

PH0502499

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED AUG 15 1977

DATE ENTERED FEB 17 1978

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Venus Hill

AND/OR COMMON

Mafolie Observatory, Venus Pillar

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

No. 24B Estate Mafolie

CITY, TOWN

Charlotte Amalie

☒ VICINITY OF

STATE

U.S. Virgin Islands

CODE
78☐ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1

COUNTY
St. ThomasCODE
0900**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☐ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☒ SITE☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC☒ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ MUSEUM☐ COMMERCIAL☐ PARK☐ EDUCATIONAL☒ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ RELIGIOUS☐ GOVERNMENT☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ MILITARY☐ OTHER:**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Arthur Witty

STREET & NUMBER

No 24B Mafolie

CITY, TOWN

Charlotte Amalie

☒ VICINITY OF

STATE

Virgin Islands

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Recorder of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

Government House

CITY, TOWN

Charlotte Amalie

STATE

Virgin Islands

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Virgin Islands Inventory

DATE

June 1977

☐ FEDERAL ☒ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Virgin Islands Planning Office

CITY, TOWN

St. Thomas

STATE

U.S. Virgin Islands

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

—EXCELLENT

☒GOOD

—FAIR

—DETERIORATED

—RUINS

—UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☒UNALTERED

—ALTERED

CHECK ONE

—ORIGINAL SITE

—MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

A geodetic monument marks the exact site of the 1882 St. Thomas observations of the transit of Venus. The monument is a 13.5' high obelisk with a pyramid cap constructed of rubble masonry covered with a fine sand stucco. The original instrument station, a 31" x 29.5" marble tablet with four stabilizing holes, has been placed on the north face of the obelisk and contains the following inscriptions:

Passagem de Venus
Dezembro 6 the 1882
Commissao Brazileria
Barao the Teffe
Calheiros da Graca
Indio do Brazil
Late 18° - 21' - 3" n
Longe 21° - 45' - 37" 0
(Rio de Janeiro)
JAH Schlesinger
St. Thomas, D.W.I.

The original site, a cleared eminence was modified during World War I to accommodate a gun mount. Later the site was incorporated into the south terrace of a residence. The obelisk is well maintained, in excellent condition with the exception of a few small Portland cement patches.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD

— PREHISTORIC

— 1400-1499

— 1500-1599

— 1600-1699

— 1700-1799

☒ 1800-1899

— 1900-

— ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC

— ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC

— AGRICULTURE

— ARCHITECTURE

— ART

— COMMERCE

— COMMUNICATIONS

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

— COMMUNITY PLANNING

— CONSERVATION

— ECONOMICS

— EDUCATION

— ENGINEERING

— EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT

— INDUSTRY

— INVENTION

— LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

— LAW

— LITERATURE

— MILITARY

— MUSIC

— PHILOSOPHY

— POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

— RELIGION

☒ SCIENCE

— SCULPTURE

— SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN

— THEATER

— TRANSPORTATION

— OTHER (SPECIFY)

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The site is significant as the location of a major astronomical station used during the 1882 international observations of the transit of Venus. A transit of Venus occurs when the planet passes in front of the sun's disk and is visible as a small dark spot in front of the sun. Transits of Venus occurred in 1761, 1769, 1874, and 1882. The next transits of Venus will occur in 2004 and 2012. Transits of Venus have been used to fix geographic positions and in attempts to determine solar parallax or what is equivalent the mean distance between the earth and the sun.

The 1882 Brazilian expedition to St. Thomas was one of a coordinated international effort that had begun during the 1872 transit. The Brazilians established their station of the heights above Charlotte Amalie with an exceptional field of view. Observations and calculations were accomplished by Barao de Teffe, Captain Francisco Calheiros da Graca, and Lieutenant Arthur Indio do Brasil. A definite report of the expedition and its results was compiled and published by the Imperial Observatory of Rio do Janeiro in 1887. Because of its importance the specific site of the observation was marked by a masonry obelisk.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

1. Annales de l'Observatoire Imperial de Rio de Janeiro, Tom 3
(Rio de Janeiro: 1887) pp 35-180.
2. McGuire, James William, Geographic Dictionary of the Virgin Islands of the United States, USC & GS Special Publication No. 103, (Washington: 1925 p. 193).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

OK-18° 21' 12" North Latitude
65° 55' 46" West Longitude

A

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

The site is located at the above referenced coordinate on a small eminence 807 feet high, immediately north of Charlotte Amalie in Estate Mafolie on what is now the south terrace of a residence. The overall site is 20' x 2-' square.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A			

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Virgin Islands Historic Survey

Annie Hillary, Jane Mrmion, Thomas W. Richards

ORGANIZATION

Virgin Islands Planning Office

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box 2606

CITY OR TOWN

St. Thomas

DATE

TELEPHONE

(809) 774-1730

STATE

Virgin Islands

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL XX

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

William R. Blake

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

Director of Planning

DATE 5 August 1977

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Robert B. Rettig

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

2/17/78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

2-8-78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Property Venus HillState V.I.Working Number 8.15.77-1292St. Thomas Island
78002733

TECHNICAL

Photos /Maps /

CONTROL

pl
8.12.77

HISTORIAN

Significant as evidence of inter-American participation in international scientific (historical and geographic) activities, in which Brazil and other South American countries had participated with European scientists since the late colonial period (late 18th & early 19th centuries). Site, although altered, appears to be original, which is important in terms of the accuracy of the astronomical and geographic observations made by the expedition.

Accept.
12/15/77
Joe Fowler

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

Monument is not on original site. Moved during WWI and later incorporated into residence. Need call - does property have great importance to scientific world? Has its symbolic value given it historical importance? Confer after historian. BASED ON HISTORIAN comment,

Jann Brimore
10.25.77CONFERR
ACCEPT 12.16.77

ARCHEOLOGIST

OTHER

HAER

Inventory Review

on present site more than 50 years; monument is significant.

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

I am unclear as to how close present location is to original, but still on high point.

Accept
reluctant
2/8/78

BRANCH CHIEF

Hurley2-8-78

KEEPER

Retig for Mortgage
2/17/78National Register Write-up Send-back Entered FEB 17 1978Federal Register Entry 4.4.78Re-submit

INT:2106-74





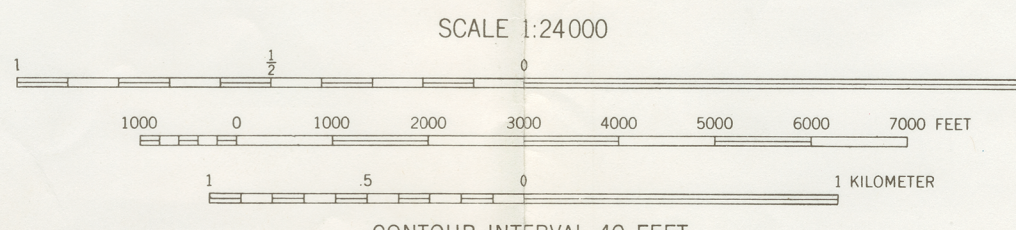
Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
in cooperation with Office of Territories,
U. S. Department of the Interior

Control by USGS, USC&GS, USCE, and U. S. Dept. of Public Roads
Topography from aerial photographs by photogrammetric methods
Aerial photographs taken 1954. Field check 1954-1955
Hydrography from USC&GS chart 905, dated 1952

Polyconic projection. Puerto Rican datum, 1940 adjustment
10,000-foot grid based on Puerto Rican coordinate system,
Virgin Islands extension

Red tint indicates area in which only
landmark buildings are shown
Unchecked elevations are shown in brown

8°
TRUE NORTH
APPROXIMATE MEAN
DECLINATION, 1955



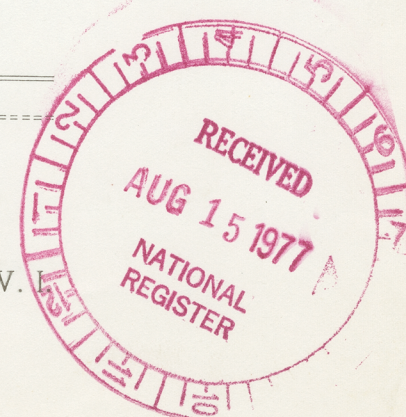
CONTOUR INTERVAL 40 FEET
DOTTED LINES REPRESENT 20-FOOT CONTOURS
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET—DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER
SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER
THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS 0.8 FEET

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

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

CENTRAL ST. THOMAS, V.
N 1818—W 6454/7.5 X 6

1955



Judi Witty 9-P

Mr. William Montagu
Keeper of the National Register,
National Park Service
Department of the Interior,
Washington, D.C. 20240
Dear Mr. Montagu:

In compliance with the request to be heard
from within a month, I am happy to tell
you that we are pleased to have the obelisk
on our property listed with the National
Register as an historic site.

It was placed in its present position Dec.
6, 1882 by a Brazilian expedition that
came to St. Thomas to study the plant
Jenyns. It is also in the world insect.
listing also latitude, longitude and names

Mr. William Muntogh
Keeper of the National Register,
National Park Service
Department of the Interior,
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Muntogh:

In compliance with the request to be heard
from within a month, I am happy to tell
you that we are pleased to have the obelisk
on our property listed with the National
Register as a historic site.

It was placed in its present position Dec.
6, 1882 by a Brazilian expedition that
came to St. John's to study the planet,
Venus. Dr. de Alencar in the marble inscription
listing date, latitude, longitude and names
of some of the leaders of the group. It is
mentioned in a number of the textbooks
in the schools on the history of the
Virgin Islands and is referred to as
"The Passage of Venus".

It is in good condition however at
the bottom some of the inner bricks

are exposed. In those days they were put
together with sand, molasses & lime. This
exposure is at only one corner and is intact.
So our knowledge no one has penetrated the
inside to ascertain the contents, if any.

We have cleared away the "bush" originally
surrounding it and incorporated it in
a cement terrace beyond which is a
spectacular view of the Harbor & Town.

When building our house we kept in mind
the old architecture & did a fix on the
monument from the front door of the
house. Recently Mr Robert Collins
from your organization visited with
us & saw at first hand these details.

Any other inquiry on your part
should be addressed to Miss Gird Baa
here in St. Thomas & perhaps she could
go a bit further into the obelisk's history.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Arthur Wittig

SEP 20 1932

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Date Entered FEB 17 1978

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
Mafolie Great House	Charlotte Amalie vicinity St. Thomas Island
Venus Hill	Charlotte Amalie vicinity St. Thomas Island
Estate Perseverance	Charlotte Amalie vicinity St. Thomas Island
Hafensight	Charlotte Amalie vicinity St. Thomas Island
Estate Hogansborg	Christiansted vicinity St. Croix Island
Estate Prosperity	Frederiksted vicinity St. Croix Island
Estate Mount Victory	Frederiksted vicinity St. Croix Island
HMS Santa Monica	Coral Bay vicinity St. John's Island
Estate Neltjeberg	Charlotte Amalie St. Thomas Island

Also Notified

Hon. Ron De Lugo

Regional Director, Southeast Region

880

Mott/js

3/1/78

State Historic Preservation Officer
Mr. Thomas Blake
Planning Director, Virgin Islands
Planning Board
Charlotte Amalie
St. Thomas, Virgin Islands 00801

NATIONAL REGISTER DATA SHEET

① NAME as it appears on federal register: Venus Hill		② OTHER NAMES: Mafolie Observatory; Venus Pillar		③ date of entry: FEB 17 1978	④ county code: 0900
⑤ LOCATION street & number Roughly 1/3 mi. N of Charlotte Amalie		city / town St. Thomas	vicinity of Charlotte Amalie	state V.I.	county St. Thomas
⑥ NPS REGION: southeastern					
⑦ OWNER ☒ PRIVATE ☐ STATE ☐ MUNICIPAL ☐ COUNTY ☐ MULTIPLE ☐ FEDERAL (agency name)				⑧ ADMINISTRATOR:	
⑨ EXISTING SURVEYS ☐ HABS ☐ HAER ☐ NHL		⑩ FUNDED? ☐ YES ☐ NO		⑪ CONGRESS. DISTRICT 1st	
⑫ SOURCE of NOMINATION ☒ STATE ☐ FEDERAL		if state who prepared form?			
⑬ WITHIN NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT? ☐ YES, NAME ☒ NO		⑭ WITHIN NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK? ☐ YES, NAME ☒ NO		⑮ ACREAGE less than 1	
⑯ ACCESS ☐ YES - Restricted ☐ YES - Unrestricted ☐ No Access ☐ Unknown		⑰ ADAPTIVE USE ☐ YES ☐ NO		⑱ SAVED? ☐ YES ☐ NO	
⑲ IS PROPERTY A HISTORIC DISTRICT? ☐ yes ☐ no					
⑳ FUNCTIONS WHEN HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT: CURRENTLY:		㉑ DATES of initial construction: major alterations: historic events:		㉒ ETHNIC GROUP ASSOCIATION	
㉓ architectural style(s):		㉔ architect:		㉕ master builder:	
㉖ engineer:		㉗ landscape architect / garden designer:		㉘ interior decorator:	
㉙ artist:		㉚ artisan:		㉛ builder/contractor:	
㉜ NAMES give role & date PERSONAL: EVENTS: INSTITUTIONAL:					
㉝ NATIONAL REGISTER WRITE-UP					