside world. On March 24, 1814, Denmark became one of the first European nations to enact a royal ordinance for extending full citizenship rights to Jews (Boxman 1983:25).

By 1833, as the congregation of St. Thomas was celebrating the completion of its new synagogue, most European countries had enfranchised their Jewish populations with full citizenship and civil rights. These changes engendered a schism within Jewish communities between those who desired to maintain their Orthodox traditions and those who wished to reform Jewish ceremonies to accommodate their new citizenship status. The religious debates ultimately saw many synagogues split into Orthodox and Reform groups, which set up separate synagogues (S. Hordes, personal communication, 1995).

The Jewish congregation on St. Thomas was not isolated from these debates. Indeed, its members found themselves in the forefront of the Reform movement with the appointment, in the early 1840s, of Rabbi Carillon to their synagogue. Rabbi Carillon, who appears to have been an advocate of the Reform movement, instituted Confirmation ceremonies for 14 year old boys and girls of the congregation, which were intended to compliment the traditional coming of age ceremonies, or *Bar Mitzvah* and *Bat*

Mitzvah, for 13 year old boys and girls, respectively.

This new Confirmation ceremony was similar to the Confirmation ceremonies of Gentile religions, and adopted by Reform synagogues with the conscious intent of drawing themselves closer to the countries that granted them full citizenship and to promote religious tolerance. As one anonymous writer of St. Thomas noted, in the case of Denmark and its colonies, the Confirmation ceremony was enforced by law.

> Confirmation for boys and girls of 14 years was ordered by the king for the Jews, in the mother country (Denmark), since 1814, and has now been extended to our island. I anticipate the happiest results from this measure, as the preparatory form of Catechism etc., will prevent, in my opinion, conversion. A severe penalty is attached to those who neglect it, they are not permitted to become citizens, hold office, marry, control the property they may get by inheritance, follow any trade, nor are their oaths taken in court . [Plaut n.d.:583].

The first Confirmation ceremony at the St. Thomas Synagogue, held on October 14, 1843, was the first of its kind ever held in the New World (Plaut n.d.:583). As noted in an article, entitled "History of the Jews in America", written by Rabbi M.D. Sasso, and submitted to the American Jewish Archives Journal by Rabbi Gunther Plaut,

> Confirmation. We learn from a private letter from St. Thomas that the first confirmation among American Israelites took place on the Sabbath *Hol ha-Moed Sukkoth* [Feast of Tabernacles] in the Synagogue under the charge of the Rev. [Rabbi] Mr. Carillon. The ceremony is represented as having been very imposing. The names of the confirmed are, Mrs. Daniel Wolff, Misses Miriam and Rebecca Wolff, Miss D[eborah Simha] Cortissos, Miss [Esther] De Meza, Alexander Wolff, and Jacob Benjamin [Plaut n.d.:583].

Rabbi Carillon would perform two other Confirmation ceremonies on February 24 and April 14, 1844, for ten other 14 year olds of the St. Thomas Synagogue congregation. And, the tradition he started would be continued by succeeding Rabbis (Plaut n.d.:584-585).

In all probability, the cosmopolitan nature of the St. Thomas

Hebrew Congregation disposed them to a Reform type of Judaism. Religious tolerance on St. Thomas was extended by Danish Governor General Peter von Scholten and several of his administrators who were prominent contributors to the construction fund for the 1833 Synagogue (Boxman 1983:10-11). According to one 1852 source,

> Jews, Gentiles and sects of various names are very amicable in St. Thomas. Great good feeling prevails. Thousands of dollars can be readily raised for any object of general charity [Boxman 1983:27].

However, it would appear that not all of the congregation were happy with the changes instituted by Rabbi Carillon. In 1844,

> A segment of the Congregation led by Judah Sasso and Mashed Mara refused to attend Synagogue services. "Immediately after the return of the Sefer Torah to the Hechal," they charged, "Rabbi Carillon proceeded with the wrong prayers and the Musaph was completely omitted." J. Fidanque, Act.[ing] President Jacob Haim Osorio, J. Levy Maduro, Moses Piza, and Jeudah Piza formed a committee to investigate. They reported that the charges were well founded. Ritual was rearranged and harmony was restored to the Congregation. Rabbi Carillon left St. Thomas shortly afterwards for Jamaica [Boxman 1983:27].

In the two decades following the building of the new synagogue, the membership of the Hebrew Congregation increased, with the census records of 1835 showing a population of 467 Jews living in St. Thomas. By 1851, however, the Jewish population had declined to 372 persons (Paiewonsky 1959:12). As the prosperity of St. Thomas began to taper off in the last half of the nineteenth century, so did the Hebrew Congregation. The year 1867 was a disastrous one for St. Thomas. In October a devastating hurricane hit the island, followed in November by a tidal wave. The two natural catastrophes did great damage to the town, the harbor, shipping facilities, and St. Thomas' reputation as a safe harbor (Brønsted 1952:299).

Improvements in the steamships of the period eliminated the need for using St. Thomas as a coaling station for ships from North America and Europe on their way to South America. St. Thomas' transit trade and usefulness as a coaling station was coming to an end. The gradual loss of population that resulted from the declining economy of the island also affected the Jewish

community. The Synagogue, however, continued to serve the spiritual needs of the diminished congregation, which only numbered 141 in 1890 (Boxman 1983:28).

Following World War II, with the increase in air transportation and the development of tourism, the congregation has again grown in numbers. As the congregation has reached the second century of its founding (1796-1996) it is larger than it has ever been in the history of the St. Thomas Jewish community (Boxman 1983:28-32).

During the flourishing period of the first half of the nineteenth century, two people of national and one of international fame belonged to the Synagogue's congregation. David Levi Yulee, born on St. Thomas June 12, 1810, went to Florida as a young man where he became the chosen territorial delegate to Congress from the Territory of Florida in 1841, and later in 1845 when Florida was admitted to the Union, was elected as a United States Senator to Congress. Jacob Mendes da Costa was born on St. Thomas January 7, 1833, and became a noted American physician and writer. His numerous books on medicine and diagnosis were translated into several languages. Finally, the famed Impressionist painter Camille Pissarro was born on St. Thomas July 10, 1830 where he spent his early years. As a teenager he already showed an interest and aptitude for painting and later when he moved to Paris, he dedicated himself to art and he changed his name from Jacob Pizzarro to Camille Pissarro. It was in France his genius was first acknowledged, and he became known as the "Father of Impressionism" (Paiewonsky 1959:9-10; Boxman 1983:24-26).

SUMMARY

The expulsion of the Sephardic Jews from Spain and Portugal, in 1492 and 1497, respectively, forced them to settle in Holland and northern Europe where existing guilds excluded them from earning a living in their traditional roles of middlemen who bought local goods and resold them to people within their community. By 1550, they had created an important new commercial niche -- as merchants facilitating the movement of goods between northern and southern Europe and later the movement and processing of New World products, such as sugar, tobacco, diamonds, and silver.

The Sephardic Jews of Amsterdam were tied to the fortunes of their adopted homeland of Holland. During the seventeenth century expansion of that country's overseas empire, Sephardic Jews settled in Brazil and later Dutch-held islands in the

Caribbean Basin. When the Dutch overseas trading system began to wane in the eighteenth century, so too did the influence of these Jewish merchants. During the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780-84), Great Britain attacked Holland for aiding the Americans in the Revolutionary War. Most of the Jewish financed Dutch-shipping was swept from the seas, and Dutch colonies in the Caribbean were seized. The seizure of St. Eustatius was a great blow to the Jewish traders in the Caribbean Basin, many of whom moved to the Danish colony of St. Thomas.

Here, this resilient community supported the founding and financing of sugar plantations in the Danish Virgin Islands and, later in the early nineteenth century, also in southern Puerto Rico. They also profited by the selling of coal to steamships traveling to South America from Europe and North America.

The St. Thomas congregation, founded in 1796, reached its zenith by the mid-nineteenth century. The congregation declined in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the fortunes of the Danish Virgin Islands, but today has the largest congregation in its history. The St. Thomas synagogue, built in 1833, is the second oldest Jewish synagogue in the United States. It is surpassed in age only by Touro Synagogue (1763), in Newport, Rhode Island, which was designated a National Historic Site on March 5, 1946, and is an affiliated unit of the National Park Service. Touro Synagogue, however, was only occasionally used for worship between the 1820s and 1880s, making the St. Thomas Synagogue the oldest synagogue building in continuous use in the United States. The congregation of *Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim* in Charleston, South Carolina was established in 1749 and erectd its current house of worship in 1840. It was designated an NHL 1980 in part in recognition of the synagogue being the second oldest extant in the country and the oldest in continual use. The St. Thomas Synagogue predates *Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim* Synagogue by seven years.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

___ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_X_ Previously Listed in the National Register. **Charlotte Amalie Historic District (7/19/76)**
___ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
___ Designated a National Historic Landmark.
___ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #_____
___ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #_____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

_x_ State Historic Preservation Office **U.S. Virgin Islands**
___ Other State Agency
___ Federal Agency
___ Local Government
___ University
___ Other(Specify Repository): **Rabbi Bradd H. Boxman**
The Hebrew Congregation of St. Thomas
P.O. Box 266
St. Thomas, USVI 00804
(809) 774-4312

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 0.23 acres

UTM References:

Zone	Easting	Northing
20	395740	2029290

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary for the St. Thomas Synagogue and Synagogue Office consists of just the parcel of land at No. 16AB Krystal Gade, in the Queens Quarter of Charlotte Amalie.

Boundary Justification:

The Boundary for the St. Thomas Synagogue and Synagogue Office is the town lot at No. 16AB Krystal Gade, in the Queens Quarter of Charlotte Amalie. This has been the site of the three previous Jewish synagogues built by the St. Thomas Congregation.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Mr. Frederik Gjessing

Org.: N/A

Street/#: Veteran's Drive Station
P.O. Box 1844

City/Town: Charlotte Amalie

State: St. Thomas, United States Virgin Islands

ZIP: 00803

Telephone: (809) 775-5674

Date: August 9, 1995

Revised by:

Mark R. Barnes, Ph.D.
Senior Archeologist
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NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY
December 10, 1996

Mark's version 1-3-97

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: **ST. THOMAS SYNAGOGUE**

Other Name/Site Number: *Beracha Veshalom Vegemiluth Hasadim* **(Blessing and Peace and Acts of Piety)**

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: **St. Thomas Synagogue - Krystal Gade #16AB, Queens Quarters** Not for publication: **N/A**

City/Town: **Charlotte Amalie** Vicinity: **N/A**

State: **U.S. Virgin Islands** County: **St. Thomas** Code: **030** Zip Code: **00804**

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property
Private: X
Public-local:
Public-State:
Public-Federal:

Category of Property
Building(s): X
District:
Site:
Structure:
Object:

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
		sites
	1	structures
		objects
1	2	Total

ok

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 2

Name of related multiple property listing: **N/A**

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

_____ _____
Signature of Certifying Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

_____ _____
Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I, hereby certify that this property is:

____ Entered in the National Register _____
____ Determined eligible for the National Register _____
____ Determined not eligible for the National Register _____
____ Removed from the National Register _____
____ Other (explain): _____

_____ _____
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: **Religious** Sub: **Religious facility**

Current: **Religious** Sub: **Religious facility**

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: **Mid-19th century: Greek Revival/Gothic Revival**

MATERIALS:
Foundation: **Stone**
Walls: **Stone, Brick around window and door openings**
Roof: **Metal**
Other:

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Beracha Veshalom Vegemiluth Hasadim (Blessing and Peace and Acts of Piety) Synagogue (see Photo 1 and Figure 1), referred to as the St. Thomas Synagogue, is located at Krystal Gade #16AB, on the southeastern slope of Denmark Hill in one of the older residential areas of Charlotte Amalie, to the north of the town's main business district. The Synagogue was built in 1833 on the same site as the first Synagogue erected in 1792. This is the fourth Synagogue to occupy this site. The first and third synagogues along with the surrounding residential area of Denmark Hill were razed by fires that devastated the area in 1804 and 1831. The second synagogue (1812-23) was torned down and expanded (Svensson 1965:20-23). A small brick and rubble masonry office building sites on the southwest corner of the lost in front of the Synagogue (see Photos 1 and 2). A wrought iron gate and fence extends from the office across the south side of the lot (see Photo 1). The Synagogue and Office Building were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1976 as contributing resources in the Charlotte Amalie Historic District.

The Synagogue Office and Fence

The St. Thomas Synagogue is situated on an irregularly shaped lot of approximately one-quarter acre on the north side of Krystal Gade, along with the Office of the Synagogue. The single story brick and rubble masonry Synagogue Office is built against the street (Crystal Gade) and the west borderline of the lot. The office is trapezoid in plan with a width of 15 feet 2 inches and its parallel west and east walls measuring 24 feet 9 inches and 15 feet 10 inches, respectively (see Photos 1 and 2).

The Synagogue Office is a single story freestanding brick and rubble masonry building located in the southwest corner of the property. It has two windows in the south wall facing the street, and two windows in the east wall. A door in the north wall facing St. Thomas Synagogue's terraced forecourt provides the sole access to the office. All four windows and door are headed by Gothic arches. They all have exterior double board shutters and the windows, in addition, have interior louvered wooden shutters.

The office has a projecting base with vertical banding of corners and surrounds of masonry openings in a yellow Danish brick generally referred to a Flensborg stone. A narrow cornice is crowned by a parapet wall. A nearly flat roof of three layers of brick set in mortar and supported by a web of wooden beams and purloins is hidden by the parapet wall. The Synagogue Office was originally plastered inside and out. Historically, the plaster was intended to protect the mortar of the rubble masonry and prevent water from infiltrating the walls. Except for the exterior cornice and parapet wall that have retained their original plaster finish and are painted white, the plaster inside and out has been removed, in 1973-74, to expose the stone and brickwork of the rubble masonry construction.

A wrought iron fence runs from the east wall of Synagogue Office to the southeast corner of the property lot. The entrance is crowned with a Star of David (see Photo 1).

The construction dates of the office and iron fence have not been documented. They probably postdates the construction of the present St. Thomas Synagogue (1833), as they do not appear on the 1836 building survey of Charlotte Amalie (Woods (1992:64). In all probability they predate the economic decline of St. Thomas during the last quarter of the nineteenth century (pre-1875) (Taylor 1888:52).

St. Thomas Synagogue

A series of steps along the east side of the office lead up from the street to a wrought iron gate and fence that extends from the office across the south side of the lot (see Photo 1). The gate gives access to a paved terrace forecourt fronting the St. Thomas Synagogue and its entrance under a roofed porch, raised seven steps above the terrace level and paved in alternating black and white marble tiles.

The St. Thomas Synagogue (see Photo 1 and Figure 1) is a rectangular one-story rubble masonry building, 41 feet and three bays wide, by 46 feet and four bays deep. It almost covers the full width of the property (east-west measurement) with the west wall only 10 inches from the retaining wall of the neighboring property, and the east wall standing within a few inches of the retaining wall towards the lower elevation of the property to the east. The colonnaded temple front of the building depicts a Greek Revival influence and the Gothic shaped windows and doors indicate a Gothic Revival influence.

The walls of the Synagogue are constructed of rubble masonry using a mortar of lime, sand, and molasses. The framing of door and window openings is red brick and on the exterior it is faced with calcified sandstone laid in an ashlar pattern (see Photos 1 and 3). The framing of doors and window openings on the interior are of red and yellow brick (see Photo 4). All door and window openings are Gothic arches.

The hipped roof is constructed of wood and covered by corrugated metal roofing over wood sheathing. The roof gutters are carried behind a parapet wall on the front and sides of the building. A small shuttered dormer on the west slope of the roof provides access and outside ventilation to the attic space.

The roof of the porch fronting the entrance to the Synagogue is supported by two pairs of red brick columns that are duplicated by similar pairs of semi-detached red brick columns flanking the entrance centered in the south wall. The columns are Tuscan in style as is the plastered and white painted entablature they carry. This in turn provides the facing of the porch roof construction. The main entrance, like all door and window openings of the Synagogue, is headed by a Gothic arch.

Two window openings are on north and south walls, while the west and east walls, have four window openings. All window and door openings on the interior are splayed at the top from equilateral pointed arches on the outer surface of the wall to a wide segmented arch on the interior wall surface. All of the window openings have exterior wood shutters, and fixed interior louvered wooden shutters in the tympanum with adjustable louvered shutters below it with either two or four folding panels. There are projecting surrounds around the exterior window openings and doors. The two doors of the Synagogue are located on the north and south sides of the building between the window openings. The brick exterior surrounds for the windows have been exposed by removing the plaster covering in 1973-74.

The interior window louvered shutters and doors are crafted in pine. The shutters have been stained to match the interior mahogany woodwork, while the doors are painted white.

The exterior surrounds for the doors still retain their plaster covering. The corners of the building have wide projecting bands that extend from an articulated and molded base to the cornice and above to the crown molding of the parapet. All molding and profiles of the architectural features of the exterior are patterned on the Tuscan order.

The plastered exterior parapet walls, main cornice, corner bands and bases, and surrounds of the doorways are painted white. The plaster has been removed from the brick columns and window surrounds on the front of the Synagogue (see Photos 3 and 5), and the stone facing of the exterior has been painted a subdued ocher. The metal roof of the Synagogue has been painted an iron oxide red.

Behind the Synagogue, on the north side of the property was a former open courtyard, pergola, which in 1984 has been enclosed with a two story wooden structure. The second floor provides space for a library and office for the rabbi, and the ground floor is an area for exhibits and overflow area for the congregation.

The interior of the Synagogue (see Photo 4) has an west-east orientation in accordance with ritual practices, with the Ark, holding five Torahs, centered against the east wall (see Photo 6) and the *Bimah* (or pulpit) against the west wall facing the Ark (see Photo 7). To emphasize the east-west orientation of the interior space, the builders and designers of the Synagogue created a square area in the center of the interior defined by four Ionic columns resting on tall pedestals. About halfway up the Ionic columns are two-armed antique brass chandeliers, modernized for electric lights ~~(see Photo 4)~~.

The 9-foot plus space between the column pedestals delineating the central area of the Synagogue and the north and south walls have broad masonry platforms two steps above and leading to the center floor area. The platforms on the south and north sides of

the interior of the Synagogue support mahogany pews, or *bancas*, for the congregation (see Photo 4).

Traditionally men sat in the first four rows of mahogany pews on the north and south sides of the central area of the Synagogue. Above the central area, on the broad masonry platforms, which run the entire west-east length of the Synagogue, are additional rows of mahogany pews for women and children. The men and women seating areas are separated by 3-foot tall wooden partitions, or *m'chitzat* (see Photo 4).

The interior columns are said to represent the four mothers of Israel: Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah. The columns support a full entablature with an architrave, an elaborate frieze and a widely projecting cornice. This in turn supports a quadripartite vault with a rope molding in the arises of the vault and a boss design of the Star of David, 31 feet above the floor of the Synagogue. The vault interior is plastered and painted white.

The vault is a plaster shell over wood lath attached to rafters shaped to the curvature of the vault. The rafters are braced to the roof structure, and at their base are joined to the upper cord of the box girder between the interior columns that also supports the attic floor. A seven-inch high continuous open space between the floor and the shell of the vault is carried around the periphery at its base interrupted only by the widely spaced rafters. From the floor level of the interior this device is hidden from view by the wide projection of the cornice. In the daytime, the heated air of the attic escapes through the dormer and creates an updraft in the Synagogue and ventilation of the roof structure.

During evening services, the rise in temperature of the Synagogue creates a similar updraft and effects a cooling of the interior. Of equal importance is the equalizing of air pressure within the structure during hurricane conditions that this design allows. The Synagogue has been through numerous violent hurricanes since its erection without any serious damage to its fabric.

Suspended from the center of the vault is an eighteen-armed brass chandelier of French design. Each of the arms supports a candle stand and Baccarat crystal hurricane shade (see Photo 7). The ceiling, between the outer walls of the Synagogue and the central area of the vault, is flat and plastered and painted white. This ceiling is slightly more than 18 feet above the floor. Six six-armed brass chandeliers with glass hurricane shades for candles are suspended from this ceiling over the central floor area. These chandeliers have been electrified. Four ceiling fans also are suspended from the ceiling.

The *Heikhal*, or area containing the Ark, is raised two steps above the floor of the central area on the east side of the interior of the Synagogue. On either side of the *Heikhal* are benches originally intended to seat the Synagogue's leaders (*parnasim*). Two pedestalled Tuscan columns, built into the

central area of the south wall of the interior of the Synagogue, support a scrolled broken pediment, all plastered and painted white. The columns flank the paneled mahogany doors of the Ark, containing the Synagogue's five Torah scrolls. The Ark is also built into the walls of the Synagogue. Above the Ark are two blue tablets with the *Decalogue* (Ten Commandments) in gilded Hebrew letters resting on the lower cord of the pediment. The tablets are embraced by the scrolls of the upper cord of the broken pediment and surmounted by a smaller tablet depicting the closed crown. Suspended from the ceiling in front of the Ark is the Lamp of Perpetual Light, called the *Ner Tamid* (see Photo 6).

On the west side of the interior of the Synagogue is the *Bimah*, from which the service is conducted. The *Bimah* area is on three stepped platforms above the central area. Along the west wall behind the reader's lectern on the highest platform area is a mahogany wooden bench for the service's participants. In front of the bench is a mahogany lectern facing the Ark on the east wall. Access to the *Bimah* is on the north and south sides by paneled wooden rails with brass finials on the rear newels and tall brass candlesticks on the front newels. Two steps below the Bimah area is a smaller octagonal enclosure of the wooden reader's desk (see Photo 7).

The floor of the Synagogue is paved with ceramic tile. In accordance with Sephardic Jewish tradition, the central floor area and the raised platforms of the congregation are covered with about an inch of sand.

Integrity: Since their construction in the nineteenth century, the St. Thomas Synagogue, Synagogue Office, and iron fence have been well maintained by the congregation. Between 1973 and 1974, the gutters and roof were repaired, and most of the chandeliers which once used candles for illumination were electrified. Deteriorated wooden shutters and doors were repaired or replaced in kind. All of the interior wood features, such as the Ark, *Bimah*, and pews of mahogany are original to the 1833 construction of the Synagogue.

The only departure from the original Synagogue integrity was the removal of the white painted plaster from interior walls of the Synagogue, the exterior porch columns, and the office building. Historically, rubble masonry buildings, such as the St. Thomas Synagogue were plastered to protect the integrity of masonry walls by preventing infiltration of water into the walls. Removal of the interior plaster has also made the interior darker as the white plaster reflected the light.

Nonetheless, the general character of the building is still apparent, exterior as well as interior, and it remains one of the most impressive, inspiring, and notably gratifying religious structures in the West Indies.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally: X Statewide: ___ Locally: ___

Applicable National Register Criteria: A X B ___ C ___ D ___

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G ___

NHL Criteria: Criterion 1

NHL Theme(s):

1987 NHL Thematic Framework

XXX. AMERICAN WAYS OF LIFE
E. Ethnic Communities

1994 NHL Thematic Framework

I. Peopling Places
4. Community and Neighborhood

II. Creating Social Institutions and Movements
3. Religious Movements

Areas of Significance: **Religion**

Period(s) of Significance: **1833-ca. 1850**

Significant Dates: **1833**

Significant Person(s): **N/A**

Cultural Affiliation: **N/A**

Architect/Builder: **Unknown**

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

Summary Statement of Significance: The Synagogue of St. Thomas, called *Beracha Veshalom Vegemiluth Hasadim* (Blessing and Peace and Acts of Piety), built in 1833, is the second-oldest synagogue and longest in continuous use in the United States. The congregation, originally Spanish and Portuguese Sephardic Jews, came to the Caribbean Basin to finance trade between Europe and the New World. The St. Thomas congregation, founded in 1796, reached its zenith by the mid-nineteenth century. The congregation declined in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the fortunes of the Danish Virgin Islands, but today has the largest congregation in its history. The St. Thomas Synagogue is surpassed in age only by Touro Synagogue (1763), in Newport, Rhode Island, which was designated a National Historic Site on March 4, 1946, and is an affiliated unit of the National Park Service. Touro Synagogue, however, was only occasionally used for worship between the 1820s and 1880s, making the St. Thomas Synagogue the oldest synagogue building in continuous use in the United States. The congregation of *Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim* in Charleston, South Carolina was established in 1749 and erected its current house of worship in 1840. It was designated an NHL in 1980 in part in belief that the synagogue was the second oldest extant in the country and the oldest in continual use. The St. Thomas Synagogue predates *Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim* Synagogue by seven years. The St. Thomas Synagogue meets Criteria Exception 1 as a religious property that derives its primary national significance from its historic importance.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Sephardic Jewish Synagogue and Congregation of St. Thomas may trace its roots through some two thousand years of the Hebrew Diaspora, starting with the destruction of the Jewish nation and the Great Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in the first century A.D. Some of these displaced Hebrew peoples ended up in the Iberian peninsula, where over some 1500 years under Roman, Visagothic, Muslim, and Christian rulers they worshiped in their synagogues, attended to their businesses, and raised their families according to religious tenets that over time evolved and came to identify them as Sephardic (Spanish and Portuguese) Jewish peoples (Kedourie 1992:8).

During their time in Iberia, the Sephardic peoples were on occasion subjected to religious persecution, special taxation, and restrictions on where they could live and what occupations they could hold. However, the elite among the Sephardic peoples consisting of doctors, bureaucrats, financiers, and religious leaders often formed symbiotic relations with their non-Jewish rulers that proved of mutual benefit to both groups.

In the latter part of the fourteenth century, however, the same religious fervor that the Castilian Catholic kings used in their successful war of liberation, or *Reconquista*, of the Iberian

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In the latter part of the fourteenth century, however, the same religious fervor that the Castilian Catholic kings used in their successful war of liberation, or *Reconquista*, of the Iberian peninsula from the Muslims also became directed at the Jews. In the past, Sephardic communities in Spanish towns were under the protection of Spanish kings who derived both financial and administrative benefit from their Jewish subjects. However, when a weak young king, Henry III ascended the throne in 1390, a series of pogroms occurred in Seville, Barcelona, Toledo, Burgos, and Valladolid the next year led by a fanatical administrator for the archdiocese of Seville, Ferrant Martines. The general intent of the pogroms was to forcibly convert the Jews to Christianity, which affected tens of thousands of Jews living in the Christian controlled areas of Spain. Records indicate most Jews left the large urban centers of Spain for rural towns or elected to become "New Christians", or *conversos* (MacKay 1992:49).

The union by marriage of the two most powerful Christian rulers on the Iberian peninsula, Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, in 1469, meant the full might of the Spanish military was now united to complete the *Reconquista* of Spain. An important aspect of the *Reconquista* was that it was not just a war of conquest but a Christian crusade against non-Catholics, which meant it became a war against the faiths of Islam and Judaism. To pursue the religious front of this war, the Spanish Inquisition was founded by papal bull in 1478 at the request of Ferdinand and Isabella, with the Inquisition beginning its activities in 1480 under Tomas Torquemada as the first Inquisitor-General (Kamen 1992:74-75).

The official policy of the rulers of Spain was that the Jews should willingly accept conversion to Christianity. It was the goal of the Spanish Inquisition's job to ~~see~~ insure that *conversos* did not backslide into their original faith. In fact, during the last two decades of the fifteenth century these *conversos* were the main target of the Inquisition (Kamen 1992:76). During this time, Judaism quite literally moved underground as basements of houses became makeshift synagogues. According to Sephardic tradition, synagogues, like the St. Thomas Synagogue, have their floors covered with clean sand to commemorate this period of time when

peninsula from the Muslims also became directed at the Jews. In the past, Sephardic communities in Spanish towns were under the protection of Spanish kings who derived both financial and administrative benefit from their Jewish subjects. However, when a weak young king, Henry III ascended the throne in 1390, a series of pogroms occurred in Seville, Barcelona, Toledo, Burgos, and Valladolid the next year led by a fanatical administrator for the archdiocese of Seville, Ferrant Martines. The general intent of the pogroms was to forcibly convert the Jews to Christianity, which affected tens of thousands of Jews living in the Christian controlled areas of Spain. Records indicate most Jews left the large urban centers of Spain for rural towns or elected to become "New Christians", or *conversos* (MacKay 1992:49).

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On March 31, 1492, three months after the conquest of Granada, ending the *Reconquista* of Spain, the king and queen of a united Spain issued a decree for the expulsion of all unconverted Jews from their realm. In their opinion, having unconverted Jews living in close proximity to *conversos* encouraged the latter to continue to follow their original faith (Kamen 1992:76). The Jews were given three months to settle their affairs and depart or become New Christians. It has been estimated that possibly half of Spain's Jews "converted" at this time, with the other half leaving Spain for nearby Portugal, while smaller numbers took boats to southern France, Italy, and areas of the Ottoman Empire in North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean where they sought refuge among established Jewish communities (Kamen 1992:84).

Later, due to a marriage of state between Spain and Portugal in 1496, a Jewish expulsion decree (1497) was generated for the latter country and many of the recently resettled Jews from Spain were again on the move, this time with their Portuguese Sephardic Jewish cousins (Kamen 1992:83). In addition, pressure by the Inquisition on *conversos* who remained in Spain, but were practicing Judaism in secret, caused tens of thousands to flee Spain in the decade after the 1492 expulsion decree (Kamen 1992:85).

Under the Spanish expulsion decree, the prohibition on Judaism was rigorously enforced in Castile, Aragon, the Balearic Islands, Sicily, and Sardinia, but appears to have been less so in Spanish overseas territories such as Oran, in North Africa, Naples, Milan, the Spanish Netherlands, and the New World which provided refuge for the displaced *conversos* (Kamen 1992:84, 90). The Portuguese permitted *conversos* to emigrate to their colonies in India, Brazil, and the Atlantic Islands (Beinart 1992:119).

In a remarkable sense of historical irony, the very persecution and forced emigration inflicted on the Sephardic Spanish and Portuguese Jews and *conversos*, became in the long run their source of strength that would help to keep their faith alive and cause their religion to prosper and spread throughout the world. Although there had been a Sephardic elite that served as counselors and financial administrators to Christian and Moslem rulers, the majority of the Jewish people made their living as small traders, farmers, shopkeepers, and money lenders. These were the trades and crafts most needed as European countries entered the Age of Exploration and established colonies in parts of the globe that were vaguely or completely unknown to them at the time of the 1492 expulsion.

Throughout the sixteenth century Sephardic Jews in the Spanish Netherlands financed trade in northern European goods, such as iron, wood, grain, and cloth, for southern European and colonial goods, such as wool, rock salt, sugar, spices, tobacco, coffee, and cocoa beans. This trade was founded on trading connections with *conversos*, often family members, still residing in Spain and Portugal and the overseas possessions in the New World, Africa, and the Far East. In addition, some of these goods were also being carried in ships captained by *conversos* (Beinart 1992:120). According to John Lynch, in *Spain After the Expulsion*, Sephardic Jews played significant roles in the financing of Spanish kings, and the development of trade with the Indies,

> For the New Christian [or *converso*] elite . . . the characteristic vocation was finance. Spanish imperial finance had long depended on Italian bankers, who had the capacity to handle the transfer of funds from Spain to the Low Countries [Spanish Netherlands]. Anxious to escape the hard settlements imposed by the Genoese . . . Philip II's government was ready to consider an alternative set of bankers, even if they were Jews and were accumulating their capital on the margin of

> legality. The union of the [Spanish and Portuguese] crowns in 1580 and the surge in transatlantic traffic in the late sixteenth century opened up commercial opportunities that the Portuguese New Christians were quick to exploit. Some made vast fortunes trading in Asian products, investing in the Brazilian sugar industry, and supplying slaves to both Brazil and Spanish America; others reexported commodities from northern Europe to America [1992:147].

By 1550, transoceanic commerce and investment were the basis for the economic and social existence of *conversos* in Portugal and Spain. In order to support international trade with the New World, Africa, and Asia, outlying colonies of trading partners of *conversos* were established in northern European towns, particularly Antwerp, which "was the general store-house and emporium for all Spanish and Portuguese colonial commodities in northern Europe" (Israel 1992:191).

By the 1570s, however, the Sephardic traders of Antwerp were leaving for Amsterdam to avoid the religious warfare between the Catholic Spanish crown and the Dutch Lutheran rebels, in the southern portion of the Spanish Netherlands. However, an additional incentive for Jewish emigration was the issuance of the Union of Utrecht (1579), the founding constitutional document of the Dutch republic, which guaranteed that no one would be investigated or prosecuted on the basis of their religion (Israel 1992:192).

The Sephardic Jews were allowed by the Dutch government to build their first synagogue in 1597, and in 1657 all resident Jews were recognized as Dutch nationals. Although they did not receive full citizenship rights until 1796 (Boxer 1990:144-145). As a result of this movement of Sephardic Jewish merchants and traders to Amsterdam, by the 1590s it had become "northern Europe's foremost emporium for sugar, spices, and all other products from the Iberian colonial empires" (Israel 1992:194).

Under the liberal atmosphere of Holland the Sephardic Jews could openly worship in their own synagogues for the first time since their expulsion from Spain in 1492. The Jewish community in Holland served as a magnet for Sephardic Jews from Muslim countries and Venice, as well as a continuing emigration from Iberia (Israel 1992:197). By the 1620s, there were over 1000 Jews in Amsterdam in three congregations. Not only did this community engage in trade it also was a major European center of Jewish religious training and publishing of books in Hebrew (Israel 1992:200).

As the Sephardic Jews managed most of the trade in New World products that passed through Holland via the Iberian ports, it was natural that when the Dutch developed their own overseas empire that Jews would play an important role (Bloom 1937:128). In particular, when the Dutch seized the northern coast of Brazil in the 1630s, "a large number of Dutch Sephardim emigrated to

Brazil, mainly to Recife, and captured a large share in the sugar export business" under the auspices of the Dutch West India Company (Israel 1992:203).

According to Jonathan Israel, in his article "The Sephardim in the Netherlands", the Brazilian experience was significant in getting large numbers of Sephardic Jews into the New World,

> . . . the West India Company granted Jewish emigrants who settled in Brazil much greater economic as well as religious and personal freedom than yet existed for Jews in the Dutch republic itself, the rush to Brazil assumed what for Dutch Sephardi Jewry were enormous proportions. By 1644 there were 1450 Sephardim living as Jews in Netherlands Brazil, a figure not much less than the total then living in Holland itself, and although a proportion of those in Brazil were former New Christians who had reverted to normative Judaism in Brazil, most had emigrated from, or at least via, the Netherlands [1992:203].

Major innovations in the processing of sugar were introduced by the Dutch and the Sephardic Jews between 1638 and 1645, which saw Brazil export an average of 23,300 tons of sugar per year (Watts 1986:182).

> Under the Dutch occupancy of Pernambuco, between 1636 and 1645, Sephardic Jews had been sent out from Europe [to Brazil] generally to enhance trading facilities and to rationalise the importation of slave labour for sugar estates. They also introduced some significant milling innovations, which raised both the quality and efficiency of cane production . . . Although the origins of the three-roller mill are still unclear, there seems to be little doubt that it was first employed widely within the Pernambuco region at this time [Watts 1986:179].

Unfortunately for the Dutch, a Portuguese military expedition retook the Pernambuco region, in 1645, once again forcing a relocation of Jews with expertise in sugar cultivation and capital, this time to English Barbados. The English, who had settled Barbados in the 1630s, had previously developed good relations with the Dutch who were their main supplier of enslaved Africans, and would now provide capital for investment in establishing sugar plantations (Mintz 1985:53; Bloom 1937:144).

With Sephardic Jewish financing from Holland, Portugal had been supplying nearly all of Europe with sugar. However, within a generation England was able to drive Portugal out of the northern European trade in sugar, from its own plantations on Barbados, thanks to Jewish emigres from Brazil (Mintz 1985:39). The English on Barbados profited greatly from the Sephardic Jewish experience with sugar plantations in Brazil's Pernambuco province. By 1645,

> . . . techniques of cane production and processing could be gained as well from a group of Sephardic Jews, formerly residents in Pernambuco and skilled in sugar refining, who trickled into Barbados following their expulsion on religious grounds from Brazil, as Portuguese-Catholic control over that territory was regained . . . By 1650, the sale of sugar cane products [from Barbados] had raised the value of exports from the island to over £3 million [Watts 1986:183].

By the 1650s there were Dutch Sephardic communities on Curacao, in Surinam, and Jamaica, in addition to Barbados (Israel 1992:205). It is interesting to note that Danish Virgin Islands plantations in the Caribbean "had been financed almost entirely by Dutch [i.e., Sephardic Jewish] capital" in the eighteenth century in a repeat of what had occurred in Brazil and on Barbados (Watts 1986:247).

A Jewish presence on St. Thomas may be traced back to the last two decades of the seventeenth century, when the Danish first undertook the colonization of the island. The fourth Governor of the Danish Virgin Islands, Gabriel Milan (1684-86) was from a Jewish family with trading connections in Portugal, the Netherlands, and Hamburg. To curry the favor of the Danish crown, Milan accepted the Lutheran faith in 1682 in order to improve his prospects of being employed by the Danish state (Westergaard 1917:58-59). However, even before his appointment, a few Jewish families and individuals from other areas of the West Indies had moved to the Caribbean Danish colony on St. Thomas (Boxman 1983:22).

The Danish West India Company that settled St. Thomas in 1672 received its charter from King Christian V in March 1671. It spelled out the Company's rights and limitations, the extent of the home government's assistance in the colonization of St. Thomas, taxes, customs duties, and judiciary matters. The charter did not specifically mention the Lutheran Church, but since it was the state religion of the United Kingdom of Denmark-Norway and the Company was to employ its ministers, it is clear the intent was to make it the official religion of the colony. The Charter stated "the Company was established for the benefit of commerce and for the general welfare which thereon depends." It also stated that foreigners who entered the service of the Company "shall enjoy the same treatment that His Majesty's subjects enjoy" (Westergaard 1917:294).

During the early years of the Danish colony, the Caribbean environment led to a high mortality rate for Northern European emigrants, which produced a critical shortage of manpower (Westergaard 1917:30). To relieve this situation the Company's administrators welcomed settlers from other areas of the Caribbean, including the Portuguese colony of Brazil. To encourage immigrants who did not embrace the Augsburg Confession (Lutheran faith), the Company adopted the concept of freedom of conscience as a policy.

In 1685 this policy of religious tolerance was formalized in a trade treaty between the Danish West India Company and the Prussian Brandenburger Company which would control the slave trade between Guinea, Africa and St. Thomas. The trade treaty between Prussia and Denmark stipulated the terms of a lease of lands on St. Thomas to the Brandenburger African Company as well as the terms under which it would be allowed to do business on St. Thomas. It included the conditions that Calvinists and Lutherans should have full freedom to exercise their rites and practices, while Jews and Catholics were allowed to hold private services "provided they did not provoke a scandal" (Westergaard 1917:76).

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Danish colonial records contain references to Jewish merchants involved in trade between Europe, Guinea, and St. Thomas (Paiewonsky 1959:6-7). The records note the Jewish residents of St. Thomas as coming from Brazil, and being Portuguese, which identifies them as Sephardic Jews (Boyer 1987:11). The records do not mention the existence of a Jewish congregation and freedom of worship under the Danes was not legalized until the mid-eighteenth century. It would appear the Jews on St. Thomas, at this time, worshiped in their homes (Oldendorp 1777:156). The records that would have pertained to an early Jewish congregation were most likely lost in the early nineteenth-century fires that twice destroyed the Synagogue.

In June of 1734 the Danish West India Company's ship *Unity* arrived in St. Thomas with the news that Denmark's treaty with France for the purchase of St. Croix had been ratified. It brought the orders from Louis XV of France to his governor and lieutenant general of the French Windward Islands, the Marquis de Champigny, to transfer the ownership of St. Croix to the Danish West India Company with the appropriate formalities. The *Unity* arrived at St. Thomas on the 11th of June and on the 23rd of the same month Governor Gardelin sent a delegation to Martinique with Emanuel Vass, a Jewish merchant of St. Thomas, as the official representative for the Danish West India Company (Westergaard 1917:210). It was a position of trust and an appointment that would only have been made based on a prior relationship of mutual respect. Later, it was noted that Sephardic "Jews originating from Brazil, Portugal, and Spain" were among the first to establish sugar plantations on St. Croix (Boyer 1983:11).

Christian G.A. Oldendorp, in his history of the Moravian Missions in the Danish West Indies, published in 1777, and based on his observations made during his visit to the islands in 1767-68, notes that, "There is a considerable number of Jews particularly in St. Croix" (Oldendorp 1777:138). He also mentions, "The Jews have no regular synagogue, but rather observe their worship services in private residences" (Oldendorp 1777:156), apparently referring to Jews residents on both St. Thomas and St. Croix.

The real growth of the Jewish population of the Danish West Indies occurred during the late eighteenth century as a result of

the British attack on the Dutch West Indies island of St. Eustatius. During the American War of Independence, St. Eustatius was a major source of military supplies for the North American colonies. The flow of contraband to the Americans had been a long-standing source of friction between Holland and England. In late December 1780, Great Britain declared war on Holland and ordered Admiral Sir George Rodney to attack St. Eustatius (Goslinga 1985:197). On February 3, 1781 he arrived in Orangestad Harbor with an overwhelming force of 14 ships of the line, 3 frigates and some minor ships, as well as 3,000 soldiers. An officer was sent ashore to demand the surrender of the island within an hour (Bloom 1937:149; Boxman 1983:7-8).

The British invasion came as a complete surprise to the Dutch authorities and citizens of St. Eustatius since word of the English declaration of war had not reached the Caribbean. For the defense of the island, it had a garrison of 60 men and two Dutch men-of-war. There was a brief exchange of shots, but resistance was futile, and Commander Johannes deGraaff signed the act of surrender.

All together Rodney seized 150 ships, including 60 belonging to Americans, and captured more than 2,000 American merchants and sailors which he sent with their agents to England as prisoners of war. Rodney then turned his attention to the merchants of St. Eustatius. English and Danish merchants were extradited to their homelands. Toward the French the attitude was somewhat more lenient, perhaps because of the presence of a powerful French fleet in the Caribbean. They were shipped to Guadeloupe and Martinique. Worse was the fate of the Jews. All male Jews, one hundred of them, were robbed of all their personal possessions, some were beaten, while 30 more were deported to St. Kitts. The remainder were allowed to witness the public sale of their properties.

In May of 1781 Admiral Rodney left St. Eustatius in the hands of a British garrison of 670 men. Following his departure, many of the inhabitants fled the island, and a number of them sought refuge in the neutral Danish West Indies. The increase in numbers of Sephardic Jews in both St. Croix and St. Thomas resulted in the formation of a congregation in Christiansted in 1784 (Larsen 1950:96), and in 1796 the first Synagogue on St. Thomas with the appellation of "Blessing and Peace," was built (Knox 1922:161-163; Boxman 1983:5).

The synagogue started with a small congregation of nine families that seven years later (1803) had increased to 22 families. The first synagogue was destroyed in the fire of November 1804 that burned large sections of western and central Charlotte Amalie. By 1812, there was a second synagogue, on the same site, but by 1823 this building was too small to adequately serve the growing congregation. In 1823, it was taken down and replaced by a larger wooden synagogue, on the same site, named "Blessing and Peace and Loving Deeds" to accommodate a congregation of 64 families (Boxman 1983:5).

On New Year's Eve 1831, a fire started in the Commandant Gade section of Queens Quarter, the central part of Charlotte Amalie. Before it burned itself out New Year's Day 1832, it had destroyed about 800 buildings, among them the wooden synagogue built in 1823 (Svensson 1965:23; Boxman 1983:9).

The first half of the nineteenth century was a period of growing prosperity for St. Thomas. The excellence and size of its harbor and the location midway between North and South America and within cruising range of the new steam-powered ships from Europe made St. Thomas an ideal transhipment point. The island was not only prospering, it was also optimistically predicting further growth and development. In such an atmosphere solicitations for the means to rebuild the St. Thomas Synagogue were met with generous responses in funds and materials, not only from the members of the congregation, but also the non-Jews of St. Thomas, as well from as Jewish congregations from abroad (Boxman 1983:9-11). The present St. Thomas Synagogue (see Figure 3 and Photos 1-4), designed by an unknown French architect, was built in 1833, and has served the Jewish congregation ever since. The working drawings of the St. Thomas Synagogue are still extant (Boxman 1983:12).

The following account of consecration of the synagogue appeared in the *St. Thomas Tidende* newspaper of September 14, 1833,

> We are happy to have in our power to congratulate our friends of the Hebrew religion on the early completion of the New Synagogue. About six o'clock on Thursday evening the congregation assembled in their temporary place of worship, and shortly thereafter proceeded to the New Synagogue in the usual ceremonial order.
>
> At 7:00 [PM], His Excellency the Governor, and many respectable persons entered the building and immediately thereafter the Consecration Service commenced. The Lamp of Perpetual Light borne by the eldest member of the Congregation followed by six sacred Rolls of the Pentateuch carried by members, appeared at the entrance, which the elder Priest received. He lighted the Lamp, pronounced the Benediction, and the Lamp was then handed to a younger Priest, who placed it on the stand appropriate for it. During the performance of these offices, the Reader returned thanks for being permitted to witness this solemn and impressive ceremony - the choir, consisting of young ladies and gentlemen, sang the 24th verse of the 118th Psalm.
>
> The Reader then accompanied by the Rulers received the sacred Rolls, the choir singing the 26, 27, 28, and 29th verses of the 118th Psalm, while the same were introduced by a circuitous route to the Reader's desk - after which, commenced the Prayer for Our Beloved Sovereign and the Royal Family, as also for their

> Excellencies, the Governor-General, the Governor and all the other Magistrates - the same was also implored for all the congregation present. The choristers then sang the 10th verse of the 146 and the 29th Psalm - during which the Rolls of the Pentateuch were deposited in the Ark. The Reader then returned to his Desk, and the choir singing from the 21st to the 29th verse of the 118th Psalm.
>
> An excellent discourse taken from the first of Kings, Chapter 8, verse 13, written expressly for the occasion by Mr. Isaac Lindo, was most emphatically delivered by that gentleman, which made the congregation deeply impressed with the most pathetic feelings of reverence and devotion. Offerings were afterwards made, in which the liberality of the assembly was apparent.
>
> The service of the Consecration was terminated by the choir chanting a Hymn for the occasion. In concluding our account of this memorable ceremony, it is only to say, the whole of which was conducted in a manner worthy of a people who were the first worshippers of the "true and living GOD" [Gjessing 1966:100-103].

The first half of the nineteenth century was also a time of great change within the Jewish religion. Prior to this time, Gentiles imposed restrictions on where Jews could live and their livelihoods. These strictures served to reinforce Jewish orthodoxy by which their religion created a cohesive society able to maintain its traditions in the face of changes imposed by a sometimes hostile outside world. On March 24, 1814, Denmark became one of the first European nations to enact a royal ordinance for extending full citizenship rights to Jews (Boxman 1983:25).

By 1833, as the congregation of St. Thomas was celebrating the completion of its new synagogue, most European countries had enfranchised their Jewish populations with full citizenship and civil rights. These changes engendered a schism within Jewish communities between those who desired to maintain their Orthodox traditions and those who wished to reform Jewish ceremonies to accommodate their new citizenship status. The religious debates ultimately saw many synagogues split into Orthodox and Reform groups, which set up separate synagogues (S. Hordes, personal communication, 1995).

The Jewish congregation on St. Thomas was not isolated from these debates. Indeed, its members found themselves in the forefront of the Reform movement with the appointment, in the early 1840s, of Rabbi Carillon to their synagogue. Rabbi Carillon, who appears to have been an advocate of the Reform movement, instituted Confirmation ceremonies for 14 years old boys and girls of the congregation, which were intended to compliment the traditional coming of age ceremonies, or *Bar Mitzvah* and *Bat Mitzvah*, for 13 year old boys and girls, respectively.

This new Confirmation ceremony was similar to the Confirmation ceremonies of Gentile religions, and adopted by Reform synagogues with the conscious intent of drawing themselves closer to the countries that granted them full citizenship and to promote religious tolerance. As one anonymous writer of St. Thomas noted, in the case of Denmark and its colonies, the Confirmation ceremony was enforced by law.

> Confirmation for boys and girls of 14 years was ordered by the king for the Jews, in the mother country (Denmark), since 1814, and has now been extended to our island. I anticipate the happiest results from this measure, as the preparatory form of Catechism etc., will prevent, in my opinion, conversion. A severe penalty is attached to those who neglect it, they are not permitted to become citizens, hold office, marry, control the property they may get by inheritance, follow any trade, nor are their oaths taken in court . [Plaut n.d.:583].

The first Confirmation ceremony at the St. Thomas Synagogue, held on October 14, 1843, was the first of its kind ever held in the New World (Plaut n.d.:583). As noted in an article, entitled "History of the Jews in America", written by Rabbi M.D. Sasso, and submitted to the American Jewish Archives Journal by Rabbi Gunther Plaut,

> Confirmation. We learn from a private letter from St. Thomas that the first confirmation among American Israelites took place on the Sabbath *Hol ha-Moed Sukkoth* [Feast of Tabernacles] in the Synagogue under the charge of the Rev. [Rabbi] Mr. Carillon. The ceremony is represented as having been very imposing. The names of the confirmed are, Mrs. Daniel Wolff, Misses Miriam and Rebecca Wolff, Miss D[eborah Simha] Cortissos, Miss [Esther] De Meza, Alexander Wolff, and Jacob Benjamin [Plaut n.d.:583].

Rabbi Carillon would perform two other Confirmation ceremonies on February 24 and April 14, 1844, for ten other 14 year olds of the St. Thomas Synagogue congregation. And, the tradition he started would be continued by succeeding Rabbis (Plaut n.d.:584-585).

In all probability, the cosmopolitan nature of the St. Thomas Hebrew Congregation disposed them to a Reform type of Judaism. Religious tolerance on St. Thomas was extended by Danish Governor General Peter von Scholten and several of his administrators who were prominent contributors to the construction fund for the 1833 Synagogue (Boxman 1983:10-11). According to one 1852 source,

> Jews, Gentiles and sects of various names are very amicable in St. Thomas. Great good feeling prevails. Thousands of dollars can be readily raised for any object of general charity [Boxman 1983:27].

However, it would appear that not all of the congregation were happy with the changes instituted by Rabbi Carillon. In 1844,

> A segment of the Congregation led by Judah Sasso and Mashed Mara refused to attend Synagogue services. "Immediately after the return of the Sefer Torah to the Hechal," they charged, "Rabbi Carillon proceeded with the wrong prayers and the Musaph was completely omitted." J. Fidanque, Act.[ing] President Jacob Haim Osorio, J. Levy Maduro, Moses Piza, and Jeudah Piza formed a committee to investigate. They reported that the charges were well founded. Ritual was rearranged and harmony was restored to the Congregation. Rabbi Carillon left St. Thomas shortly afterwards for Jamaica [Boxman 1983:27].

In the two decades following the building of the new synagogue, the membership of the Hebrew Congregation increased, with the census records of 1835 showing a population of 467 Jews living in St. Thomas. By 1851, however, the Jewish population had declined to 372 persons (Paiewonsky 1959:12). As the prosperity of St. Thomas began to taper off in the last half of the nineteenth century, so did the Hebrew Congregation. The year 1867 was a disastrous one for St. Thomas. In October a devastating hurricane hit the island, followed in November by a tidal wave. The two natural catastrophes did great damage to the town, the harbor, shipping facilities, and St. Thomas' reputation as a safe harbor (Brønsted 1952:299).

Improvements of the steamships of the period eliminated the need for using St. Thomas as a coaling station for ships from North America and Europe on their way to South America. St. Thomas' transit trade and usefulness as a coaling station was coming to an end. The gradual loss of population that resulted from the declining economy of the island also affected the Jewish community. The Synagogue, however, continued to serve the spiritual needs of the diminished congregation, which only numbered 141 in 1890 (Boxman 1983:28).

Following World War II, with the increase in air transportation and the development of tourism, the congregation has again grown in numbers. As the congregation has reached the second century of its founding (1796-1996) it is larger than it has ever been in the history of the St. Thomas Jewish community (Boxman 1983:28-32).

During the flourishing period of the first half of the nineteenth century, two people of national and one of international fame belonged to the Synagogue's congregation. David Levi Yulee, born on St. Thomas June 12, 1810, went to Florida as a young man where he became the chosen territorial delegate to Congress from the Territory of Florida in 1841, and later in 1845 when Florida was admitted to the Union, was elected as a United States Senator to Congress. Jacob Mendes da Costa was born on St. Thomas January 7, 1833, and became a noted American physician and writer. His

numerous books on medicine and diagnosis were translated into several languages. Finally, the famed Impressionist painter Camille Pissarro was born on St. Thomas July 10, 1830 where he spent his early years. As a teenager he already showed an interest and aptitude for painting and later when he moved to Paris, he dedicated himself to art and he changed his name from Jacob Pizzarro to Camille Pissarro. It was in France his genius was first acknowledged, and he became known as the "Father of Impressionism" (Paiewonsky 1959:9-10; Boxman 1983:24-26).

SUMMARY

The expulsion of the Sephardic Jews from Spain and Portugal, in 1492 and 1497, respectively, forced them to settle in Holland and northern Europe where existing guilds excluded them from earning a living in their traditional roles of middlemen who bought local goods and resold them to people within their community. By 1550, they had created an important new commercial niche -- as merchants facilitating the movement of goods between northern and southern Europe and later the movement and processing of New World products, such as sugar, tobacco, diamonds, and silver.

The Sephardic Jews of Amsterdam were tied to the fortunes of their adopted homeland of Holland. During the seventeenth century expansion of that country's overseas empire, Sephardic Jews settled in Brazil and later Dutch-held islands in the Caribbean Basin. When the Dutch overseas trading system began to wane in the eighteenth century, so too did the influence of these Jewish merchants. During the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780-84), Great Britain attacked Holland for aiding the Americans in the Revolutionary War. Most of the Jewish financed Dutch-shipping was swept from the seas, and Dutch colonies in the Caribbean were seized. The seizure of St. Eustatius was a great blow to the Jewish traders in the Caribbean Basin, many of whom moved to the Danish colony of St. Thomas.

Here, this resilient community supported the founding and financing of sugar plantations in the Danish Virgin Islands and, later in the early nineteenth century, also in southern Puerto Rico. They also profited by the selling of coal to steamships traveling to South America from Europe and North America.

The St. Thomas congregation, founded in 1796, reached its zenith by the mid-nineteenth century. The congregation declined in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the fortunes of the Danish Virgin Islands, but today has the largest congregation in its history. The St. Thomas synagogue, built in 1833, is the second oldest Jewish synagogue in the United States. It is surpassed in age only by Touro Synagogue (1763), in Newport, Rhode Island, which was designated a National Historic Site on March 5, 1946, and is an affiliated unit of the National Park Service. Touro Synagogue, however, was only occasionally used for worship between the 1820s and 1880s, making the St. Thomas Synagogue the oldest synagogue building in continuous use in the United States. The congregation of *Kahal Kadosh Beth*

Elohim in Charleston, South Carolina was established in 1749 and erected its current house of worship in 1840. It was designated an NHL in 1980 in part in recognition of the synagogue being the second oldest extant in the country and the oldest in continual use. The St. Thomas Synagogue predates *Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim* Synagogue by seven years.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

___ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_X_ Previously Listed in the National Register. **Charlotte Amalie Historic District (7/19/76)**
___ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
___ Designated a National Historic Landmark.
___ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #_____
___ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #_____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

_X_ State Historic Preservation Office **U.S. Virgin Islands**
___ Other State Agency
___ Federal Agency
___ Local Government
___ University
_X_ Other(Specify Repository): **Rabbi Bradd H. Boxman**
The Hebrew Congregation of St. Thomas
P.O. Box 266
St. Thomas, USVI 00804
(809) 774-4312

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: **0.23 acres - St. Thomas Synagogue**

UTM References: Zone Northing Easting Zone Northing Easting

20 395740 2029290

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary for the St. Thomas Synagogue and Synagogue Office consists of just the parcel of land at No. 16AB Krystal Gade, in the Queens Quarter of Charlotte Amalie.

Boundary Justification:

The Boundary for the St. Thomas Synagogue and Synagogue Office is the town lot at No. 16AB Krystal Gade, in the Queens Quarter of Charlotte Amalie. This has been the site of the three previous Jewish synagogues built by the St. Thomas Congregation.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: **Architect Frederik C. Gjessing, AIA**

Org.: **N/A**

Street/#: **Veteran's Drive Station**
P.O. Box 1844

City/Town: **Charlotte Amalie**

State: **St. Thomas, United States Virgin Islands**

ZIP: **00803**

Telephone: **(809) 775-5674**

Date: **January 3, 1997**

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St. Thomas
P.O. Box 266
St. Thomas, USVI 00804
(809) 774-4312

Dr. Stan Hordes
HMS Associates Inc.
P.O. Box 4543
Santa Fe, NM 87502
(505) 983-6564

Virgin Islands SHPO Staff
Dep't of Planning & Natural
Resources
Nisky Center, Suite 231
No. 45A Estate Nisky
Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas
Virgin Islands 00830
(809) 776-8605

L3431-IBH

December 1, 1958

Memorandum

To: Chief, Division of Interpretation

From: Charles W. Porter III, Staff Historian

Subject: Simmons' Report on Planning for a Nonurban Recreation Resources of Virgin Islands

At the request of Mr. George Olcott and Mr. Ludden, I have reviewed the above report, and in my opinion, Mr. Simmons has done an excellent job so far as history is concerned.

It is apparent that he has approached the historical problems with understanding and sympathy. His suggestion on page 13 that Fort Christian in Charlotte Amalie be designated as a national historic site echoes the feeling that all of us have often had, and I am sure that the Service will give the proposal serious consideration.

The Great Pond mentioned on page 18 may very well be the stagnant pond visited by Sir Walter Raleigh's colonists who stopped at such a place on St. Croix en route to Roanoke Island, North Carolina in 1587.

The smaller surviving examples of Danish architecture mentioned at the top of page 20 cannot be designated as national historic sites, but the Service will certainly want to encourage their preservation through advisory assistance in planning.

It is interesting to learn that Jerusalem presents the best and most complete example of the Sugar Estate. The Service will certainly wish to encourage its preservation as well as the Whim Great House mentioned in the middle of page 20 of the report.

The Columbus Site on St. Croix has been one in which the Service has taken a keen interest. It has been in our National Historic Sites program, and its acquisition is authorized by a recent act of the Virgin Islands Legislature,

which appropriated money for an historical and recreational park at that place. It is not clear just what our relation to this proposed park will be; but, the Director of the National Park Service has offered our cooperative assistance to the Governor of the Virgin Islands. On page 21, it should be stated that some of Columbus' men landed at the Columbus Site on St. Croix. Columbus, himself, did not leave his ship.

For better or for worse, the National Park Service is halfway committed to the idea of a statue at the Columbus Site. Mr. Canaday, with whom the Service has been collaborating, wishes to donate a copy of the statue now in Genoa, Italy. Mr. Canaday is quite eager to do this, and it will be difficult to turn him down.

The historical data on St. John is to our mind a little too brief. For instance, it is believed that more emphasis could be given to the preservation and use for historical purposes of the impressive fortifications overlooking Coral Bay.

(SGD) CHARLES W. PORTER III

Charles W. Porter III
Staff Historian, Colonial Period

Copy to: Mr. Ben Thompson (det.)
Mr. George Olcott (det.)
History Branch
Dr. Porter (det.)

CWPorter:mek 12/1/58

St. Thomas Synagogue
HEBREW CONGREGATION OF ST. THOMAS
ק"ק ברכה ושלום וגמילות חכדים
Charlotte Amalie
St. Thomas, V.I. 00801

December 7, 1967

Hon. Stewart L. Udall
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Udall:

The purpose of this letter is two-fold. Newspaper reports suggest that you might visit the Virgin Islands again following your forthcoming trip to Puerto Rico. We would be honored if you could visit our Synagogue building, which is the second oldest under the U.S. flag.

The second purpose relates to an inquiry concerning the possibility of designating the Synagogue building as a National Historic Site. I would appreciate receiving any information concerning the regulations relating to this inquiry. Incidentally, the St. Thomas Synagogue was selected by the Historic American Buildings Survey as one of fourteen in St. Thomas worthy of being designated for special merit in the Library of Congress Archives.

With many thanks for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Rabbi Murray Blackman

MB/br

JAN - 2 1968

AIR MAIL

Dear Rabbi Blackman:

Thank you for your letter of December 7 in which you inquire about the possibility of designating St. Thomas Synagogue a national historic landmark and extend an invitation to visit your synagogue.

National historic landmark designations result from studies conducted by the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings. A consulting committee to the Survey and the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings, and Monuments review and evaluate these studies. The Advisory Board recommends to me those sites that it believes merit national historic landmark recognition.

The National Survey is currently undertaking a study of sites associated with the historical development of American architecture. We will plan to include St. Thomas Synagogue among those sites included in this study. We should add that the architectural study will require at least two years because of its highly technical nature and the very large number of buildings to be considered.

We are enclosing a booklet "NPS Criteria for Parklands" that discusses the landmark program in general terms (pp. 24-25) and the criteria used by the Advisory Board (pp. 29-31) in evaluating proposals.

It is always a great disappointment to miss an opportunity to visit St. Thomas. Regrettably, my recent trip to Puerto Rico was so hurried and the schedule so demanding that I could not possibly accept your kind invitation. However, my several visits to the Virgin Islands have given me a fairly deep insight into the rich heritage of the Jewish community and its venerable Synagogue. One cannot associate with the Paiewonsky family without becoming thoroughly oriented to that facet of territorial tradition.

Sincerely yours,

(sgd) Stewart L. Udall

Secretary of the Interior

Rabbi Murray Blackman
St. Thomas Synagogue
Charlotte Amalie
St. Thomas, Virgin Islands 00801

Commitment

Sheely-Rewrt. Mangan 12/28/67
cc: Sec. reading file; FW; DCCO
Reg. Dir. SE; Supt. V.I.
NPS files; Mr. Sheely/ Melvin-NPS

JAN 23 1968
RECEIVED
JAN 22 8 45 AM '68

St. Thomas Synagogue

HEBREW CONGREGATION OF ST. THOMAS
ק"ק ברכה ושלום וגמילות חסדים

Charlotte Amalie
St. Thomas, V. I. 00801

Rabbi Murray Blackman

PNP

H34

HH

January 17, 1968

Hon. Stewart L. Udall
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

Dear Mr. Udall:

Your letter of January 2nd was a delight to receive and read. I am pleased that the St. Thomas Synagogue will be included in the ongoing National Survey. We all look forward to the day when a bronze plaque will be affixed to the Synagogue.

I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Robert Mangum during his recent visit to St. Thomas and look forward to return trips by him, and, hopefully, by you.

Yours sincerely,

Rabbi Murray Blackman

MB/br

No reply necessary
Commitment

1-19

VINP

to: Mr. Bradford
from: Saul Schiffman, Room 2745

I wondered if the Jewish Synagogue in Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, V.I. Virgin Islands has been considered in the historic landmark program?

It represents the house of worship for the oldest continuously active Jewish community in the New World. The community — not the building — pre dates Thurso by several years.

Architecturally, it is a classic example of early orthodox Sephardic (Spanish rite) Jewry — the only one of its kind in U.S. soil.

Its dual altars and sand (earthen) floors are unique as is its moorish style —

Saul Schiffman

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Southeast Regional Office
75 Spring Street, S.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

IN REPLY REFER TO:

RECEIVED 41
AUG 30 1995
INTERAGENCY RESOURCES DIVISION
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

August 24, 1995

Memorandum

To: Chief, National Historic Landmarks Survey and Keeper of the National Register, Interagency Resources Division

From: Chief, National Register Programs, Southeast FDO

Subject: St. Thomas Synagogue and Cemeteries, USVI

Enclosed is a National Historic Landmark (NHL) nomination for the St. Thomas Synagogue and Cemeteries, located in Charlotte Amalie, United States Virgin Islands. The synagogue was identified in a Historic Sites Survey developed by this office and the Southeast SHPOs as a potential nationally significant property.

The St. Thomas Synagogue is considered nationally significant for a number of aspects, including the role its congregation played in aiding the American cause during the Revolutionary War. This synagogue is the secondest oldest and longest in continual use building of its kind in United States territory. In addition, the St. Thomas Synagogue was the site of the first Reform Sepharidic Confirmation ceremony performed in the New World.

St. Thomas Synagogue was identified as a contributing resource in the Charlotte Amalie Historic District, listed in the National Register on July 19, 1976. The Virgin Islands SHPO office, that worked with this office to develop the enclosed NHL nomination will shortly be sending a National Register nomination for this property to your office. Individual Register listing is intended to give special recognition to this property during the bicentennial year (1996) of the founding of the St. Thomas Jewish Congregation (see attached). A copy of the text has been e-mailed to your office.

With the full understanding of the problems facing your office regarding the NHL program, this office would appreciate any effort on your part to have this property considered for NHL status in 1996. If you have any questions please contact me at (404) 331-2643.

Enclosure

[7] From: Robie Lange at NP-WASO-IRD 10/17/95 1:58PM (1129 bytes: 12 ln)
To: Cecil McKithan at NP-SERO
cc: Mark Barnes at NP-SERO, Carol Shull, Patricia Henry at NP-WASO-MSPC,
Marilyn Harper
Subject: Virgin Island Synagogue NHL Nomination
---------- Message Contents ----------

After noting in your cover memo that you planned to submit this nomination for National Register listing at the same time as NHL nomination I asked the NR staff if their review was successful. I was surprised to find out that they had no record of receiving any such nomination. I then learned that the NR reviewer responsible for that part of the country had informed your staff that the nomination of two distant resources (one a cemetery) as a single NHL would not meet NR requirements. As this was the first question that crossed my mind when I skimmed the nomination, I thought it best to bring this matter to your attention and not act further until this can be resolved.

Robie --

Received your e:mail message of 10/17/95 regarding NHL nomination for St. Thomas Synagogue, in Charlotte Amalie, USVI. Answers as follows:

1. Do not be "surprised" the Virgin Islands SHPO has not yet sent in a copy of the National Register Nomination for the St. Thomas Synagogue. Hurricanes Luis and Marilyn made a mess of their office. The latter knocked down part of the office building where they are housed which may postpone the Round IV program review. The Synagogue is already listed in the National Register as part of the Charlotte Amalie National Register District in 7/19/76.

I must admit I am "surprised" and pleased you are moving so quickly on review of a nomination sent to the National Register in August of 1995. Nomination of a property to the National Register is of course not a prerequisite for NHL status, we were simply reporting the VI office's desire to send in a National Register nomination so that the congregation could be individually listed in the Register in 1996, and recognized during the 200th anniversary of the founding of the St. Thomas Jewish congregation. The VI SHPO office wanted to do this because of their experience with the Skytsborg (Blackbeard's Castle) NHL nomination which took three years to process.

2. Marilyn Harper recommended that the St. Thomas Synagogue and Old and New Cemeteries should be submitted to the National Register as a multiple resource nomination. We can only assume that is what the VI office intended to do before the hurricanes. Government proposes -- God disposes.

NHL staffers recommended to this office that the NHL nomination for the synagogue and associated cemeteries should be submitted in one nomination. This office would appreciate the NR office proceeding to process the NHL nomination as promptly as possible as it does not apprea the VI office will be submitting a NR nomination in the foreseeable future.

If you have any further questions, please contact me at (404) 331-2638.

Mark--

[11] From: Carol Shull at NP-WASO-NRHE 11/1/96 3:16PM (2591 bytes: 41 ln)
To: Mark Barnes at NP-SERO, Cecil McKithan at NP-SERO
cc: Carol Shull, Susan Kline, Patty Henry
Subject: St. Thomas Synagogue
---------- Message Contents ----------

We have reviewed the nomination for the St. Thomas Synagogue and have a number of recommendations for changes which should not be difficult to make. We will put the nomination in the mail to you with a copy of this cc mail message, so that the nomination can be revised. This is an important property. We really appreciate the work you have done to prepare nominations for the Virgin Islands. As you know, we have not received the National Register nomination for the synagogue from the Virgin Islands. Let's process the NHL nomination as soon as you make the revisions.

We don't know who recommended that you include the cemeteries in the NHL nomination, but we think they need to be deleted. They are discontiguous, and there is no real case made for their national significance. That, of course, will mean deleting them from the text and changing the category of property, resource count, boundary, and other blanks that reference them.

In the statement of significance, we cannot claim that having the first reform confirmation ceremony there contributes to the national significance, unless we explain in the text more about what that is and why that is such a significant ceremony and event. Also, we recommend moving the summary of significance from the end to the front of the significance statement, because that is the essence of the argument for national significance which should be easy to see at the beginning of the nomination. Even so, we also recommend condensing the background history where possible. It is lengthy and some of it is only tangentially related to the synagogue.

Please see if you can get some better photographs of the synagogue. It is very difficult to see what the building really looks like from the photographs. Can we get some distance shots, so we can get a sense of the building as a whole?

We look forward to receiving the revised NHL nomination.

[211] From: Carol Shull at NP-WASO-NRHE 11/1/96 4:01PM (668 bytes: 7 ln)
To: Mark Barnes at NP-SERO, Cecil McKithan at NP-SERO
cc: Carol Shull, Susan Kline, Robie Lange, Patty Henry
Subject: St. Thomas Synagogue
---------- Message Contents ----------

We are thinking that it will be more efficient for Susan Kline to fix the nomination here if you two agree, and she can fax you her revised version for review. Let us know and she will work on it next week. Mark, we still need you to see if you can get some more photos, since the ones we have only show parts of the building.

[221] From: Mark Barnes at NP-SERO 11/4/96 11:50AM (2937 bytes: 54 ln)
To: Carol Shull at NP-WASO-NRHE, Cecil McKithan
Subject: St. Thomas Synagogue
---------- Message Contents ----------

Dear Carol:

Thank you for your two messages of 11/1/96 regarding the St. Thomas Synagogue. Cecil and I have discussed the comments of you and your staff.

We do not mind dropping the cemeteries from the nomination. They are included in the National Register nomination for Charlotte Amalie. We were asked to make a case for their inclusion by the partners that assisted us in the preparation of the nomination.

As for the reform confirmation ceremony, we can ask our partners (particularly Rabbi Boxman) to assist us in revising this point. However, we believe the important point is this is first place in the western hemisphere this ceremony took place.

Moving the statement of significance from the end to the front of the significance statement is not a problem either.

However, we do have a problem with "condensing the background history." We hope that you can appreciate the fact that this nomination would not exist without the partnership we developed and we must take care not make it seem that the NPS is denegrating our partner's contributions. Please return the nomination as noted in your first message and we will work with our partners to come up with a resolution that hopefully satisfies everyone. We appreciate your timeliness in getting this nomination reviewed and your understanding of the sensitive situation with our partners. It is our hope that these partners will work with NPS on other NHLs and National Register projects in the future.

As for the photographs -- The Synagogue is so tightly sited between other buildings that one cannot get an overview or distance shot. It is best appreciated from shots showing certain parts of the building. For example, both sides and the back of the synagogue abutt right up to other buildings so the only view one can get is of the front of the building. We are going to contact the VI SHPO office and ask them to get us slides of the building and hopefully this may help.

NOTE: Claudette Lewis called before this e:mail message was received and she said the National Register nomination of the Synagogue would not be reviewed until end of November so your e:mail message was most timely.

Finally, we again thank you and your staff for the hard work you are doing -- this will pay off great dividends for everyone and the NHL Program.

Thanks.

Mark

PS. Cecil and I just remembered an NHL nomination for the Antonio Lopez that has been up in WASO with Kevin Foster for about two years -- could you please find out the status of that NHL? The Puerto Rican office is most anxious as they have not heard anything from Kevin since they provided him with additional documentation over a year ago.

[227] From: Carol Shull at NP-WASO-NRHE 11/4/96 4:41PM (780 bytes: 8 ln)
To: Mark Barnes at NP-SERO, Cecil McKithan at NP-SERO
cc: Susan Kline, Carol Shull
Subject: Re: St. Thomas Synagogue
---------- Message Contents ----------

Mark and Cecil, since your message I have talked with Cecil. We agreed that we would revise this to the extent we can here and then you can look at it to see if you need to show it to your partners again. Please see if Claudette can do better by the photos. How about a streetscape showing the street and the building from an oblique angle? The building is really hard to see. We will check on the nomination that Kevin has.

[2] From: Carol Shull 11/5/96 5:26PM (1623 bytes: 28 ln)
To: Marilyn Harper, Susan Kline, Kevin Foster
Subject: St. Thomas Synagogue
---------- Forwarded ----------
From: Mark Barnes at NP-SERO 11/5/96 4:59PM (1432 bytes: 28 ln)
To: Carol Shull at NP-WASO-NRHE, Cecil McKithan
Subject: St. Thomas Synagogue
---------- Message Contents ----------

Carol:

We look forward to receiving your staff comments on the St. Thomas Synagogue. We will then see if we need to show it to our partners - particularly Rabbi Boxman and Claudette.

I called Claudette yesterday and she said she would sent someone from her office to shoot a role of film on the synagogue for us. A streetscape is going to be difficult as the rabbi's office building sits in front of the synagogue. Let's see what the VI office sends us.

Thanks for checking on the Antonio Lopez shipwreck nomination from Puerto Rico. Kevin indicated over two years ago he wanted to make the site a NHL, and asked the office down there for certain information. They responded over a year ago and have heard nothing from him since then. I have sent about six e:mail messages to Kevin, but never got an answer - possibly a problem in the circuitry.

Tell Marilyn Harper the USVI office got her comments on Cane Garden National Register nomination, and Fred Gjessing is looking at it now to organize a revised nomination. This nomination will clear up all the negative inquires for the National Register section of Round IV Program Review.

Thanks for your help with St. Thomas Synagogue,

Mark

[7] From: Susan Kline at NP-WASO-NRHE 12/10/96 1:57PM (82914 bytes: 62 ln, 1 fl)
To: Cecil McKithan at NP-SERO, Mark Barnes at NP-SERO
cc: Carol Shull, Patty Henry, Marilyn Harper
bcc: Susan Kline
Subject: St. Thomas NHL nom (pending)
---------- Message Contents ----------

Text item 1:

Attached is an electronic copy of the subject nomination in Windows WP 6.0. Please review and let me know if the revisions meet your approval.

There are a few items that need to be clarified for the final version. They include:

1). The gate and fence have been counted as one contributing structure. This is assuming that they date from the period of significance. If they do not, then they will need to be counted as a noncontributing structure. Please provide a date of construction/installation.

2). If it is thought that the Office Building was constructed after 1850 it should be counted as noncontributing. Please see if a date can be established for its construction. The removal of the exterior plaster also greatly impacts its historic integrity which is another issue in determining if it is contributing. When was the plaster removed and why? Please try to provide a photo that better captures this resource.

3). Page 6 states that at the rear of the property, a former open courtyard has been "enclosed with a two story wooden structure." The nomination states that it is recent but it is unclear if it is an addition to the original building or a freestanding building. If the latter, it must be counted as a noncontributing building. If the former, the nomination must include a statement regarding the impact of this addition on the integrity of the building. Is it possible to obtain a photo of it?

4). When was the plaster removed from the columns, window and door surrounds, and interior of the Synagogue? Why was it removed? What is the impact of the loss of the interior plaster (is the interior much darker now)?

5). Does the Ark hold five Torahs (p. 7) or six (p. 8)?

6). Is the covering of the floors with sand a local Sephardic tradition (p. 9) or a general Sephardic tradition (p. 12)? Also on page 9, is the phrase "raised platforms of the congregation" appropriate?

7). Verbal Boundary Description--Is there a legal description for the parcel (Lot and Block)?

8). Please try to provide photos that better capture the front facade of the Synagogue.

We appreciate the work put into this nomination by all involved. We will send a hard copy of the nomination by mail and will retain the photos and USGS map here unless we hear otherwise from you.

If you should have any questions, please contact me by cc:mail or at 202-343-8165.

We look forward to receiving your comments and the possibility of scheduling this nomination on the spring agenda.

[8] From: Mark Barnes at NP-SERO 12/10/96 2:35PM (727 bytes: 17 ln)
To: Susan Kline at NP-WASO-NRHE
Subject: St. Thomas Synagogue
---------- Message Contents ----------

Dear Susan:

Many thanks for being soon prompt on the St. Thomas Synagogue. Unfortunately, I have WordPerfect 5.1 and can't read WordPerfect 6.0. See if you can send it by 5.1.

The US Virgin Islands is sending me new slides and photos of the synagogue, but the building is hard to shot because the crowding of other buildings around it.

Did not see any major problems with what you have in your memo, and we would like to see it presented in the spring.

Mark

PS. If all else fails, send me a disk and I'll convert it.

[9] From: Mark Barnes at NP-SERO 12/10/96 2:48PM (371 bytes: 9 ln)
To: Susan Kline at NP-WASO-NRHE
Subject: 6.0 Wordperfert St. Thomas Syn.
---------- Message Contents ----------

Susan--

Just found out that Frank Miele has Wordperfect 6.0. Try sending the St. Thomas Syn, revision by e:mail to him - he is in the next cubicle.

Thanks,

Mark

I forwarded copy to Frank 12-10-96

[9] From: Susan Kline at NP-WASO-NRHE 12/10/96 3:20PM (79957 bytes: 6 ln, 1 fl)
To: Frank Miele at NP-SERO
bcc: Susan Kline
Subject: St. Thomas Synagogue NHL nom (pending)
---------- Message Contents ----------

Text item 1:

Hi Frank:

You don't know me but....Mark Barnes asked that I send you the attached file. Let me know if it worked.

Thanks, Susan Kline

14] From: Susan Kline at NP-WASO-NRHE 12/12/96 2:12PM (1496 bytes: 24 ln)
To: Cecil McKithan at NP-SERO, Mark Barnes at NP-SERO
cc: Patty Henry
bcc: Susan Kline
Subject: St. Thom & Ft. Fred NHL noms
---------- Message Contents ----------

Hello,

I was wondering if Frank Miele received the 6.0 version of the St. Thomas Synagogue nomination? If not, we can send it by disk. The hard copy should be arriving by mail soon.

Also, did you receive my cc:mail of Nov. 15, 1996 asking if you could locate an electronic version of the Fort Frederik nomination? I know you are adjusting from your recent move and may not have had time to look for it yet. I will be out of the office December 13-20. My work load has lightened up a bit where I could devote time to that nomination the week of Christmas. We may have a short notification deadline for the next round of nominations and would like to get Fort Frederik in shape as soon as possible (the same for St. Thomas Synagogue if our changes meet your approval). If you could cc:mail a copy of the Ft. Frederik nomination or put a copy on disk in the mail, I would appreciate it. Or if you can't find it, please let us know so we can make other arrangements.

Thanks for your help.

Susan

[16] From: Mark Barnes at NP-SERO 12/13/96 11:49AM (1722 bytes: 31 ln)
To: Susan Kline at NP-WASO-NRHE
Subject: St. Thomas Syn. and Fort Frederik
---------- Message Contents ----------

Dear Susan --

Frank Miele was able to print out the 6.0 version of the St. Thomas Synagogue that you worked on. I have compared it with the older version we sent you, but do not really see any problems with it. Cecil will send a copy to the US Virgin Islands office and give them a 30 day turn around for comments. They are also sending us new Black and White Photos and color slides of this property. I anticipate sending you a final NHL Nomination with everything before mid-January. I will also try and answer the questions you had in the e:mail message you sent. Many thanks both for your speed and help on this one.

As to the Fort Frederik nomination -- we never received your e:mail message of November 15th. However, both Cecil and I think there is some miscommunication you might help us with. We received the Fort Frederik NHL nomination back from WASO in the late summer along with a e:mail message noting certain minor changes. These changes were discussed with the US Virgin Islands and were then discussed with the NHL staff during an October 3rd meeting in WASO. At that meeting, we, Carol, and the NHL staff were under the impression that once a final NHL Nomination was sent (with the changes agreed to on October 3rd) it would be presented to the next Advisory Council. This office sent the final NHL nomination to Carol in November. Do you have this final NHL nomination?

Please call me when you return so we can resolve this miscommunication.

Thanks

Mark

[21] From: Mark Barnes at NP-SERO 12/23/96 3:06PM (525 bytes: 11 ln)
To: Susan Kline at NP-WASO-NRHE
Subject: St. Thomas Synagogue
---------- Message Contents ----------

Dear Susan--

Thank you for helping clarify the points you made in your 12/10/96 e:mail message.

I received a phone call from the USVI SHPO Office - they send me the Black and White photos and slides of the Synagogue last Thursday. So I should be able to send a completed nomination to you by the first week of January.

Mark

[33] From: Mark Barnes at NP-SERO 1/3/97 4:17PM (2739 bytes: 54 ln)
To: Susan Kline at NP-WASO-NRHE
Subject: St. Thomas Synagogue
---------- Message Contents ----------

Susan--

In response to your 12/10/96 e:mail these are the changes to the nomination for the St. Thomas Synagogue we are sending you next week.

1. Consultation with Mr. Gjessing and the state office was unable to identify a date for the wrought iron fence across the front of the property. It would appear that the fence is contemporary with the Synagogue Office (post-1850) so we are counting it as noncontributing.

2. The Synagogue Office, likewise, appears to be post-1850. It does not appear on the 1836 survey of Charlotte Amalie, and we are treating it as noncontributing. The plaster was removed in the 1973-74 restoration of the synagogue and office. It does impact the look of the building and that is another reason for making it noncontributing.

3. At the rear of the property was an open to the sky area, which Mr. Gjessing refers to as a pergola. The two-story wooden building enclosing this area was made in 1984. As you have been to the synagogue you will note it can't be seen from front of the synagogue and it is very difficult to get a picture of it. It is noncontributing, but does not impact the synagogue.

4. The plaster on the interior of the synagogue and the exterior columns were removed in the 1973-1974 restoration. Woods in her 1992 book on the architecture of St. Thomas calls the removal of the plaster "a misinterpreted attempt at restoration." We noted in the Integrity section that this removal has affected the historical look of the synagogue and that historically rubble masonry buildings of this sort were plastered to prevent water infiltration into the walls. Mr. Gjessing told me the congregation is now interested in replastering the building. We also noted the plaster removal on the interior gives a darker appearance on the interior.

Apparently throughout the Virgin Islands in the early 1970s there was a movement to remove plaster to expose "original" stone and brick work without considering the historic reason for the plaster, which protected the structural integrity of the wall.

5. The Ark holds six Torahs.

6. The sand on the floor is a general Sephardic tradition and the phrase "raised platforms of the congregration" is okay.

7. There is no legal description for the parcel.

8. We are going to enclose with the revised nomination seven new photographs and one figure (showing the front of the synagogue before removal of the plaster from the columns).

Call me if you need additional information.

Mark

[35] From: Susan Kline at NP-WASO-NRHE 1/6/97 7:23AM (676 bytes: 11 ln)
To: Mark Barnes at NP-SERO
cc: Cecil McKithan at NP-SERO, Patty Henry
bcc: Susan Kline
Subject: Re: St. Thomas Synagogue
---------- Message Contents ----------

Thanks for your message Friday and for checking into these things.

I do have one comment. From my visit, I noted that the sand actually just covers the center area of the floor; the raised platforms are covered with a sand colored carpet. The postcards I bought while there also confirm this.

Sincerely,

Susan Kline

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Southeast Field Area
75 Spring Street, S.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

IN REPLY REFER TO:

January 8, 1997

Memorandum

To: Chief, National Historic Landmarks Survey and Keeper of the National Register, WASO

From: Chief, National Register Programs, Southeast Field Area

Subject: National Historic Landmark (NHL) Nomination for the St. Thomas Synagogue, St. Thomas, USVI

Enclosed is the revised NHL nomination form and a new set of photographs for the St. Thomas Synagogue, located in Charlotte Amalie, on St. Thomas, USVI. Your office should already have an original USGS map for this property on file. This synagogue is significant as the second-oldest Jewish synagogue and longest in continuous use in the United States.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (404) 562-3171.

Cecil N. McKithan

Enclosure

RECEIVED
JAN 13 1997
NATIONAL REGISTER, HISTORY & EDUCATION
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

[2] From: Susan Kline at NP-WASO-NRHE 1/14/97 8:08AM (775 bytes: 12 ln)
To: Cecil McKithan at NP-SERO, Mark Barnes at NP-SERO
cc: Patty Henry, Carol Shull
bcc: Susan Kline
Subject: St. Thomas Synagogue
---------- Message Contents ----------

Hello Cecil and Mark,

We received the revisions to the St. Thomas Synagogue nomination yesterday. Thanks for getting them back to us so quickly. I should be able to review them this week and the nomination should be scheduled for the spring meeting of the Advisory Board.

Thanks to all for their work on this one. If you have any questions, you can reach me at 203-343-8165 or cc:mail.

Susan

[3] From: Susan Kline at NP-WASO-NRHE 1/22/97 11:54AM (2315 bytes: 43 ln)
To: Cecil McKithan at NP-SERO, Mark Barnes at NP-SERO
cc: Carol Shull, Patty Henry
bcc: Susan Kline
Subject: St. Thomas Synagogue nom.
---------- Message Contents ----------

Hello,

I justed wanted to update you on the progress of this nomination.

I have made a few revisions to the format. I moved the description of the Office and fence after the description of the Synagogue as they are both noncontributing resources. I added a statement about how the addition to the rear has not impacted the integrity of the Synagogue because it is not visible due to the high retaining walls and surrounding buildings (this is in the discussion on integrity).

Also, we are going to use a combination of some of the earlier photos submitted with the 1995 nomination and the ones taken in December 1996 so I changed some of the numbering of the photos and the corresponding references in the nomination. Can you tell me when the first batch of photos were taken and who took them?

Also, we were wondering if we could at least give a description (or addresses) of the properties that bound the Synagogue since a precise legal description does not exist. For instance, we can say that it is bounded on the south by Krystal Gade, and then can we give the addresses of the properties that bound it on the other three sides. If you could contact the folks in Charlotte Amalie, we would appreciate it.

Other comments: I removed Rabbi Boxman's name from the address for additional locations of information. From my visit, I got the impression that the Synagogue has a new Rabbi, Stephen A. Schafer (his name is on the plaque on the Office building).

We've still not heard when the committee meeting will be but I would appreciate it if you could get back to me by early February.

Thanks so much,

Susan Kine
202/343-8165

[5] From: Susan Kline at NP-WASO-NRHE 1/22/97 1:06PM (657 bytes: 11 ln)
To: Cecil McKithan at NP-SERO, Mark Barnes at NP-SERO
cc: Patty Henry, Carol Shull
bcc: Susan Kline
Subject: St. Thomas nom
---------- Message Contents ----------

Hi again.

As I was sifting through our file for this nomination, I found the pages that had the photo info I requested so disregard that portion from my earlier message (unless you have discovered who took the photos attributed to "Unknown" and when they were taken).

Thanks again.

Susan Kline

[4] From: Susan Kline at NP-WASO-NRHE 1/23/97 10:17AM (1084 bytes: 23 ln)
To: Cecil McKithan at NP-SERO, Mark Barnes at NP-SERO
cc: Carol Shull, Patty Henry
bcc: Susan Kline
Subject: St. Thomas Synagogue
---------- Message Contents ----------

Hello again:

I was reviewing the information for the notification letters and had a couple of questions.

For owner of property, Rabbi Boxman was listed at the address for the Synagogue. Please confirm if he is still there or if we should use Rabbi Schafer's name.

Also for the highest elected local official for the city or county, the governor is listed. Does Charlotte Amalie have a mayor? If so, he/she should be the contact person. Please let us know who is the highest elected local official and what the appropriate address would be.

Please let me know what names we should use by early February.

Thanks so much,

Susan

[26] From: Mark Barnes at NP-SERO 1/31/97 3:28PM (2369 bytes: 55 ln)
To: Susan Kline at NP-WASO-NRHE
Receipt Requested
Subject: St. Thomas Synagogue
---------- Message Contents ----------

Dear Susan --

Received your e:mail messages of 1/14/97, 1/22/97 (both messages) and 1/23/97 with the following requests and information:

1. We have no problem with your moving the descriptions of the office and fence after the description of the Synagogue, or adding a statement regarding the rear addition.

2. Glad the photo information you requested is found.

3. As for the properties which bound the St. Thomas Synagogue (Address is Crystal Gade 16 AB) you can say it is bound on the south by Crystal Gade (the Street), and on the east by Crystal Gade 16C (an 1820s yellow brick residence). I will ask the USVI staff what building address is on the east and whether the appropriate name is Crystal Gade or Krystal Gade (I prefer the latter).

4. Rabbi Boxman has left the Synagogue - a great pity as he is a great Jewish historian scholar in his own right. I will try to determine the name of the new rabbi, but the address is still the same.

5. Will check on whether Charlotte Amalie has a mayor and their address, but you should still include the governor (as a necessary courtesy) in the notification letters.

Many thanks for your help, I should be able to send the above to you by early next week,

Mark

Up date to the above -- 1/31/97 at 3:30 PM

Susan:

1. Claudette Lewis said she would FAX me the addresses of the buildings on the north and west sides of the Synagogue -- probably early next week.

2. The correct name for the street is Crystal Gade, not Krystal Gade - you will need to change this in the nomination.

3. I called the synagogue and the name of the new rabbi is Stephen A. Schafer -- just as you noted.

4. Claudette Lewis said that the towns do not have elected mayors, rather each island has an appointed (not elected) administrator. Therefore, the highest elected individual for the entire Virgin Islands and all the towns is the Governor of the Territory.

Once you have the above encoded and I send you the two addresses that should complete the nomination. We would appreciate receiving an e:mail copy of the the completed nomination for our files.

Mark --

[27] From: Mark Barnes at NP-SERO 1/31/97 3:36PM (882 bytes: 21 ln)
To: Susan Kline at NP-WASO-NRHE
Receipt Requested
Subject: St. Thomas Syn.
---------- Message Contents ----------

Susan--

I just sent you an e:mail with the following, but I'm not sure it was sent.

1. The Rabbi's name is Stephen A. Schafer.

2. Claudette Lewis will FAX me the addresses of the buildings on the north and west sides of the Synagogue, early next week.

3. The correct address name is Crystal Gade, not Krystal Gade -- please change this in the nomination where it appears.

4. The highest elected official for the town of Charlotte Amalie is the Governor of the Territory. He appoints administrators for each island, but the towns like Charlotte Amalie do not have mayors.

5. Please send us an e:mail copy of the completed NHL nomination for our files.

Mark

[25] From: Mark Barnes at NP-SERO 1/31/97 2:43PM (1452 bytes: 31 ln)
To: Susan Kline at NP-WASO-NRHE
Receipt Requested
Subject: St. Thomas Synagogue
---------- Message Contents ----------

Dear Susan --

Received your e:mail messages of 1/14/97, 1/22/97 (both messages) and 1/23/97 with the following requests and information:

1. We have no problem with your moving the descriptions of the office and fence after the description of the Synagogue, or adding a statement regarding the rear addition.

2. Glad the photo information you requested is found.

3. As for the properties which bound the St. Thomas Synagogue (Address is Crystal Gade 16 AB) you can say it is bound on the south by Crystal Gade (the Street), and on the east by Crystal Gade 16C (an 1820s yellow brick residence). I will ask the USVI staff what building address is on the east and whether the appropriate name is Crystal Gade or Krystal Gade (I prefer the latter).

4. Rabbi Boxman has left the Synagogue - a great pity as he is a great Jewish historian scholar in his own right. I will try to determine the name of the new rabbi, but the address is still the same.

5. Will check on whether Charlotte Amalie has a mayor and their address, but you should still include the governor (as a necessary courtesy) in the notification letters.

Many thanks for your help, I should be able to send the above to you by early next week,

Mark

[17] From: Mark Barnes at NP-SERO 2/4/97 11:27AM (733 bytes: 15 ln)
To: Susan Kline at NP-WASO-NRHE
Receipt Requested
Subject: St. Thomas Synagogue - additional info
---------- Message Contents ----------

Susan --

Talked with Claudette Lewis yesterday. The address of the building to the east of the Synagogue is Crystal Gade 16. She is sending me the address for the property to the north of the Synagogue to complete the information you requested for boundaries.

She is also sending us new slides for the Synagogue -- they had taken a series of slides earlier, but they were not please with them and just finished taking some more.

Slides and last address information is being sent today to this office.

Mark

[20] From: Mark Barnes at NP-SERO 2/5/97 9:20AM (939 bytes: 25 ln)
To: Susan Kline at NP-WASO-NRHE
Receipt Requested
Subject: St. Thomas Synagogue correction.
---------- Message Contents ----------

Dear Susan:

I apologize if I sent you the wrong addresses for the buildings along Crystal Gade. Here goes the correct addresses:

1. The address of the building to the west of the Synagogue is Crystal Gade 15.

2. The Address of the Synagogue is Crystal Gade 16AB.

3. The Address of the Building to the east of the Synagogue is Crystal Gade 16C.

4. The Synagogue is bounded on the south by Crystal Gade (the name of the street).

We are getting the address of the building which bounds the synagogue on the north. Hope this clarifies the historic, but confusing property address system in Charlotte Amalie.

The state office is also sending us a selection of slides for the presentation in WASO.

Mark

[11] From: Mark Barnes at NP-SERO 2/11/97 3:25PM (733 bytes: 16 ln)
To: Susan Kline at NP-WASO-NRHE
Receipt Requested
Subject: St. Thomas Synagogue
---------- Message Contents ----------

Susan:

Just this morning I received in the mail a city map showing the area of St. Thomas Synagogue in Charlotte Amalie. I am going to FAX the map to you shortly.

The Synagogue is bounded on the south by Crystal Gade (note on the map it is spelled in the old Danish version as Krystal Gade - but it is now Crystal Gade); on the west by Crystal Gade #15; on the east by Crystal Gade #16C, and on the north by Lille Gronne Gade #3b.

The state office also sent me a whole group of color slides for my presentation in May.

Mark

H34(2280)

MAR 7 1997

Honorable Donna M. Christian-Green
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ms. Christian-Green:

We are pleased to inform you that the National Park Service has completed the study of the St. Thomas Synagogue in Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Island, for the purpose of nominating it for possible designation as a National Historic Landmark (NHL). We enclose a copy of the nomination. The National Park System Advisory Board will consider the nomination during its next meeting, at the time and place indicated on an enclosure. This enclosure also specifies how you may comment on the proposed nomination if you so choose. The Board will make its recommendation to the Secretary of the Interior based upon the criteria of the National Historic Landmarks Program.

You have 60 days to submit your views in writing, if you so desire. After the 60-day period, we will submit the nomination and your comments to the National Park System Advisory Board's Landmarks Committee, which will then inform the full Advisory Board of the Committee's recommendations at the Board's meeting. The Secretary of the Interior will then be informed of the Board's recommendations for his final action.

To assist you in considering this matter, we have enclosed a copy of the regulations governing the National Historic Landmarks Program. They describe the criteria for designation (Sec. 65.4) and include other information on the Program. We are also enclosing a fact sheet that outlines the effects of designation.

Sincerely,

Donald M. Greenberg

for

Katherine H. Stevenson
Associate Director, Cultural Resources
Stewardship and Partnerships

Enclosures

PROPERTY STUDIED FOR NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION

ST. THOMAS SYNAGOGUE
CHARLOTTE AMALIE, ST. THOMAS, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

The Landmarks Committee of the National Park System Advisory Board will evaluate this property at a meeting to be held on Tuesday, May 6, 1997 beginning at 9:00 a.m. in Hearing Room 100, Ground Floor, 800 North Capitol Street, NW, Washington, DC. The Landmarks Committee evaluates the studies of historic properties being nominated for National Historic Landmark designation in order to advise the full National Park System Advisory Board at their meeting on Thursday, June 26, 1997, in Washington, DC, and will recommend to the full Board those properties that the Committee finds meet the criteria of the National Historic Landmarks Program.

Owners of private properties nominated for NHL designation have an opportunity to concur with or object to listing in accord with the National Historic Preservation Act and 36 CFR 65. Any owner or partial owner of private property who chooses to object to designation must submit a notarized statement certifying that the party is the sole or partial owner of the private property and objects to the designation. Each owner or partial owner of private property has one vote regardless of the portion of the property that the party owns. If a majority of private property owners object, a property will not be designated. Letters objecting to or supporting nominations may be sent to Ms. Carol D. Shull, Chief, National Historic Landmarks Survey, at the National Park Service, National Register, History and Education (2280), P.O. Box 37127, Suite 310, Washington, DC 20013-7127.

Should you wish to obtain information about these meetings, or about the National Historic Landmarks Program, please contact Historian Patty Henry at the National Park Service, National Register, History and Education (2280), P.O. Box 37127, Suite 310, Washington, DC 20013-7127; or by telephone at (202) 343-8163.

If you have questions concerning the nomination, you may contact the preparer, Dr. Mark Barnes, at National Park Service, Southeast Region Office, Atlanta Federal Center, 1924 Building, 100 Alabama Street, NW, Atlanta, Georgia 30303; or by telephone at (404) 562-3173.

IDENTICAL LETTER SENT TO:

Honorable Donna M. Christian-Green
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

bcc: 5090 M. Barnes
0001 Kennedy
2200 Stevenson
2605 CCU
2280 Kline
2280 ST. THOMAS SYNAGOGUE (NHL PENDING)

FNP:PHenry:mg:2/26/97
F:\NR-NHL\NOTICE.LTR

H34(2280)

MAR 7 1997

Rabbi Stephen A. Schafer
The Hebrew Congregation of St. Thomas
P.O. Box 266
Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, U.S.Virgin Islands 00804

Dear Rabbi Schafer:

We are pleased to inform you that the National Park Service has completed the study of the St. Thomas Synagogue in Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, U.S.Virgin Islands, for the purpose of nominating it for possible designation as a National Historic Landmark (NHL). We enclose a copy of the nomination. The National Park System Advisory Board will consider the nomination during its next meeting, at the time and place indicated on an enclosure. This enclosure also specifies how you may comment on the proposed nomination if you so choose. The Board will make its recommendation to the Secretary of the Interior based upon the criteria of the National Historic Landmarks Program.

You have 60 days to submit your views in writing, if you so desire. After the 60-day period, we will submit the nomination and your comments to the National Park System Advisory Board's Landmarks Committee, which will then inform the full Advisory Board of the Committee's recommendations at the Board's meeting. The Secretary of the Interior will then be informed of the Board's recommendations for his final action.

To assist you in considering this matter, we have enclosed a copy of the regulations governing the National Historic Landmarks Program. They describe the criteria for designation (Sec. 65.4) and include other information on the Program. We are also enclosing a fact sheet that outlines the effects of designation.

Sincerely,

(Sgd) Carol D. Shull

Carol D. Shull
Chief, National Historic Landmarks Survey
and Keeper, National Register of Historic Places

Enclosures

PROPERTY STUDIED FOR
NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION

ST. THOMAS SYNAGOGUE
CHARLOTTE AMALIE, ST. THOMAS, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

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Should you wish to obtain information about these meetings, or about the National Historic Landmarks Program, please contact Historian Patty Henry at the National Park Service, National Register, History and Education (2280), P.O. Box 37127, Suite 310, Washington, DC 20013-7127; or by telephone at (202) 343-8163.

If you have questions concerning the nomination, you may contact the preparer, Dr. Mark Barnes, at National Park Service, Southeast Region Office, Atlanta Federal Center, 1924 Building, 100 Alabama Street, NW, Atlanta, Georgia 30303; or by telephone at (404) 562-3173.

IDENTICAL LETTER SENT TO:

OWN: Rabbi Stephen A. Schafer
The Hebrew Congregation of St. Thomas
P.O. Box 266
Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, U.S.Virgin Islands 00804

HEO: Honorable Roy L. Schneider, M.D.
Governor of the Virgin Islands
Kongens Gade
Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, U.S.Virgin Islands 00801

SHPO:Mrs. Beulah Dalmida-Smith, SHPO
& Commissioner, Department of Planning and
Natural Resources
Foster Plaza, 396-1 Anna's Retreat
Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, U.S.Virgin Islands 00802

bcc: 5090 M. Barnes
0001 Director
2200 Stevenson
2605 CCU
2280 Kline
2280 ST. THOMAS SYNAGOGUE (NHL PENDING)

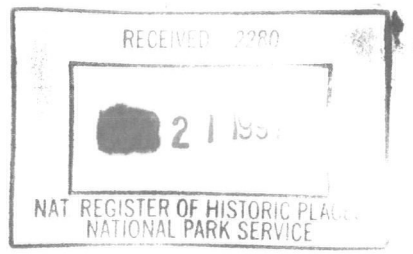
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GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES
-0-
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION FOR ARCHAEOLOGY & HISTORIC PRESERVATION
WHEATLEY CENTER II
CHARLOTTE AMALIE, ST. THOMAS, V.I. 00802
TDD-(809) 777-8413

Beulah Dalmida-Smith
Commissioner/SHPO

Telephone: (809) 776-8605
Fax: (809) 774-5416

April 8, 1997



Mrs. Carol D. Schull
Chief National Historic Landmarks Survey
and Keeper, National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

Dear Mrs. Schull:

I am in receipt of your letter dated March 6, 1997 re: the nomination of **Fort Frederik**, Frederiksted, St. Croix and the **St. Thomas Synagogue** in Charlotte Amalie St. Thomas as possible National Historic Landmarks. We are very pleased about these two (2) properties and is in full support of their designation as Landmarks.

Dr. Mark Barnes of the National Park Service and my staff has spent considerable time working on these nominations and we look forward to a favorable review.

Sincerely,

Beulah Dalmida-Smith
Commissioner/SHPO

cc: Dr. Mark Barnes, National Park Service
Claudette Lewis, Assistant Director

Author: Mark Barnes at NP-SERO
Date: 4/8/97 2:53 PM
Priority: Normal
Receipt Requested
TO: Susan Kline at NP-WASO-NRHE
Subject: St. Thomas Synagogue
---------- Message Contents ----------

Dear Susan:

I finally got a chance to look at the St. Thomas Synagogue nomination.

I note that on the top of Page 21 you refer to Figure 3. Is this supposed to be Figure 1? or am I missing Figure 3?

I also did not find any where in the text a reference to Figure 2 - am I missing something?

Myron Jackson of the USVI SHPO office was the photographer for Photos 1 and 5. They were taken in January 1997.

Finally, I'm a little concerned about the last part of the Summary Statement of Significance on Page 11. I looked at the Kahal Kadosh Eth Elohim Synagogue nomination for Charleston, SC. The importance is threefold the oldest in continunal use, the center for German Jewish Reform Movement and outstanding Greek Revival architecture.

Obviously our St. Thomas Synagogue bests the Charleston one as the oldest in continual use synagogue and it was the first center of Spanish Jewish Reform Movement in the western hemisphere. However, the Charleston synagogue is probably able to stand on its own for its significance for Greek Revival architecture.

I may be reading too much into this but I would not want to make the Charleston congregation think we were in any way denigrating the significance of their synagogue. Perhaps that article I read where Orthodox rabbis are claiming that Conservative and Reform Jews were not real Jews have made me overly sensitive.

Mark

PS. I will be in the office April 9th and 14th and will return on April 21st if you want to discuss.

Author: Susan Kline at NP-WASO-NRHE
Date: 4/9/97 9:21 AM
Priority: Normal
TO: Mark Barnes at NP-SERO
CC: Patty Henry
BCC: Susan Kline
Subject: St. Thomas Nomination
---------- Message Contents ----------

Mark:

Received your message yesterday. Thanks for catching the item about the figure number on page 21. You are correct, it should be Figure 1. I was so concerned about making sure the references in Section 7 were correct that I missed the one in Section 8. The correction will be made on the final version of the nomination.

You are also correct that there is no reference in the text to Figure 2. The caption is self-explanatory.

Photos number 1 and 5 could not have been taken in 1997 as they were among the photos sent with the original nomination and at that time were labeled as both the photographer and the date being unknown.

The summary statement of significance states that the Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim in Charleston, SC was designated an NHL in 1980 "in part" in belief that it was the second oldest in age and oldest in continuous use in the US. That recognizes that there were other reasons why it was designated. This was not something added to the nomination recently. That statement was in the version we sent you in December 1996. But I am glad that you brought it up because I noticed that I need to add the word "in" between "NHL" and "1980."

If you find anything else, please let me know.

Susan

2200-#26163

DONNA M. CHRISTIAN-GREEN
DELEGATE, VIRGIN ISLANDS

COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES

MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS AND PUBLIC LANDS

MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCES

MEMBER, CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS

MEMBER, CONGRESSIONAL WOMEN'S CAUCUS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515–5501

PLEASE RESPOND TO:

WASHINGTON OFFICE
☐ 1711 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225–1790
FAX (202) 225–5517

DISTRICT OFFICES
☐ VITRACO MALL, BLDG. 2—BAY 3
ST. THOMAS, VIRGIN ISLANDS 00801
(809) 774–4408
FAX (809) 774–8033

☐ P.O. BOX 5980
SPACE #3 MINI MALL
SUNNY ISLE SHOPPING CENTER
ST. CROIX, VIRGIN ISLANDS 00823
(809) 773–5900
FAX (809) 773–5111

April 21, 1997

Ms. Carol D. Shull
Chief, National Historic Landmarks Survey
National Park Service, National Register, History and Education (2280)
P.O. Box 37127, Suite 310
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

Dear Ms. Shull:

I write in support of the designation of the St. Thomas Synagogue, Beracha Veshalom Vegemiluth Hasadim (Blessing and Peace and Acts of Piety) at Crystal Gade #16AB, Queens Quarter, Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas as a National Historic Landmark.

The St. Thomas Synagogue has long been a place of historical significance to the people of the United States Virgin Islands, particularly the people of St. Thomas, as the Synagogue served as the place of worship for 200 years for the island's Jewish community and many members of the merchant class that helped build the town of Charlotte Amalie and finance its growth and development throughout history.

I understand that the St. Thomas Synagogue is the second oldest synagogue and longest in continuous use in the United States, which contributes to its national significance. It's architectural design, as well as the history of those who worshipped there, is of importance not only to those of Jewish heritage but to all in the territory and the nation who know the importance of understanding history as an important tool with which to chart the future.

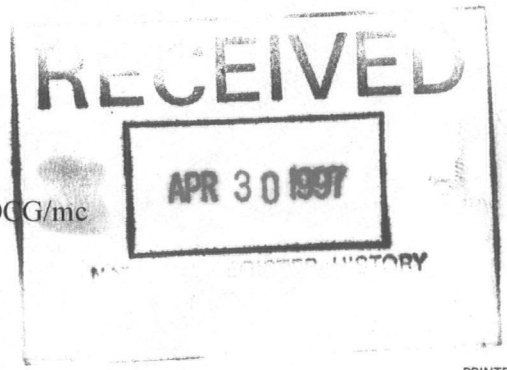
The Virgin Islands and indeed, the United States, draws upon its history as a tool of economic development through tourism and the St. Thomas Synagogue is a fine example of the living history that helps to define the local and national character.

With the recent celebration of the synagogue and congregation's 200th anniversary, I believe that designation as a National Historic Landmark would be most fitting.

Sincerely,

Donna Christian-Green
Member of Congress

DCG/mc



PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

IN REPLY REFER TO:

JUN 24 1997

H3415(418)

MEMORANDUM

To: Secretary

Through: Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks SEP 5 1997

From: Denis P. Galvin
Acting Deputy Director

Subject: Designation of Twenty-Two Properties as National Historic Landmarks: Request for Secretarial Action

At a meeting on June 10, 1997, the National Park System Advisory Board recommended designation of the following 22 properties as National Historic Landmarks:

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

1. ***BASTROP STATE PARK***, BASTROP COUNTY, TEXAS
2. ***LAKE GUERNSEY STATE PARK***, PLATTE COUNTY, WYOMING
3. ***ST. CROIX RECREATIONAL DEMONSTRATION AREA***, PINE COUNTY, MINNESOTA
4. ***MENDOCINO WOODLANDS***, MENDOCINO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
5. ***PINE MOUNTAIN STATE PARK***, HARRIS COUNTY, GEORGIA

ARCHITECTURE

6. ***SHELBURNE FARMS***, SHELBURNE, VERMONT
7. ***JOSIAH QUINCY HOUSE***, QUINCY, MASSACHUSETTS
8. ***COLLEGE OF MEDICINE OF MARYLAND***, BALTIMORE, MARYLAND
9. ***ISAAC BELL HOUSE***, NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND
10. ***HENRY WHITFIELD HOUSE***, GUILFORD, CONNECTICUT

MARITIME

11. ***ROSEWAY (SCHOONER)***, CAMDEN, MAINE
12. ***VICTORY CHIMES (SCHOONER)***, ROCKLAND, MAINE
13. ***BLOCK ISLAND SOUTH EAST LIGHT***, BLOCK ISLAND, RHODE ISLAND
14. ***LOUISVILLE MARINE HOSPITAL***, LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

PREPARED BY: Patty Henry *TELEPHONE:* (202) 343-8163

HISTORY OF GEOLOGY

15. ***SCHOONMAKER REEF***, WAUWATOSA, WISCONSIN
16. ***VAN HISE ROCK***, SAUK COUNTY, WISCONSIN
17. ***MAZON CREEK FOSSIL BEDS***, GRUNDY COUNTY, ILLINOIS
18. ***DR. FISK HOLBROOK DAY HOUSE***, WAUWATOSA, WISCONSIN

INDIVIDUAL TOPICS

19. ***FORT FREDERIK***, ST. CROIX, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS
20. ***ST. THOMAS SYNAGOGUE***, CHARLOTTE AMALIE, ST. THOMAS, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS
21. ***PALMITO RANCH BATTLEFIELD***, CAMERON COUNTY, TEXAS

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

22. ***F. JULIUS LEMOYNE HOUSE***, WASHINGTON, PENNSYLVANIA

In accordance with National Historic Landmarks Program regulations, the Board reviewed the studies nominating these properties for Landmark status and found that the properties meet National Historic Landmarks Program criteria. The Board, therefore, voted to recommend that they be designated as National Historic Landmarks.

I recommend that you approve the Board's recommendations and designate as National Historic Landmarks the 22 properties listed above.

APPROVE: _____ DISAPPROVE: _____

DATE: SEP 25 1997 DATE: _____

ATTACHMENT

H3417(2280)

Rabbi Stephen A. Schafer
The Hebrew Congregation of St. Thomas
P.O. Box 266
Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, U.S.Virgin Islands 00804

DEC 10 1997

Dear Rabbi Schafer:

I am pleased to inform you that the St. Thomas Synagogue in Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, U.S.Virgin Islands has been found to possess national significance in the history of the United States. As a result, the Secretary of the Interior designated this property a National Historic Landmark on September 25, 1997.

The purpose of landmark designation is to identify and recognize nationally significant sites and to encourage their owners to preserve them. Landmarks are chosen after careful study by the National Park Service. They are evaluated by the National Park System Advisory Board and designated by the Secretary of the Interior in accordance with the Historic Sites Act of 1935 and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

Designation as a National Historic Landmark automatically places a property in the National Register of Historic Places, if it is not already so listed, and extends to it the safeguards and benefits provided by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and other Federal laws protecting historic properties.

Each Landmark is eligible to receive one bronze plaque to commemorate the property's designation. Please complete the form in triplicate and return two copies to the National Historic Landmarks coordinator identified on the form. You may retain the third copy for your records. Unless you specify otherwise, the plaque will bear the name of the property as it appears above. The plaque has a standard text, except for the name of the property (a maximum of two lines) and the year of designation.

The National Park Service will be pleased to assist owners who wish to arrange a ceremony for the presentation of the plaque. Such a ceremony should be scheduled a minimum of several months after notice of designation to provide time to cast the plaque and to arrange the participation of appropriate officials in the ceremony.

We are pleased to include the St. Thomas Synagogue on the roll of National Historic Landmarks as significant representatives of our Nation's heritage.

Sincerely,

(Sgd) Carol D. Shull

Carol D. Shull
Chief, National Historic Landmarks Survey and
Keeper, National Register of Historic Places

Enclosures

IDENTICAL LETTER SENT TO:

OWN: Rabbi Stephen A. Schafer
The Hebrew Congregation of St. Thomas
P.O. Box 266
Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, U.S.Virgin Islands 00804

HEO: Honorable Roy L. Schneider, M.D.
Governor of the Virgin Islands
Kongens Gade
Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, U.S.Virgin Islands 00801

SHPO: Mrs. Beulah Dalmida-Smith, SHPO
& Commissioner, Department of Planning and
Natural Resources
Foster Plaza, 396-1 Anna's Retreat
Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, U.S.Virgin Islands 00802

bcc: 5090 M. Barnes
0001 Director
2200 Stevenson
2280 Henry
2280 ST. THOMAS SYNAGOGUE (NHL)

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PH 12/5/97
Shue
12-4-97
R Greenberg
& Stevenson
12/8/97
0002
12/15/97

DEC 17 1997

H3417(2280)

Honorable Donna M. Christian-Green
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Ms. Christian-Green:

I am pleased to inform you that the St. Thomas Synagogue in Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, U.S.Virgin Islands has been found to possess national significance in the history of the United States. As a result, the Secretary of the Interior designated this property a National Historic Landmark on September 25, 1997.

The purpose of landmark designation is to identify and recognize nationally significant sites and to encourage their owners to preserve them. Landmarks are chosen after careful study by the National Park Service. They are evaluated by the National Park System Advisory Board and designated by the Secretary of the Interior in accordance with the Historic Sites Act of 1935 and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

Designation as a National Historic Landmark automatically places a property in the National Register of Historic Places, if it is not already so listed, and extends to it the safeguards and benefits provided by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and other Federal laws protecting historic properties.

Each Landmark is eligible to receive one bronze plaque to commemorate the property's designation. Copies of the plaque application form have been sent to Rabbi Stephen A. Schafer, The Hebrew Congregation of St. Thomas, P.O. Box 266, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands 00804.

Unless specified otherwise by the owners, the plaque will bear the name of the property as it appears above. The plaque has a standard text, except for the name of the property (a maximum of two lines) and the year of designation.

The National Park Service will be pleased to assist owners who wish to arrange a ceremony for the presentation of the plaque. Such a ceremony should be scheduled a minimum of several months after notice of designation to provide time to cast the plaque and to arrange the participation of appropriate officials in the ceremony.

We are pleased to include the St. Thomas Synagogue on the roll of National Historic Landmarks as significant representatives of our Nation's heritage.

Sincerely,

Robert Stanton

Robert Stanton
Director

bcc: 5090 M. Barnes
0001 Stanton
2200 Stevenson
2605 CCU
2280 Henry
2280 ST. THOMAS SYNAGOGUE (NHL)

FNP:PHenry:mg:11/26/97
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United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

JUL 17 1998

H3415(2280)

MEMORANDUM

To: Secretary

Through: Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

From: Director

JUL 29 1998

Subject: Rescission of One Property as a National Historic Landmark: Request for Secretarial Action

On September 25, 1997, you signed a memorandum designating the following 21 properties, which had been recommended to you by the National Park System Advisory Board, as National Historic Landmarks.

In accordance with National Historic Landmarks Program regulations, the Board reviewed the studies nominating the 21 properties listed below for Landmark status and found that the properties meet National Historic Landmarks Program criteria. The Board, therefore, voted to recommend that they be designated as National Historic Landmarks.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

1. ***BASTROP STATE PARK***, BASTROP COUNTY, TEXAS
2. ***LAKE GUERNSEY STATE PARK***, PLATTE COUNTY, WYOMING
3. ***ST. CROIX RECREATIONAL DEMONSTRATION AREA***, PINE COUNTY, MINNESOTA
4. ***MENDOCINO WOODLANDS***, MENDOCINO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
5. ***PINE MOUNTAIN STATE PARK***, HARRIS COUNTY, GEORGIA

ARCHITECTURE

6. ***JOSIAH QUINCY HOUSE***, QUINCY, MASSACHUSETTS
7. ***COLLEGE OF MEDICINE OF MARYLAND***, BALTIMORE, MARYLAND
8. ***ISAAC BELL HOUSE***, NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND
9. ***HENRY WHITFIELD HOUSE***, GUILFORD, CONNECTICUT

MARITIME

10. ***ROSEWAY (SCHOONER)***, CAMDEN, MAINE
11. ***VICTORY CHIMES (SCHOONER)***, ROCKLAND, MAINE
12. ***BLOCK ISLAND SOUTH EAST LIGHT***, BLOCK ISLAND, RHODE ISLAND
13. ***LOUISVILLE MARINE HOSPITAL***, LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

PREPARED BY: Patty Henry *TELEPHONE*: 202/343-8163

HISTORY OF GEOLOGY

14. ***SCHOONMAKER REEF***, WAUWATOSA, WISCONSIN
15. ***VAN HISE ROCK***, SAUK COUNTY, WISCONSIN
16. ***MAZON CREEK FOSSIL BEDS***, GRUNDY COUNTY, ILLINOIS
17. ***DR. FISK HOLBROOK DAY HOUSE***, WAUWATOSA, WISCONSIN

INDIVIDUAL TOPICS

18. ***FORT FREDERIK***, ST. CROIX, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS
19. ***ST. THOMAS SYNAGOGUE***, CHARLOTTE AMALIE, ST. THOMAS, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS
20. ***PALMITO RANCH BATTLEFIELD***, CAMERON COUNTY, TEXAS

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

21. ***F. JULIUS LEMOYNE HOUSE***, WASHINGTON, PENNSYLVANIA

During the time that the memorandum was being transmitted to your office, Senator Leahy of Vermont contacted the National Park Service's Associate Director, Cultural Resource Stewardship and Partnerships and requested that the following property, ***SHELBURNE FARMS***, SHELBURNE, VERMONT, which had also been on the list of properties recommended for National Historic Landmark designation, not be sent forward for designation until further discussions could be held with the interested parties. This is a wholly appropriate request prior to designation, and one we honor when it is requested by any Member. Before we were able to effectuate this request, as a result of ministerial error, the package was signed, designating all 22 properties listed therein, erroneously including ***SHELBURNE FARMS***.

Because of the ministerial error, I am requesting that you void the September 25, 1997 memorandum and instead sign this memorandum. This memorandum will supercede that memorandum of September 25, 1997 with the effect of removing Shelburne Farms from the list of properties recommended for designation and making the National Historic Landmark designation of the remaining 21 properties effective as of **SEPTEMBER 25, 1997.**

The National Park Service will re-present the nomination for Shelburne Farms to the National Park System Advisory Board and provide an additional opportunity for local input.

I recommend that you approve the Board's recommendations and designate as National Historic Landmarks the 21 properties listed above effective as of **SEPTEMBER 25, 1997.**

APPROVE: _____ DISAPPROVE: _____

DATE: SEP 18 1998 DATE: _____





ST. THOMAS SYNAGOGUE

U.S. Virgin Islands



The Oldest Synagogue Under The U.S. Flag

In Continuous Use



