

The Welcoming Arms

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ST. THOMAS HISTORICAL TRUST

December 2016



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President's Letter

Thank you to all of those members who recently attended our Halloween Gala and fundraiser, and for the continued support of so many throughout the year. We depend on your contributions to continue our mission to identify, preserve, and promote the history, sites, and culture of St. Thomas.

I have some exciting news to share with everyone. Thanks to a generous offer from Topa Properties, the St. Thomas Historical Trust is moving to a new location on Raadets Gade. I cannot thank Topa Properties enough for giving back to the community and helping preserve and share the history of St. Thomas by giving us the opportunity to have a brand-new museum with an office right in historic downtown. Please go to our Facebook page, like and share it, and watch for announcements of upcoming events and requests for assistance as we prepare this new museum location!

There are many things on the horizon: our historical tours, our Lecture Series, and Centennial celebrations for the upcoming year. With new leadership at the helm, and a new location for our museum, I'm excited about the future of the St. Thomas Historical Trust!

Best Regards,

Malcolm Schweizer, President



@STT_Historical

Our Mission Statement...

To identify, protect and preserve the history, sites and culture of St. Thomas.



Coming soon:
The Trust's new downtown Museum!



- **Did you know** that St. Thomas' earliest settlers came by boat from South America?
- **Did you know** why Europe's powers explored and settled the Caribbean before any region of continental America?
- **Did you know** that St. Thomas' harbor was the busiest port of all in the New World?



Get some eye-opening answers when you visit our new Museum on Raadets Gade in town!

Positioned to welcome island visitors as well as working folks and other residents, our brand-new museum (opening its doors very soon) will reflect St. Thomas Historic Trust's long commitment to showcasing the many sides of St. Thomas' dynamic history.

We've been in the museum business before. Our last museum overlooking Roosevelt Park, just east of downtown, featured a collection of 19th century hand carved furnishings, historic artifacts, records, and a working library among other holdings. Its active popularity was evidenced by its many visitors.

That museum closed last year due to weather impact on the building. The new museum will feature expanded offerings -- and evolving displays of historic items, images and resources.

It also houses our enlarged library and genealogical resources, along with the office of our full-time executive director, Melia Cook.

Weekly walking tours start from its air-conditioned interior. And our library's collection is available for researchers.

The past made present!

Stop in... bring your guests by for an overview of St. Thomas' history. Take a historic walking tour.

Enjoy St. Thomas' brand-new site that honors our age-old culture and history!!



**ST. THOMAS HISTORICAL TRUST
MUSEUM**

*West Indian Furniture
other Historic Artifacts
and Photographs on Display*

Also Offering:

**Downtown Walking Tours
Historical Hassel Island Tours**

Call (340) 774-5541

**FOR MUSEUM AND TOUR INFO
Raadets Gade, Charlotte Amalie**

ExecDirector@StThomasHistoricalTrust.org
www.stthomashistoricaltrust.org

Opening December, 2016

What's the non-profit St. Thomas Historical Trust all about?!

“The Trust works to preserve the cultural and historical heritage of Saint Thomas, through education, advocacy, and preservation promotion.”

We've had an extraordinarily long record of work in this community. Forty years! We've been going strong since 1966... Next year (2017) starts our fifth decade of projects and initiatives here in St. Thomas.

What is it we really do, in simple terms?!

All along, we've been planning, organizing, speaking out and getting results to effectively showcase and preserve St. Thomas' exceptional maritime and cultural history.

Early projects included involvement in the archeological site in Estate Tutu. The Trust has since been involved in numerous preservation, restoration, and outreach projects, including the Historic District on Hassel Island, the Danish colonial Fort Christian and the step streets of Charlotte Amalie, among others.

What are some of the Trust's shorter-range involvements, enhancing the community?

We have ongoing programs of historical and cultural events, including walking tours, lectures, hands-on workshops, newsletter reporting, and practical projects.

We organize initiatives to celebrate local islanders' traditions, such as our annual Coal Pot Cook-Off each spring. See more on some of these activities planned for 2017, at right.

We also raise funds for future preservation work, through memberships, sale of "St. Thomas History" license plates, and our fun-loving, annual costume Gala fundraiser, held each October.

What's coming up for the Trust in 2017?

- We're celebrating St. Thomas' Centennial Year! Become a member, and receive our newsletter of upcoming events, including a January 27 & 28, 2017 show of artworks created "for and about St. Thomas and the Virgin Islands" over the last 3 centuries!
- Opening a brand new museum on Radaats Gade downtown, showcasing St. Thomas' centuries-old history (native American era through Danish times). Not to be missed!

Welcoming new faces and interests, through our community outreach, programs and our membership opportunities.

Join us, and be a part of St. Thomas' vibrant history!!

Our phone is 774-5541,
or email us at:

execdirector@stthomashistoricaltrust.org,
visit our website:

www.stthomashistoricaltrust.org
Yearly memberships start at only \$35!

(see page 6 for all membership levels)

Beating the Heat



“Linen Market” (ca 1775) A Brunias, oil on canvas

How did Charlotte Amalie residents keep cool in centuries past? With no electricity to power fans or air conditioning, resourcefulness was needed! Here’s how townspeople coped with the tropics’ high heat, especially in summer and on airless autumn days.

Whitewash, a cheap and available mix of quicklime and water, was easy to use. Quicklime, the main ingredient for the mortar needed by masons, was made by burning down coral and shells in Island kilns. Diluted considerably with water and mixed with a little salt, quicklime was also valuable to islanders as a clean white, non-toxic paint able to brighten and seal the inner and outer walls of homes and barns.

Hassel Island tours offered by the Trust (January-May) include a visit to our single remaining lime kiln, now restored there.



BEFORE



AFTER
Renovations
funded by the
Trust.

How they lived, at home or work:

- **in shady spaces.** Shutters, curtains or louvered blinds were drawn during the day to block sunlight heating the rooms. These were opened at night so cooler air-flow could circulate, aiding relaxation and sleeping.
- with interior walls lightened **with home-made whitewash**, to deflect light, not absorb it (see inset).
- **with cooking areas set distinctly apart from living areas**, to minimize generated heat. In merchants’ houses, the kitchen with its built-in oven was typically a separate outbuilding. In servant dwellings, the cookstove was usually a coalpot set outdoors in a courtyard gathering area.
- **with shaded outdoor areas.** Tree-shade, umbrella shade, awning shade, veranda shade – they all worked, whether in a small yard, or as one of the **fancifully-trimmed roofed porches** characterizing merchants’ homes along the second floor of Main Street’s warehouse buildings.
- **with room layouts that invited air circulation.** High ceilings, arched openings, lattice above doorways, all invited cross-drafts to circulate fresh air and help cool interior rooms.
- **with furniture that let air through to the user.** Carved wood settees and chairs with caned seats and backs, open-legged chests and sideboards, beds with netting rather than bed-curtains, and few rugs on floors all encouraged air-flow through rooms.





Workers Unloading Ice

Networks of ice wagons were typically used during the 1800's to distribute large blocks of ice to island homes and businesses. The ice had been cut from the surface of ponds and streams in New England, and stored in ice houses there before being packed in sawdust and sent on by ship to the Southern US, and islands in the Caribbean. (Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ice_trade).

What they wore:

- **light colors.** There's a reason old photographs show townsmen and women dressed in beige or white. Darker colors absorb the sun's heat and stay warmer longer than light or white clothing, which reflects light and heat.
- **cotton, broadcloth, linen,** ie. loosely-woven natural fabrics. And for the very wealthy, silk, on occasion.
- **long sleeves, long skirts, and trousers.** They covered up. Partly, this was the modesty and fashion of the age. Partly, too, covering up with loose-style clothing shaded their skin from the beating sun.
- **hats.** A main sensor for our body temperature control system is in the back of the neck. When this area is shaded with a broad-brimmed hat, the rest of the body registers "cooler." Those without a hat used a wet handkerchief on the back of the neck, a raised collar, or a backwards cap to feel cooler.
- **water on clothing.** For workers, this might mean a wet bandana worn on the head. Others wore shirts they'd soaked (in water ...or sweat), wrung out and wore while drying. Those engaged in milder work sprinkled water on their sleeves, their trouser hems, or the hemline of their long skirts.

How they got or kept cool, daily:

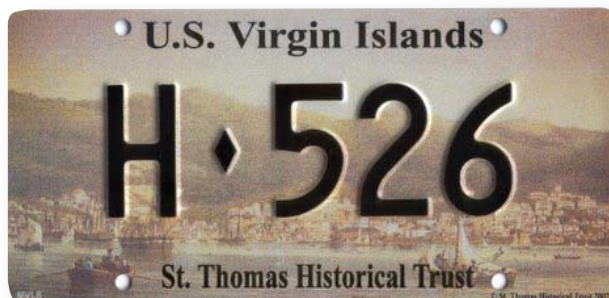
- **saved their strength by moving slowly,** resting or sitting often, especially from 10am-3pm during the hottest time of day. Energy for heavy household tasks (cleaning, washing clothes, cooking) was saved for early morning or later afternoon, as possible.
- **took frequent drinks...**often spirits, but more often water. While some added liquor to their water, others included steeped herbs or sliced fruit to make the water more palatable and refreshing.
- **used ice,** (see inset above).
- **added spices to food,** to mask possible spoilage, and to increase perspiration which cools the body as it evaporates.
- **soaked their hands or feet** in a bucket of cold water. Men and boys wet their hair. Ladies dabbed water on their wrists or temples, or along their hairline. The body radiates heat from the hands, feet, face and ears, so cooling any of these efficiently helped to cool the body.
- **went to the ocean,** and took a swim. Women, prohibited by custom from public swimming, took cold baths in private (with ice added in, if available!).



Christmas Gift Ideas

Show your support for historical preservation in the Virgin Islands with

ST. THOMAS HISTORICAL TRUST LICENSE PLATES



*A numbered series license plate: \$51 members price, \$56 non-member
A personalized plate: \$96 for members, \$106 for non-members.*



Membership in the St. Thomas Historical Trust

Individual \$35, Family \$75
Contributor \$125, Corporate \$250
Lifetime \$500

Receive quarterly newsletter, VIP invitations to select STHT events, Tour discounts, free admission to Museum for you and your guests.

HASSEL ISLAND DVD \$20

Produced by the St. Thomas Historical Trust

Learn about the fascinating history of Hassel Island; its importance in our maritime history, the naval battles fought along its shorefront, the era of steamship transport and coaling station, and the Creque Marine Railway where ships of the Caribbean came to be repaired.

Hassel Island Update

Our involvement in preserving and protecting Hassel Island.

We see Hassel Island as a time capsule, where Virgin Islands history has been little changed except by time and weather.

On many other historic sites in the VI, development has erased a former era's footprints. But on Hassel Island, a wealth of stone forts, housing and shipping structures reveal life lived there in purpose-driven former centuries.

International maritime trade conducted from St. Thomas' exceptional harbor relied heavily on Hassel Island for armed harbor-protection, and for shipping support services.

The St. Thomas Historical Trust has been on the forefront of effective fundraising, documentation, and restoration efforts to stabilize and preserve Hassel Island's exceptional historic structures.

To preserve this history, and working in partnership with federal and local agencies and foundations we have:

- Stabilized and restored **Prince Frederik's Battery** (harbor protection fort)
- Stabilized and restored **Cowell's Battery** and **Signal Station** (fort and lookout station)
- Stabilized and restored the **Garrison House** (military equipment armory)
- Stabilized and restored the historic **Lime Kiln** structure (last one remaining in the USVI)
- Stabilized and repaired the **Creque Marine Railway cistern**
- Stabilized and preserved the **Creque Marine Railway historic antique machinery**
- **Cleared and landscaped** the grounds at Creque Marine Railway
- **Cleared hiking paths** accessing and linking Hassel Island's major historic sites
- **Installed signage and benches at historic sites**, and produced a map of the trails and sites - **Conducted walking tours** to provide public access and education of sites' history

Want to learn more? Visit www.hasselisland.org.

Want to be part of this successful initiative?

- Join one of our Hassel Island walking tours (starts soon).
- Stop by our new Museum (opening this December) to view a display on Hassel Island's significance to the region's development and prosperity.... And learn what's next on our schedule for Hassel Island!

And meanwhile –

Join us as a member, and be a part of St. Thomas' and Hassel Island's vibrant history!!

On the web at www.stthomashistoricaltrust.org

Our phone is 774-5541, or email us at exccdirector@stthomashistoricaltrust.org. We welcome you.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

For Our New Museum

A couple of hours each week would go a long way to making the museum a success.

Please consider lending us a helping hand.

Upcoming Events:

Hassel Island Tours & Historical Walking Tours

Call the Trust Office at 774-5541 for next tour date.

Friday & Saturday

January 27, 28, 2017

“Virgin Islands Through Earlier Eyes”

Show of Historic Artworks

Paintings, Prints, Maps, Objects D'Art

at Havana Nines location

Yacht Haven Grande

10 am until 7pm

\$10 Entry fee

Hassel Island Clean Up

Have a chance to see Hassel Island while helping in our clean up effort. Snacks and drinks will be provided.

Dates To Be Announced

Call 774-5541 for update

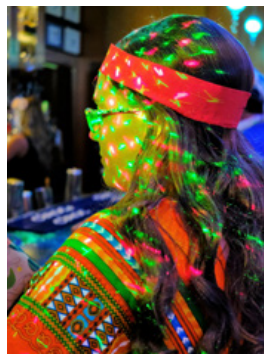
2016
Annual
Halloween
Gala



2nd Prize
Hugh Hefner & his Bunny
Sean and Allison Krivatch



1st Prize
"Flower & Power"
Sarah and Don Hancock



Always a
Good Time!
Join Us
Next Year!

