

The Welcoming Arms

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ST. THOMAS HISTORICAL TRUST

JUNE 2018



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Malcolm Schweizer
President

Members and Friends,

To all who helped celebrate recovery and renewal in 2018 for The Trust and for each other, Thank You!

We saw you at our first Fundraiser at Felipe Ayala's house, we met you again on the Trust's historic downtown tours, and again recently at our big 1950-1999 Art Exhibition, "The Past Still Present," in May (see more on p.2).

Active, engaging events, all. And more to come!

More workshops and tours are ahead. This fall, we'll be celebrating Heroes and Heroines in all senses and centuries at our annual fundraiser Gala on October 27th – a chance to REALLY dress up!

Meanwhile, let's talk business. We need your help to further our initiatives in the community. Your membership contributions help us do this – both your membership renewal (see p.8) and your participation, which means even more.

We're pleased to be launching our new website (see p.3), and building it from here to keep you aware of the resources we offer, and our projects both underway and planned.

When in town this summer, mosey through St. Thomas' public Garden: Emancipation Park hasn't always been green (see p.6)! Or take your ease under the [new] trees at Magens Bay, which hasn't always been a 'scene!' (see p.7).

Here's to enjoying Summertime! And History. And Renewals!

Kind regards,

Malcolm Schweitzer
President



Our Mission Statement...

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

Oh, What a Show!

“The Past Still Present: The VI from 1950-1999”

*Hmm ...if a picture's worth 1,000 words,
what amazing stories can 100 pictures tell?*

More than a hundred original artworks in the Trust's recent Art Exhibition told a multi-faceted story of St. Thomas and the Virgin Islands in the half-century from 1950 to 1999 – decades that went from drowsy to dynamic.

Held from May 18-26 at the Gallery space in Yacht Haven Grande, this was the Trust's second history-focused, fundraising Art Exhibit in 18 months.

Our previous art show, “The VI Through Earlier Eyes,” in January 2017, showcased historic VI paintings, prints, and charts illustrating VI life from the late 1700's to the mid-1900's.

Last year's exhibit raised more than \$9,000. This year's show surpassed that figure, and will help fund the Trust's

mission of identifying and preserving the island's history, sites and culture.

“Like for many, post-storm revenues for us are down — but our expenses are not,” says Melia Cook, the Trust's executive director. “Yet we need to continue our initiatives to protect and preserve.”

All artworks were graciously lent to us from private collections on-island. Assembled together for the first time, these rarely-seen paintings provided the community a complex, compelling view of Virgin Islands people, places and pursuits during a half century of Virgin Islands' renewal and growth.

In curating these exhibitions, the Trust has focused on Art as an accurate, stirring and enduring record of our islands' past.



The Opening Night celebration brought out art enthusiasts...almost 100 of them!..to savor the show.


 the St. Thomas Historical Trust presents
 a Fundraising Event
**The Past still Present:
 A Grand Art Exhibition**
VI Faces and Places, mid 1900's to 1999
 Ira Smith • Shansi Miller • Gregory Samuels • Eric Winter
 Dana Wylder • William Thompson • Diane Kreimer
 Dave Millard • Arona Petersen • Ann Miller
 & Many More

Yacht Haven Grande
May 19th - 26th
 10:00am - 6:00pm
 Come Enjoy the Show! - \$10 per person
 email: execdirector@stthomashistoricaltrust.org or call 340-774-5541
 Historical Trust's Mission:
To protect and preserve the history, culture and sites of St. Thomas



Art students came to sketch, and to absorb their artistic forebears' work.

For All Who Loved the Exhibit (or Missed It!)



NEW! The Trust's Notecards

by long-time artist,
 Ira Smith.

\$15 per box
 set of 6 different images.

NEW!
Our 2019 Calendar
 captures 12 memorable paintings from
 "The Past Still Present" show.



St. Thomas Historical Trust
 2019

\$20. A wonderful Christmas gift, birthday gift,
 hostess gift, or simply – a pleasure for yourself!



"Crystal Gade" - Ira Smith

January 2019

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | | | | | | 5 |
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| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | |

Where do our Place-Names Come From?



Q: Why are the US Virgin Islands named for Saints?

A: It was Christopher Columbus who began identifying the islands with the names of saints!

In deference to his sponsors King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain (known as the “Christian Monarchs”), Columbus gave Christian-themed titles to many of the islands he encountered on his Caribbean voyages. Exploring in 1493, he gave religious names to the islands of **Dominica**, Santa María la Galante (**Marie Galante**), Santa María de Guadalupe (**Guadeloupe**), Santa María de Montserrat (**Monserrat**), Santa María la Antigua (**Antigua**), Santa María la Redonda (**Saint Martin**), Santa Cruz (**St. Croix**) and San Juan Bautista (**Puerto Rico**).

He named our own region, with its 100+ close islands and cays, for the martyr St. Ursula and her 11,000 Virgins (Santa Úrsula y las Once Mil Vírgenes). His reference was used again in the shortened ‘Virgin Islands’ name of these US and British islands today.

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Saint Croix – named Santa Cruz, (Spanish for “Saint of the Cross” or “Holy Cross”) by Columbus when he landed there briefly in 1493. When owned by France, the name became French: St. Croix.

Q: What’s behind other Virgin Islands’ names?

A: A variety of people, dates and circumstances... such as --

Saint Thomas – name-origin unknown. Seen by Columbus enroute to Puerto Rico in 1493, “St. Thomas” was likely named by a later mapmaker or nation. Documented as Sint-Thomas by early Dutch settlers and later Sankt Thomas by the Danish who established a later settlement here.

Saint John – named Sankt Jan (St. John) by Danish West India and Guinea Company, between late 1600’s when they claimed the island, and 1718 when they established plantations there.

Water Island – named for its freshwater ponds. The island was an anticipated stop for ships to replenish their drinking water, as most regions in the Lesser Antilles lacked reliable freshwater springs.

Hassel Island – named for the Hazzel (later Hassel) family, owners from 1800 into the 20th century. Originally a peninsula of Saint Thomas, its safe harbor was Orkanhullet (Danish: Hurricane Hole), and later Carenage or Careening Cove where ships were hauled-out and repaired. In the 1860’s a channel was cut through this ‘haulover,’ so currents could cleanse St. Thomas’ heavily-used, larger harbor, though making Hassel a separate island.

Hans Lollick – name-origin unknown. Named perhaps for a Hans Christensen Laalick who on May 21, 1675 was recorded as buying a pair of shoes in St. Thomas while exchanging 36 pounds of sugar. Or possibly named for an unknown Hans from “Lolland” – the 4th largest island in Denmark.



Magens Bay:

Summertime Enjoyment

Summertime is a serene season to enjoy Magens Bay: an almost-perfect rectangle of topaz-blue water set in an extended curve of palm-lined beach.

For many islanders, it's their favorite place for gathering with friends, for holding parties, for walking at dusk or dawn.

Behind the beach, a forest of exotic trees planted in this century fills the broad watershed. Aboriginal peoples formed settlements here as early as 6 or 7AD, around an apparent inland salt pond. Stone tools and distinctive pottery have been excavated at the site.

European colonists settling St. Thomas in the mid-1600's named the area 'Great Nordside Bay.' By 1700 the relatively fertile watershed area behind the great bay was a Danish plantation named Zufriedenheit ('Contentment'), used to grow cane and produce rum and sugar. Fragmentary ruins of this plantation's farm buildings, animal-mill, sugarworks factory, and its overseer- and slave-quarters still exist.

Other early 1700's ruins may have been for storage and shipping; the Bay was an easier route to town for Northside planters' produce than were the difficult mountain cartways.

In 1817 Zufriedenheit's bayside plantation was sold to Arve Petersen Magens. Though his plantation declined

after Emancipation in 1848, the Bay has taken the name of this former Danish owner.

The Magens family sold Zufriedenheit (which then included estate Peterborg) in 1898. New owner Dr P. Mortensen combined the Bay's lands to his other estates (Misgunst, Louisenhoj and Caanan & Sherpenjewel), calling the expanded holdings 'Magens Bay Estate.'

Twenty years later a 100-acre parcel of this larger estate was acquired by Arthur S. Fairchild, a wealthy New York financier turned island resident.

From 1916 to 1946 Fairchild developed a lush arboretum behind the Bay, importing hundreds of exotic specimen plants and employing up to 12 full-time gardeners. His goal: a world-species botanical park.

In 1947, he deeded 57 acres of beach and arboretum lands to the people of the Virgin Islands, to be enjoyed by all, forever.

Fairchild died in 1951 at his St. Thomas home, Louisenhoj – a former plantation greathouse overlooking the Bay, named for Louisa Magens Rohde, a daughter of the Magens family.

More on Magens Bay colonial ownership at <http://ufdcimages.uflib.ufl.edu/AA/00/06/19/61/00365/11-43.pdf>



Emancipation Park:

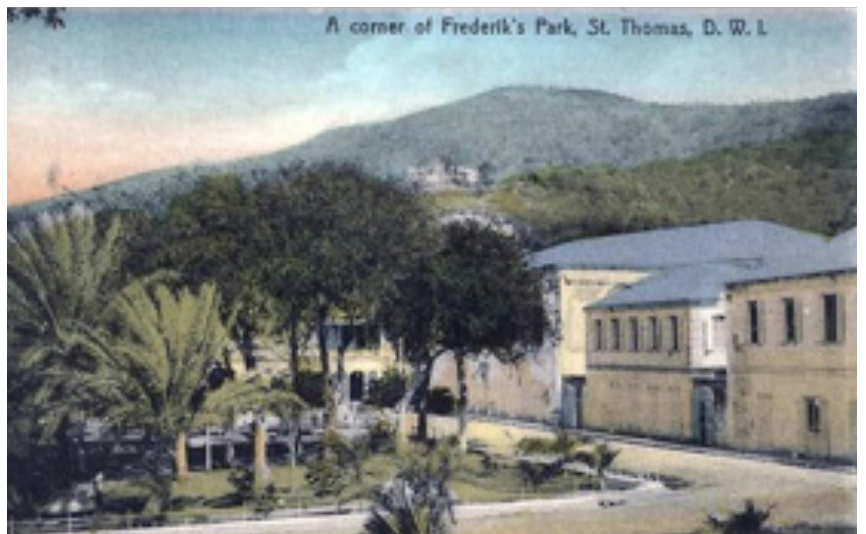
Summertime Enjoyment

If centuries-old Charlotte Amalie contains a “heart,” it’s Emancipation Garden. This central town square connects Fort Christian (St. Thomas’ ‘first’ building), with Main Street (the island’s busy main artery).



It wasn’t always the leafy-green space it is today. In the 1700’s this was a packed dirt area at the head of a broad harbor inlet, seawater at its edge. Used as a staging-ground for the unloading of goods and the plying of trade, this active area was first called Toddodsplad, and later King’s Wharf. Local fishermen docked here; bales and barrels from moored sailing ships were unloaded onto its shore. A building shown here in a 1722 map was where busy clerks weighed, registered and ‘taxed’ the arriving goods.

Almost 150 years later on an 1840 map this central gathering spot is seen as remade into the town’s outdoor living room: Frederik Park. Named for Denmark’s King Frederik (1808-63), it provided shady relief from town’s dusty heat and busy commerce. Renamed Emancipation Garden sometime after 1848’s abolition of slavery, a bandstand was added in 1879, drawing dressed-up crowds for weekly military band concerts (these continued through the 1930’s). A 1909 dedication of a bust of Danish King Christian IX (1818-1906) drew a crowd of thousands, with flags and banners decorating the nearby buildings.



Changes came. The historic Kings Wharf boat basin (next to the park) was filled in to make way for a waterfront highway in the 1950's, as cars replaced slow-moving wagons in town.

Without a connection to the trade and activity of the harbor, the park suffered disuse.

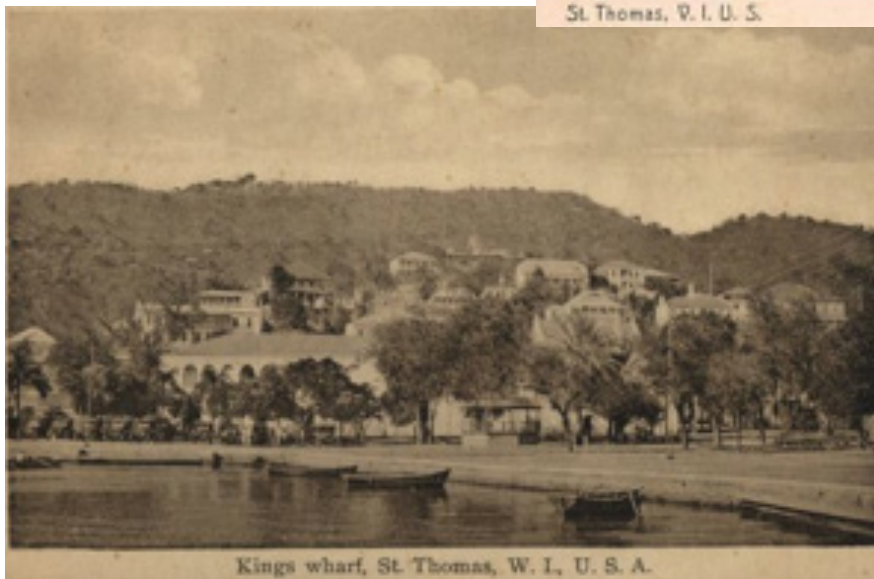
Finally in the late 1990's, a public-private initiative rebuilt the bandstand, opened up more entrances, and doubled the number of trees providing shade. A bronze statue of a slave blowing a conch shell was dedicated on the 150th anniversary of Emancipation Day: July 3, 1998. Newly-made paths and benches, new plantings, and historic-replica lamps now welcome residents and visitors.

Emancipation Park has resumed its role as the island's central open-air gathering place, where cultural events and traditions are upheld. Governors have been sworn in there, and beauty queens crowned there. It's a site for quadrille dancing, competing choirs on Christmas morning, and crowds savoring Food Fair before Carnival each year.

Summer's a great time to savor the park yourself, and our island residents' freedom that it honors.



Emancipation Garden, circa 1950



Kings Wharf, with Park at rear, circa 1917



News You can Use

Panel Discussion: **Rebuilding the Historic District**

Sunday, July 8, 2pm. Meeting site: Trust Museum, Raadets Gade

What's needed to rebuild and strengthen historic structures, and tips for effective solutions. Discussion includes some of the affected buildings noted in the Trust's Sunday walking tours of Spring 2018.

Panel: includes preservationists, architects and planning representatives.



Soon You Will be Able to Access our New Website

Same URL: **www.StThomasHistoricalTrust.org**

We will notify you when it is complete.

We're upgrading our online presence and navigation, and adding lots of new information.

Your suggestions and feedback will be welcome!

License Plates: Part of “the Drive” for Historic Preservation!



Numbered Series License Plates

\$51 – Member Price / \$56 – Non-Member

Personalized Plate

\$96 –Member price / \$106 Non-Member

Call 774-5541

or go online to our website: **www.StThomasHistoricalTrust.org**

Download the License Plate order form and return to the trust

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AS A MEMBER YOU'LL RECEIVE:

- Seasonal Newsletter
 - VIP Invitations to the Trust's Parties & Events
 - Discounts on Tours, etc.
 - Free Museum Access
- | |
|---------------------|
| \$35 – Individual |
| \$75 – Family |
| \$125 – Contributor |
| \$250 – Corporate |
| \$500 - Lifetime |

1. Call and renew by phone: 774-5541
2. Fill out the form online at www.stthomashistoricaltrust.org
 - a. email it to: execdirector@stthomashistoricaltrust.org
 - b. Print it and mail it to:
STT Historical Trust,
POB 6707, St. Thomas VI 00804

St. Thomas Historical Trust Museum

PLEASE NOTE: Our Museum on Raadets Gade, downtown, will be closed for the summer.

Re-opening date will be publicized in upcoming newsletter.