

The Welcoming Arms

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ST. THOMAS HISTORICAL TRUST

May 2017



OFFICERS

Malcolm Schweizer
President

Frances Newbold
Vice President

Kevin Qualls
Treasurer

Kim Holdsworth
Secretary

Charles Consolvo
Board Member

Executive Director
Melia Cook

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 6707
St. Thomas, VI 00804

Physical Location:
5332 Raadets Gade,
St. Thomas, VI 00802

Telephone:
(340) 774-5541

Email:
execdirector@stthomashistorical-
trust.org

Website:
StThomasHistoricalTrust.org



Malcolm Schweizer
President

The Trust Celebrates 2017's Centennial Year

Your Trust has been busy!

Already this year we've had some significant celebrations and successes!

January, 2017

"The VI Through Earlier Eyes," the Trust's gala 2-day Art Show showcased 2 centuries of original artworks showing St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix as experienced by island artists of the time. Several hundred residents and island guests attended the show, a fundraiser for the Trust.

February, 2017

Board members packed up the Trust's former museum on Roosevelt Park (closed due to an environmental hazard). Meanwhile they repaired, scrubbed, painted, restored and furnished unfinished retail space on Raadets Gade in town, to house the museum's enhanced collection.

March, 2017

The new museum opened its downtown doors to visitors. Hours 10am-4pm weekdays. Phone 774-5541. Free admission for current Trust members; \$10 fee for non-members (children 0-15 free).

May, 2017

Museum's official Opening Celebration: Trust Membership and Special Friends will gather for this evening event on May 24 to tour the collection and enjoy wine, food, and a maritime history presentation by resident expert Charles Consolvo. Thanks to all for attending, and for your ongoing support!

...Read on for details of the above list.

Our Mission Statement...

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

FRIDAY & SATURDAY ONLY!
 January 27 & 28, 2017
 at Yacht Haven Grande
 10am - 7pm



The Virgin Islands Since Colonial Times
A Once in a Lifetime Art Exhibition
a Fundraising Event for the
ST. THOMAS HISTORICAL TRUST



Suggested Donation: \$10pp
 call **340-774-5541**
 for more information
execdirector@stthomashistoricaltrust.org

What a Show – with 100 Performers!

The Trust's First Fundraiser of 2017
 a 3-Centuries-of-Art Show

“The Virgin Islands Through Earlier Eyes”

In late January, the Trust produced and mounted a gala, 2-day art show titled “The VI Through Earlier Eyes,” inviting the community to attend. The fundraising show was held in the elegant gallery space at Yacht Haven Grande.

Attendees were treated to an “insider” look at 100 paintings, prints and other artworks dating from the late 1700’s until the mid-20th century -- all culled by the Trust from private collections. Each of the loaned artworks showed island people and places during these past eras, seen and recorded by observers at the time.

From anonymous artists to others more celebrated (like Camille Pissarro), these observers’ individual skills in portraying local subjects helped ensure their artworks have endured, still captivating us today.

Collector Mike Sheen was also on-hand at the fundraiser, sharing his collection of early St. Thomas stereoscope photos. These allow viewers to “be right there” in island settings a century ago, as his images of daily town life become 3-dimensional!

We thank everyone who loaned art and/or came to the art show, contributing to our first fundraiser of the year!



A collection of these stereoscope photos are currently at the Trust's new museum for all to enjoy.



Attendees enjoying the light food and drink while taking in all the great art.



On the wall is a painting of Dennis Bay, St. John, by A. Christian Riis Carstensen, 1905

**For All Who Loved the Exhibit (or Missed It!)
 ...Coming Soon – Fall 2017**

*We're currently working on a commemorative book showcasing the
 “VI Through Earlier Eyes” historic collection.*

*The book captures the many original, privately-held artworks, and provides available text
 on the artists' lives who made these enduring works over the past 3 centuries.*

A window to the past.

Limited copies available. To reserve a copy for yourself: (340)774-5541.

The Trust's History Museum has a New Lease on [Historic] Life!

(Clue: we're no longer on Roosevelt Park...)

Our New Address: 5332 Raadet's Gade (at the intersection of Raadet's Gade and Waterfront, in town)

We've moved, we're now open – and welcoming all visitors!

Marked by blue doors and opening right onto the street, our tidy new history museum is full of things to enjoy and explore. Visitors will find artifacts, artworks, maps, furnishings, books and photographs – all evidencing St. Thomas' lives and livelihoods over the past 3 centuries.



Fittingly, our new location is within St. Thomas' Historic District. Around us are the very same stone buildings and Danish-named streets that were filled by the energy and bustle of yesterday's merchants, traders, stevedores, farmers, tinkers, ladies, and house servants. And we're enjoying being part of the draw that the Historic District still provides for island residents and visitors today!

Our improved availability extends to our opening hours: the museum's now open Monday - Friday from 10am to 4pm (closed weekends and on federal holidays).

We're delighted to welcome St. Thomas Historical Trust members to tour the collections for free – waiving the nominal admission charge of \$10 per visitor (note: children 15 and under are also free). Our doors are open!



Here's some of what you'll find at St. Thomas' new museum!

- 100 vintage photographs showing where and how St. Thomas residents lived, between late 1800's – mid-1900's
- A visual exploration of rum-making in the VI
- Early maps, some hand-drawn, showing island topography, estates, dirt roads (and even trails) of the time
- An early household's standby tools, some made from local resources
- A video and photo display of excavated findings (tools, shards) of St. Thomas' pre-colonial 'Saladoid' culture
- Military and marine artifacts from many nations and dating from the 1700's, recovered from the harbor
- Mementos from the 50-year anniversary (1967) of Danish-American transfer
- The Trust's own Centennial T-shirts, honoring our 100th year Anniversary of USVI transfer in 2017
- 3 room-settings of carved West Indian mahogany furniture, from significant local residences.

And more...



We're Working Alongside Danes to Translate 'Unrecovered' VI History

The Danish are great record-keepers. Millions of records still survive that document everyday life and official works in the Danish West Indies during colonial rule (1672-1917).

The Danes took most of this collection of colonial records to Denmark after 1917. Up to now the originals of these documents, many written in hard-to-decipher Danish Gothic writing, and housed at the Danish National Archives in Copenhagen, have been difficult to access.

Researchers – including some here in the VI -- are now helping to make the collection available and readable by all, today.

Fran Newbold, a St. Thomas Historical Trust Board member, attended the recent 15 hour “Introductory Course on the Use of Archival Records from the Danish West Indies in the Collection of the Danish National Archives (Rigsarkivet),” taught by archivist Dr. Niklas Thode Jensen of the Danish National Archives (Rigsarkivet).*

Mostly scanned originals, these 8.5 million pages of Danish Archival documents are often difficult for us to understand or search for details. Currently, as when searching Census reports handwritten in Danish Gothic script, one must go through the records page by page, looking for the name one is researching. All in Danish, the script is especially difficult to read as Gothic letters differ markedly from modern Latin letters.

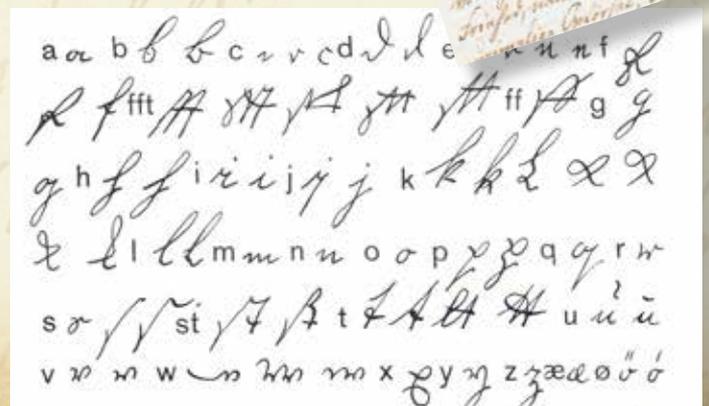
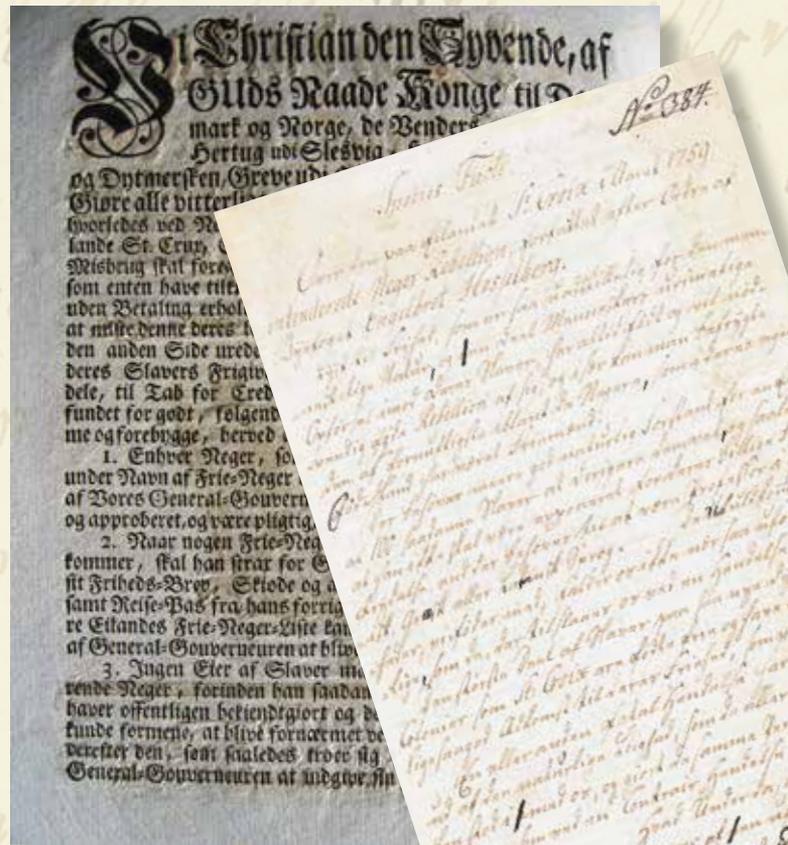
Fran says, “We learned how to transcribe Danish Gothic handwriting and typescript, sometimes letter by letter, into Danish, and then into English text so that these records can be accessed using specific search terms and names.

“So far, about 200,000 pages of documents have been uploaded into a crowdsourcing portal for transcription by volunteers. “We were encouraged to join this crowdsourcing effort.

“Really, any VI resident can be part of this valuable, VI history-expanding project!”

Interested? Visit the crowdsourcing site at <https://cs.sa.dk/>. For questions, please contact Territorial Archivist Susan Lugo at the Territorial Archives of the Virgin Islands, organizer of the workshop and of this Danish partnership: susan.lugo@dpnr.

**The course was offered as part of the 2017 Transfer Day Centennial observance, with funds provided by the Danish Ministry of Culture, the A.P. Möller and Chastain McKinney Möller Foundation for General Purposes, and the VI Department of Planning and Natural Resources, Division of Libraries, Archives and Museums.*



The Centennial Year is Ongoing Here are Some of our Plans.

Summer 2017

We're extending our popular
Historic Walking Tour
through the Summertime!

Normally in-season only, our guided in-town walking tour now still available. 9am Fridays. \$35pp (max. 10ppl). Call to ensure a space for yourself and/or guests. 24 hr notice required. 774-5541

Some Reviews

"Informative! We got a real sense of St. Thomas' rich history."

"A morning well-spent."

"So much contained in a small town! Our guide brought it alive."

"Totally worth it!"



July 22, 2017

Coal Pot Cook-Off

Our 5th Annual Coal Pot Showcase and Great Eating Event!

Upholding a venerable VI cultural tradition, this Trust summer fundraiser draws the community. In shady Emancipation Garden, local cooks vie for prizes using traditional Caribbean stoves to prepare food that's tasty and healthy. The public and chefs are both winners in this annual foodie event!



We've improved our

Hassel Island Historical Tour.

Pirates, Ship Battles, Red Coats and Forts!

A guided walking tour enjoyed by kids and adults. Bring water, wear closed-toe shoes. 9am Tues, Thurs. \$80pp /2 person minimum (includes boatride to/fm). Call to reserve space for yourself and/or guests. 24 hr notice required. 774-5541



October 28, 2017

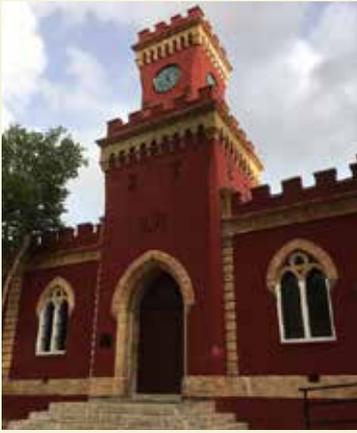
Our Annual Costume Gala & Fundraiser

"Glad Hearts on the Ramparts"

An evening of VI characters and costumes from the past. Join us for this 2017 Centennial bash!

We will be including historical costume resources and information in our Gala "Save the Date" notice.





A big **THANK YOU** to the Friends of the Fort who made donations towards Fort projects. The Trust used those funds to pay for the renovation of the south steps (facing the Legislature) and Tower clock in the amount of approximately \$33,000.



Founding Friends of the Fort

- Shansi Miller
 Martin Stokes Ginger & James Martin
 Tom & Kris Brunt Michael & Susan Hancock
 Joanne Bozzuto Alliance Aviation Fuels,
 Christopher Curreri Michael Hancock
 F.F. Apple Deborah Murphy, Seattle, Wa.

Available now, until...
 Collector's Item

Centennial USVI 100-Year T-Shirts

Our tasteful and colorful tee combines Danish, US and historic elements to honor the USVI's 100th Anniversary. Great 2017 gift to bring dinner hosts, & for birthdays, family members, friends, and VI ex-pats. \$20, all sizes (S thru XL).



**Want to renew your Membership?
 Or become a Member?**

Renew or join by phone (774-5541)

Renew or join online
 at www.stthomashistoricaltrust.org
 You can **fill out the form online and submit by email**
execdirector@stthomashistoricaltrust.org
 or you can **print out the form and mail it** to us at
 P.O. Box 6707, St. Thomas, VI 00804

Alert: REQUEST FOR MUSEUM VOLUNTEERS!

Do you have a weekday or two to welcome guests, and share your interest in history with them? We're looking for a few wonderful volunteers!
 Please call Melia Cook, the Trust's Executive Director, at 774-5541 to learn more about this friendly opportunity.