

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

FORT FREDERIK

Page 1

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: FORT FREDERIK

Other Name/Site Number: Frederiksfort

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: South of junction of Mahonany Road and Route 631, North end of Frederiksted

Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Frederiksted

Vicinity: N/A

State: US Virgin Islands

County: St. Croix

Code: 010

Zip Code: 00840

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: \_\_\_

Public-Local: \_\_\_

Public-State: X

Public-Federal: \_\_\_

Category of Property

Building(s): X

District: \_\_\_

Site: \_\_\_

Structure: \_\_\_

Object: \_\_\_

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

2

\_\_\_

\_\_\_

1

3

Noncontributing

\_\_\_ buildings

1 sites

\_\_\_ structures

\_\_\_ objects

1 Total

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

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

**FORT FREDERIK**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

**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

**FORT FREDERIK**

**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

Historic: Defense Sub: fortification  
Current: Recreation Sub: museum

**7. DESCRIPTION**

Architectural Classification: Colonial - Danish colonial

Materials: Limestone

Foundation: Limestone

Walls: Limestone

Roof: Fired Brick

Other: Fired Brick paving in courtyard

**FORT FREDERIK****Page 4**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

**Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**

Fort Frederik is a mid-eighteenth-century Danish masonry fort located at the north end of Frederiksted, on the western end of St. Croix, United States Virgin Islands. The fort was to protect Danish colonial interests in the Caribbean and the western end of St. Croix against incursions by other colonial powers, prevent smuggling, protect shipping in the Frederiksted harbor, and maintain order among the plantation slaves. The fort is slightly trapezoidal in plan, with diamond-shaped bastions at the southwest and northwest corners, and a triangularly-shaped projecting salient on the east side that housed the powder magazine. Within the curtain, or long walls, of the fort are a number of rooms which functioned as Officer's and Men's Kitchens and Rooms, and Detention Cells, all opening on to an inner brick-paved courtyard. The Commandant's Quarters, the only second story part of the fort, was built above the main entrance on the west, or seaward side, of the fort. Exterior stairs provide access to the Commandant's Quarters and the roof of the first level of the fort which also held gun batteries. On the west side, is a three-pointed masonry sea battery, and on the north side are the masonry stables, enclosed by a masonry wall (see Figures 1-3; see Photos 1-4).

**Environmental Setting:** St. Croix is situated between the islands of the Greater Antilles (Cuba, Hispaniola, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico) to the west and the Lesser Antilles to the south. St. Croix is the largest of the 40+ islands and cays that comprise the United States Virgin Islands. It is 22 miles long (east to west) and varies in width (north to south) from six miles at its western end to five miles at Christiansted in the east-central portion of the island and tapers to a point at its eastern end. The island is approximately 85 square miles in size and contains a diverse topography of mountains, rolling plains, and low hills (Jones 1992:9).

This island first emerged from the Caribbean Sea during the Upper Cretaceous age as a result of volcanic activity (Cederstrom 1941:564). Plate tectonics caused it to submerge during the Oligocene, during which time limestone sediments were laid down over the clay sediments that had accumulated in earlier submergences. The island was slowly uplifted throughout the Pleistocene, with the island achieving its present shape about 7,000 years ago (Jones 1992:9-10).

The island is divided into three physiographic zones: the mountains in the north, the low hills on the east end of the island, and the rolling plain occupying the western portion of the island, where Fort Frederik is located. Soils of the southern plain consists of the soils of the Aguilita-Fredensborg-Sion association, which are derived from the soft marly limestone under the western portion of the plain (Jones 1992:10). These are well-drained soils, formed on gentle to steep slopes and consist of clay loam and silty clay loam over soft, marly limestone, excellent for agricultural purposes (Rivera et al. 1970).

**Physical Description:** Prior to the construction of the Danish fort on this site, Lieutenant Peter Lotharius Oxholm reported in 1778, a succession of French, English, and Dutch colonists had previously maintained a fortification on this location (see Figure 4).

. . . when the French occupied the Island of St. Croix this place was especially in times of war a rendezvous for privateers and pirates who were looking for landing places from which they could penetrate into the forests and sneak into the country where they attacked the inhabitants and ruined the properties. The French had therefore built a

**FORT FREDERIK****Page 5**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

small battery on this very spot which because of the forest and the lagoon was inaccessible except from the sea. Being in the center of the bay it covered the same distance to both sides with its big cannons. But when the country was bought by the Danish Company [in 1733] - the forest was cleared and the land planted. A new town was then wanted in the west end of the country, no other possibility was considered, and since the French had built a battery there this was considered the most suitable sites for a harbor and a town [1778:2].

Oxholm went on to report he thought the town and fort were poorly sited, and noted that little consideration had been given to town planning or ensuring the fort actually protected the harbor. For example, he noted the residential buildings were so close "to the fort . . . that they wreck the possibilities of the guns of the fort" being used against a hostile naval force (1778:2-3).

The original Fort Frederik as constructed between 1752 and 1760 is the same as shown in Figures 1 and 2, drawn by Oxholm in 1778. Oxholm referred to this structure as "a fortified house with a [sea] battery rather than a fort" (1778:4). In his report of 1778, he said "this fort is now very dilapidated, and its repair would be rather costly" (1778:5). Oxholm went on to describe the state of Fort Frederik in the following manner.

Ceilings and floors in the Commandant's rooms are so dilapidated and rotten that they have become uninhabitable. All the beams and planks along and under the batteries are rotten and should all be replaced and the wall facing the town has been so poorly built that I fear that the whole wall will collapse when we start working on it. The other side, however, which was built by the present Governor General is an excellent and strong construction and consequently needs very little repair. The vaults under the powder magazine has not been built to last long, and one cannot stay in it for even a short period without fearing the vault will collapse. Furthermore, the place is so damp that the powder soon becomes unserviceable. There are no air-vents in the vaults and none can be made until the outside walls are surrounded with another wall to prevent troublemakers from approaching and throwing fire through the holes. The rain catch has been very strongly and well built, but as the former lieutenant Bang wanted to lay out a garden behind the wall, he began to blast the rock, which supported the fort's foundation wall; unfortunately, he came too close to the rain catch, and the entire wall of the catch burst from top to bottom; the water catch became unserviceable and will have to be completely rebuilt [1778:5].

Oxholm further recommended the Commandant's rooms be upgraded, restoration with brick of the sea battery and parapets, closing access to the sea wall from the town, and raising the level of the inner yard of the fort (1778:6-8). It would appear that only the strengthening of the sea battery, repair of the water catchment, and raising the level of the inner yard of the fort were ever accomplished. With these exceptions the original 1752 configuration of the fort has been maintained down to the present.

In 1959, Mr. Fred Gjessing, then with the National Park Service undertook, a Historic American Buildings (HABS) study of Fort Frederik. He described the fort as

. . . trapezoid [in] plan with four wings [or long walls] built around a courtyard and with projecting bastions at the salient angles [southwest and northwest corners] of the widest side of the fort and one in the center of the shortest [or east] side. The long [west] side of the fort faces the sea to the west. A three-pointed breastwork with a gun platform in the center extends across the front of the fort (see Photo 3). An enclosed horse yard and

**FORT FREDERIK****Page 6**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

stable area is located north of the fort (see Photo 4) [1959:1].

As for wall construction, Gjessing noted,

Rubble masonry with brick vaulting and arches. All exterior masonry is plastered and painted red with white trim. The curtain [or west] wall between the two seaward bastions is 2 stories. The rest of the fort was originally one story with a continuous gundeck over the bastions and the south and north curtains [1959:1-2].

As for access to the fort, Gjessing noted,

The fort has two entrances, the sally port [or main entrance] in the center bay of the west curtain wall and a vaulted passageway through the south wing. A gateway in the east wall just north of the fort provides access to the horse yard. The entrance ways have wood gates of double board construction with metal strip covering on their exterior sides. The sally port has projecting quoins on the exterior face.

All doors and window openings throughout the ground floor are equipped with storm shutters or double board construction. The window openings toward the exterior are barred. On the second floor [Commandant's Quarters] throughout the shutters have 3 panels, and windows have double hung 12 light glazed sash (east wing) and interior jalousie shutters with fixed and movable louvers.

The west wing has an arcade on the [interior] ground floor with niches in the flanking piers of the sally port. On the second floor [Commandant's Quarters] the center 5 bays toward the courtyard have segmented and triangular pedimented window heads. The flanking bays have recessed panels below the window openings (see Figure 5 and Photo 1) [1959:2].

As to the roofs, Gjessing noted,

All one-story sections of the fort have flat brick pavement roofs supported on wood beams and purlins or a brick vaulting. The second story [Commandant's Quarters] section had a hipped roof with corrugated metal roofing on sheathing and wood trusses (see Figure 5) [1959:2-3].

Following restoration of the fort in 1976, the hipped roof, dating from the early twentieth century was replaced with a flat roof, in keeping with the eighteenth-century plans of the fort drawn by Oxholm in 1778 (Gjessing, personal communication 1993).

As to interior plans, and other details, Gjessing noted,

**Interior Plan:** The curtains are one room deep and the rooms are arranged in a row interconnected and accessible from the courtyard. There are no internal hallways or passages. The [southwest and northwest corner] bastions contain one large vaulted chamber with a center pillar. A freestanding cistern is built in the southeast corner of the courtyard.

**Stairways:** Two exterior brick masonry staircases lead from the southwest and northwest corners of the courtyard to the bastions and the gundeck.

**FORT FREDERIK****Page 7**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Floors: The ground floor has pavements in brick, Gotland limestone tile and concrete. On the second floor all uncovered areas are paved in brick. The floors of the 2nd story [Commandant's Quarters] are tongue and groove pine flooring throughout.

Ceilings & Walls: On the ground floor, ceilings are brick on beams or brick vaulting as previously mentioned. On the second floor the west wing has a wood tray ceiling with cornice and trim mouldings, the north wing has exposed trusses and the east wing furred wood ceiling. [F. Gjessing notes that these early twentieth century wooden ceilings were removed in the 1976 restoration, personal communication 1993.] The masonry walls are plastered except for the 2nd floor of the west wing [Commandant's Quarters] where all wall have wood board covering.

Doors & Trim: Interior doors are panelled and have moulded wood casings. The center room in the 2nd story of the west wing has dado mouldings and baseboard.

Hardware: All storm shutters have wrought iron strap hinges, wall hooks, head and sill hook, and in some cases, ring pulls and bar brackets. Interior shutters have H and L hinges and surface bolts. Gates and doors are equipped with a variety of wrought iron surface bolts, box locks, mortise locks, hooks, porcelain and brass knobs, wrought iron hasps and hooks of several sizes [1959:3-4].

In the Napoleonic Wars, Denmark was forced by circumstances of a powerful continental French army to become the ally of France. Unfortunately, the French and Danish allies had no navy force that could withstand the British in the Caribbean. British naval squadrons twice occupied the Danish Islands to prevent Caribbean goods from reaching Denmark and France [Anderson 1970:11-12). According to John Anderson,

The first seizure of the islands was in 1801; the British held them only ten months that time. The second seizure was in 1807, and this time the British occupied the islands for eight years, until Napoleon's final defeat in 1815, at which time the British, a little embarrassed about the whole thing, handed them back to the Danes [1970:12].

British forces occupied all of the Danish fortifications on the three main islands, including Fort Frederik. Although they constructed water batteries during their occupation on St. Thomas, and St. John, they did not modify any of the structures at Fort Frederik during their residence.

**Integrity:** Although primary documentation is lacking for much of the physical history of Fort Frederik it would appear that throughout its nearly two hundred and fifty years of existence, Fort Frederik has not been substantially modified in any manner.

Between 1974 and 1976 a general renovation was undertaken to present the fort as described in Oxholm's drawings of 1778. This work consisted of repointing masonry, replastering and repainting, and removal of two small twentieth century wooden structures built after 1917 as attachments to the Commandant's Quarters on the second story and replacement of the hipped roof on the Commandant's Quarters with a flat roof. Based on the Historic American Building Survey records, and visitation by National Park Service personnel in 1991, Fort Frederik possesses a high degree of historical integrity and is currently well maintained by the Government of the Virgin Islands as a historical site. On August 9, 1976, Fort Frederik was listed on the National Register as a contributing property in the Frederiksted Historic District. On October 8, 1996, Fort Frederik was individually listed in the National Register. The present

**FORT FREDERIK****Page 8**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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nomination is to recognize the significance of Fort Frederik through an individual National Historic Landmark nomination.

In the winter of 1991, Southeastern Archeological Services, Inc., under contract with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District, undertook a cultural resources survey to identify sites and historic properties located within La Grange Gut in Estate La Grange, in the West End Quarter, of St. Croix. The lower part of La Grange Gut, or ravine, is located approximately 50 m to the north of Fort Frederik (Elliot 1992).

During this survey the area between the north wall of Fort Frederik and the south bank of La Grange Gut was determined to be one continuous archeological site covering some 2000 square meters and with intact archeological deposits up to 70 cm in depth (Elliot 1992:75). A surface examination and test excavations produced "prehistoric ceramics, eighteenth and nineteenth century artifacts, marine shell, and coral" (Elliot 1992:52). The site (12VAm1-73) is shown in Figure 6.

This multi-component prehistoric and historic archeological site discovered to the north of the fort during a survey of La Grange Gut is located within the Frederiksted Historic District listed on the National Register of Historic Places, although it was not noted in the nomination form at the time the district was listed (August 9, 1976), as it was only discovered in a 1991 archeological survey. It was determined during that survey the site is intact and eligible for inclusion in the National Register. Not enough information was developed during that survey to determine whether the site is associated with Fort Frederik (1752) or earlier seventeenth century colonial forts believed located in the area. Until further work is accomplished to clarify the relation of this site to the fort is must be classified as non-contributing. A portion of this site is included within the National Landmark boundary for Fort Frederik (see Figure 6).



**FORT FREDERIK**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

**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):  
I. Peopling Places  
6. encounters, conflicts, and colonization  
V. Developing the American Economy  
5. labor organizations and protests

Areas of Significance: Exploration and Settlement, Ethnic Heritage - Black Crucian

Period(s) of Significance: 1752-1878

Significant Dates: July 3, 1848; October 1, 1878

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: N/A

Historic Contexts:  
II. EUROPEAN COLONIAL EXPLORATION & SETTLEMENT  
D. Other European Exploration & Settlement  
1. Scandinavian (Danish)  
XXX. AMERICAN WAYS OF LIFE  
A. Slavery and Plantation Life

**FORT FREDERIK****Page 10**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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

**Summary Statement of Significance:** Fort Frederik was erected by the Danish in the mid-eighteenth century to defend the western end of St. Croix from the aggression of other European powers. It is nationally significant as an early surviving building associated with Danish exploration in the present-day Virgin Islands, and as the location of two significant events that led to the dissolution of the plantation based economy of the islands: The Emancipation Revolt of 1848 and the 1878 Labor Riot and Fireburn. The Emancipation Revolt brought about the end of slavery in the Danish West Indies, but inaugurated a thirty-year period of an institutionalized form of serfdom based on contract labor. Unlike their counterparts on St. Thomas and St. John, the former slaves of St. Croix were unable to escape the control of the plantation owners. Escalating tensions between landowners and contract laborers culminated in the 1878 Labor Riot and Fireburn, which brought an end to the contract system.

**Historical Background**

St. Croix Island was named and claimed for the Spanish crown by Christopher Columbus on his second voyage to the New World on November 14, 1493. While the fleet lay off the north coast of St. Croix for a few hours on this day, Columbus's men were involved in the first recorded armed conflict between Europeans and Native Americans (the Columbus Landing Site - designated a National Historic Landmark in 1960) (Sauer 1969:55). Probably as a result of this skirmish the Native Americans of St. Croix, referred to by the Spanish as Caribs, resisted Spanish settlement in the West Indies for the next twenty years. In January of 1511 a joint force of Puerto Rican Tainos and Caribs from St. Croix attacked and destroyed a Spanish settlement on the Añasco River, on Puerto Rico. In retaliation, Juan Ponce de León attacked St. Croix in February of the same year and made off with numerous Carib slaves to be put to work in the gold mines of Puerto Rico (Pantel et al. 1988:C-3; Floyd 1971:103). Thereafter, Spanish expeditions from Puerto Rico regularly raided St. Croix and other Lesser Antilles Islands for Carib slaves. By 1515, however, Juan Ponce de León found St. Croix was completely deserted (Sauer 1969:192).

The deserted islands of the Lesser Antilles offered the Spanish little incentive for colonization because they lacked precious metals or slaves. However, other Europeans bent on raiding Spanish possessions and treasure fleets found deserted islands like St. Croix well suited to their piratical activities. In 1621, the Spanish Governor of Puerto Rico, Juan de Vargas sent an expedition against French pirates on St. Croix. It was reported the Spanish captured eight Frenchmen and they were "punished summarily for piracy" (Figueredo 1978:59).

Ten years later (1631), English colonists from Barbados, established "substantial plantations of tobacco, maize, sweet potatoes, and watermelons" on St. Croix. Four months after the English arrived on St. Croix, the Governor of Puerto Rico, Enrique Enriquez de Sotomayor dispatched a shipload of infantry to uprooted the plantations and brought the English settlers to Puerto Rico as captives (Figueredo 1978:60).

In 1634, the French established themselves on St. Croix, and again Don Enrique sent infantry to the island. On February 20, 1635, they took six Frenchmen captive and killed ten others. The Spanish then burned the straw huts and plantations of the French (Figueredo 1978:61).

Less than a year later (1636) the English were back on St. Croix, this time from Tortuga. The new governor of Puerto Rico, Iñigo de la Mota Sarmiento, sent his lieutenant Domingo Rodríguez to deal with the English. Rodríguez reported,

Enemies occupied the Island of Santa Cruz [St. Croix], so harmful to the safety of this one [Puerto Rico], with very considerable strength; they were dislodged by these arms, even to the benefit of the royal treasury [Figueredo 1978:61].

Again, in February of 1641, the English returned to St. Croix. This time under Thomas Brainsby, Deputy Governor for Colonel William Caverly, with colonists from St. Christopher (Figueredo 1978:62; Figueredo n.d.:1). Before the Spanish could react, in mid-April 1642, the Dutchman Louys Capoen, and an armed force of Dutchmen landed on St. Croix "pistolled the said Deputy Governor Brainsby, hanged 11 of his men and forcibly possessing themselves of the said Isle" (Figueredo 1978:62).

**FORT FREDERIK**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

**Page 11**

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

To maintain control over the English colonists, Capoen brought some 120 Frenchmen to St. Croix. However, Capoen ruled so harshly, the English rebelled against the Dutch and expelled them and their French allies in 1645 (Figueredo 1978:63; Figueredo n.d.:1).

The newly free English settlers of St. Croix requested the governor of St. Christopher send them a new English governor to rule the island. They were sent Major Reynoulds, who with the Earl of Marlborough organized the defense of the island by the construction of three earthwork forts.

. . . the main one [Fort Sale] at Salt River Point, with another smaller fortification at the mound of Altona Lagoon, on the site of the later Danish Fort Louisa Augusta. There was a large unfinished fort at the West End, near or upon the site of the modern Fort Frederik, which only mounted two guns in 1647 [Figueredo n.d.:2].

The three forts are shown on the 1647 Spanish map of St. Croix (see Figure 4), and was drawn from the information gathered during an attack on the island by the Spanish from Puerto Rico. In April of 1647, the Governor of Puerto Rico, Fernando de la Riva Agüero, "sent two ships and two frigates with fifty troops from the garrison of San Juan and one hundred Puerto Rican settlers to attack the English on St Croix" (Figueredo n.d.:2).

By accident the Spanish missed their intended landfall on Salt River Bay, and found themselves off the earthwork fort at the West End of St. Croix. As described by Alfredo Figueredo,

The English fort at the West End was a large earthen structure with wicker-work parapets, in four drum bastions united by curtains. There was a structure in the inner court which may have been a magazine. The fort mounted two cannon of eight pounds caliber [n.d.:3].

In the initial confusion, the Spanish attackers lost the element of surprise and allowed the English to retreat into the fort before the Spanish ships could open fire. The Spanish ran their ships up on to the beach, crashing right into the fort. This caused the English to abandon the fort and retreat into the woods. The Spanish landing force dismantled the West End fort and razed the crops and plantations in the neighborhood, and took the two cannon of the fort back to San Juan (Figueredo n.d.:3).

Three years later, on July 12, 1650, the Spanish from Puerto Rico mounted another raid on the British colonists on St. Croix. The Spanish raiding party reported the English to be so weak that a second raid was sent in the same year which resulted in the English being forced to abandon the island (Figueredo n.d.:3).

Continued Spanish success on the field of battle never ensured undisputed possession of St. Croix, because the Spanish never settled the island. Within the year St. Croix was acquired by the French West India Company and French colonists were installed on the island (Oldendorp 1987:26).

The French colony was not a success and the company sold the island to the Knights of Malta in 1651, who controlled the island until 1665 before reselling it back to the French West India Company (Jones 1992:21). In 1674 King Louis XIV "united all the company's possessions, of which St. Croix was one, with his own domain" (Oldendorp 1987:27). The French made

**FORT FREDERIK****Page 12**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

extensive progress in clearing the land and establishing plantations, but "war between France and Great Britain from 1689 to 1697 (King William's War) provided the cause for the complete break-up of the French colony on St. Croix and its transfer to St. Domingue" (present day Haiti) (Oldendorp 1987:27).

The Danes were relative late colonizers of the New World having only established the Danish West India and Guinea Company in 1671 "to carry on business in the West Indies" (Oldendorp 1987:23). The Danes acquired the rights to St. Thomas and St. John and founded colonies on these islands by 1672 and 1717, respectively (Oldendorp 1987:15, 26). In 1733, the Danish West India and Guinea Company purchased the practically abandoned French island of St. Croix, and took possession in the following year (Oldendorp 1987:27).

Between 1735 and 1755, Danish surveyors, moving from east to west, divided the island into approximately 300 plantations, each of approximately 150 Danish acres in size (Tyson 1989:6). Therefore, the island developed in a east to west manner with the western end being developed last. The Danish surveyors divided the island into nine quarters, and mapped out 150 acre parcels within each quarter (see Figure 7). Even before the western end of the island of St. Croix had been surveyed it was noted in 1742 that 264 plantations were established on the island (Boyer 1983:11).

A portion of land on Estate La Grange was reserved by the Danish colonial government for the construction of a fort and establishment of a town as early as 1745. On October 19, 1751 the Directors of the Danish West India and Guinea Company approved the establishment of a town at the western end of St. Croix. In that same year the area of the future fort and town was cleared and surveyed (Lewisohn 1970:336). The town was named Frederiksted in honor of the Danish King Frederik V. The town plan consisted of blocks 400 feet long by 200 feet in depth with the standard house lot measuring 50 by 100 feet. The city blocks were separated by streets measuring 40 to 50 feet in width. The proposed town plan is reflected on a map of Frederiksted drawn in 1754 (see Figure 7) (Brøndsted 1952:165).

In 1755 Frederiksted had only two houses, but by 1766 there were 341 inhabitants in the town. Oldendorp reported in 1767 there were only a few houses in Frederiksted (Oldendorp 1987:32). The Oxholm map of 1799 of Frederiksted shows Fort Frederik and other features in Frederiksted that were created after 1767 (see Figure 8). By 1780 187 houses of all kinds were in the town with a population of about 800. It was not until 1789 that the population of Frederiksted topped the 1,000 mark (Svenson 1980:77).

This slow growth was due largely to the sugar economy of St. Croix which made Frederiksted little more than a seaport for the export of agricultural products from the western end of the island. Plantation supplies were imported through the town, but Frederiksted's merchants were few in number and in competition with ships' captains who were permitted to sell their good directly to the planters (Svenson 1980:77-78).

Fort Frederik, also named after Frederik V, was begun in May 1752 and finished in 1760. According to the Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums, the present rubble masonry fort "stands on the site of an earlier earthen fortification used by the English and the French from the mid-17th century" (Anonymous 1990). The fort although originally intended for military purposes to defend the western end of St. Croix, prevent smuggling and protect legal shipping

**FORT FREDERIK****Page 13**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

and forestall slave rebellions was later used for many non-military purposes.

Fort Frederik was built as a defense against European colonial powers, such as Spain, who throughout the eighteenth century continued to press their claims on the Virgin Islands by right of discovery by Christopher Columbus. The Danes had no reason to believe that Spain would respect their purchase of St. Croix from the French, recalling that during the previous century, Spanish soldiers from Puerto Rico had driven out a succession of English, French, and Dutch settlers. The Danes hoped Fort Frederik would be a deterrent to Spain and other European colonial powers in the West Indies in the future (Brown 1976:1).

What supplies planters needed on St. Croix were often brought in the holds of American ships coming out of several east coast ports and sailing southward to trade their cargos for tropical products, such as sugar or rum. The Danish Virgin Islands were important to the economies of several countries, because as a neutral power the islands could serve as a place where merchants from warring states could meet to trade in peace, for which the Danes collected a customs fee from such transactions. For their part, the Danes were supposed to refrain from selling war materiel and contraband goods to warring powers (Brown 1976:1).

However, the merchants and planters of St. Croix had a history of circumventing such agreements when it benefitted their interests. In fact, the establishment of Fort Frederik was intended to put an end to the smuggling which was widespread at the western end of the island. Most of the sugar plantations were located in the central and western parts of the island and the deep water harbor at Frederiksted was a convenient shipping port for the sugar and rum. Danish law stipulated all sugar products had to be sold to the Danish West India Company, but many planters preferred to quietly ship theirs to the Dutch merchants on St. Eustatius where they received twice the amount of money the company would have paid them (Brown 1976:1).

During the American Revolution, Denmark and its king remained neutral. However, the Danish colonists lent their support to the American colonists, many of whom were pre-war trading partners. The St. Croix planters continued trading with them, even dealing in war materiel. The Danes did stipulate that American ships should claim a neutral country's registry and fly that country's flag while in their port. American ships acquired gunpowder and molasses at Frederiksted, with the latter being converted into rum for consumption by American troops (Brown 1976:2).

Suspecting early on in the conflict the Danish were not abiding by the rules of neutrality, the British warship *HMS Hind*, sailed into Frederiksted in early 1776 and began searching ships lying at anchor for American ships or cargos. Eventually, the British seized one ship as a prize of war and sailed off. Claussen, the Governor General of the Danish Islands, sent an angry letter of protest to Vice-Admiral Young, in Antigua, who was the commander of the British Navy in the Caribbean (Brown 1976:2-3).

Possibly in response to this British action, it was reported to Admiral Young, that on October 25, 1776, an American schooner after loading a cargo of gunpowder, in Frederiksted, had left port under an American flag and fired a salute to Fort Frederik as it left the harbor. It was reported the fort cannon responded with a salute of their own. If, as the British contended this incident occurred, then Fort Frederik may be credited as the first foreign military installation having fired the first salute to an American ship flying an American flag (Brown 1976:3).

**FORT FREDERIK****Page 14**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Admiral Young sent a protest letter of his own to Governor General Claussen demanding an explanation. The Danish governor refused to admit the incident occurred, but correspondence on the incident continued for another two years, when Lord Germain, the English Secretary of State for the American Department was still trying to get an answer out of the Danes (Brown 1976:3-4).

In 1777, after the "incident" took place, Lieutenant Peter Lotharius Oxholm was sent from Denmark to make a survey of the island's defenses. Oxholm, who later became governor of the islands, reported the defenses of Fort Frederik were in poor condition. The original gun carriages, which had come out from Denmark with the cannon, were destroyed by termites. The carriages were replaced in Frederiksted, but they were so poorly designed they could not be sighted for firing on an attacking vessel. In Oxholm's estimation the cannon on the island were only fit to be used to fire salutes (Oxholm 1778; Brown 1976:3).

Oxholm's 1778 report on the condition of the fort found numerous structural and armament problems. These were corrected in 1780, and the rebuilding is described in the description section of this nomination. It is this 1780 structure that has survived down to the present.

The Danish, like other European colonial powers in the Caribbean, used African slave labor to produce tropical products, such as sugar, cotton, coffee, and cacao, which had a high demand world-wide. However, the expense of transporting, maintaining, and policing a captive population would in the long run prove to be economically unprofitable and morally indefensible.

The Danish West India and Guinea Company was under contract to the Danish government to organize the Lesser Antilles islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John into profitable colonies. To this end the Company established slaving stations along the Guinea coast of Africa, which between 1698 and 1754 transported over ten thousand slaves from Africa to the Danish Virgin Islands, of whom over one quarter perished at sea. This was a much higher loss rate than that suffered by other European slavers (Boyer 1983:17).

When the contract of the Company ended in 1754, the Danish government continued the transport of African slaves with a similar ratio of loss until 1803, when the Danish slave trade was officially ended. The end of the trade was recommended by the Great Negro Trade Commission which showed the trade was equally unhealthy to Danish sailors.

Of the 2,004 Danish sailors who sailed in the Danish slave ships in the twelve-year period of 1777 to 1789, a total of 691, or more than one-third, died during the voyages [Boyer 1983:37].

Acting on the Commission's recommendations, the King's edict of March 16, 1792 set the date of the end of the slave trade at December 31, 1802, "in order to permit the planters time to stock up on the number of slaves" (Boyer 1983:37).

Once in the Virgin Islands, African slaves frequently ran into the remote parts of the Danish Virgin Islands or stole boats to get to other islands. Runaway slaves become a constant problem for the planters. Many disappeared into the "bush" or "escaped to Puerto Rico where the Spanish worked them for a year before freeing them and giving them land to cultivate" (Boyer

**FORT FREDERIK****Page 15**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1983:24). In 1745 alone 300 slaves left for Puerto Rico (Taylor n.d. 139).

As early as 1689, Governor Johnan Lorentz of the Virgin Islands proclaimed a strict policy of conduct for slaves. This Danish slave policy created a system which denied enslaved Blacks any civil rights, required incessant toil in the fields, provided no protection for their wives or children from exploitation, required the slaves to produce their own food, and did not allow any hope of changing of their status as slaves through manumission. Such harsh treatment of slaves would be responsible for encouraging maroonage to Puerto Rico. In 1733, as the problem of runaways increased, a new and harsher policy allowing execution or mutilation as punishment for runaway slaves was issued (Boyer 1983:24). Within the Danish islands

. . . a special tax was levied on planters to indemnify those among them for any legally killed or injured slaves, thus removing a powerful economic constraint against the maiming and killing of slaves [Boyer 1983:24-25].

On September 5, 1733, Governor Philip Gardelin promulgated the most oppressive set of slave rules within the Caribbean. In addition to death, mutilation, branding, and/or flogging as punishment for runaways, minor criminal acts could be punished by death, loss of a limb or ear, flogging, "pinched" with a red-hot iron, broken on a wheel, and/or branding on the forehead (Boyer 1983:25-26). The imposition of these rules was a direct cause of the 1733 St. John Slave Rebellion which was not put down for almost six months by French troops from Martinique.

It was not until 1755 that any consideration was given to the welfare of the slaves in the Danish Virgin Islands. In the Regalement of 1755 was prescribed food rations and clothing to be allotted to slaves, and certain rights, such as religious instruction, no work on Sundays and holy days, prohibition of sexual exploitation of women slaves and separation of marriage partners and minors from their parents, and the legalization of manumission of slaves (Boyer 1983:27).

Throughout the rest of the eighteenth century and into the early decades of the nineteenth century, the Danish slave laws were still being enforced, although during the British occupation of the islands (1801 and 1807-1815) they were considerably relaxed (Boyer 1983:28). Added to this was a growing free-colored class that served in the Free-Colored Militia, owned property, ran businesses, and even possessed slaves, and who were petitioning the Danish King for their full rights as citizens (Boyer 1983:42).

The central figure in the slave question was Peter Carl Frederik von Scholten, governor of the islands from 1827 to 1848. Von Scholten pressed for the emancipation of all Black Virgin Islanders. As he stated in a letter of 1849,

. . . all my endeavors have been concentrated on slowly and systematically, through education, to prepare the free colored and the slaves for their rights and obligations as citizens and for their freedom [von Scholten, 1849 cited in Boyer 1983:49].

In 1830, von Scholten was able to grant limited emancipation to the free-colored class, and through his efforts got King Frederik VI to approve the Royal Ordinance of April 18, 1834 granting all "free people of color" their "full participation of every civil right" (Boyer 1983:52). In the same year he got another Royal decree allowing slaves to purchase their freedom from planters (Boyer 1983:55).

**FORT FREDERIK**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

**Page 16**

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

The governor next turned his attention to preparing the slaves for their eventual emancipation through the establishment of integrated schools.

Fired by his ambition to prepare the slaves for freedom through education, von Scholten was convinced that the schools should be under Moravian directions, permission for which he obtained from Moravian authorities in Herrnhut, Germany, during his visit there in 1838. Also, in 1838, a local committee he appointed recommended the erection of eight public schools to be paid for in part by planters and the remainder from public funds subscribed by the government. The Country School Ordinance of June 4, 1839 provided for free and compulsory education in the Danish Virgin Islands for the unfree as well as the free, and authorized the erection of eight schools in St. Croix, five in St. Thomas, and four in St. John. Instruction was to be in English under the direction of the Moravians [Boyer 1983:55-56].

Finally, in 1847 von Scholten got the king to issue a Royal decree providing that all children thereafter born to slaves were to be free, but present slaves would be free only after twelve years, or in 1859. However, the slaves of St. Croix were unwilling to wait any longer for their freedom (Boyer 1983:57).

The Emancipation Revolt of 1848 which led to freedom for all slaves in the Virgin Islands was led by Adam Gottlieb, called Buddhoe by his fellow workers, and General Bordeaux by himself. Gottlieb was a sugar boiler on the La Grange plantation just north of Frederiksted (Elliot 1991:9), who organized in secret a revolt that on July 3, 1848, saw the sacking of several houses in Frederiksted. Most whites left the town for refuge on vessels in Frederiksted harbor.

The slaves then besieged Fort Frederik and its small Danish garrison under the command of Captain von Castonier, demanding immediate emancipation. Shortly thereafter, von Scholten arrived from Christiansted, to find the slaves were demanding their freedom in one hour or they would torch Frederiksted. With that the Governor announced his Proclamation of Emancipation to the slaves from the roof of the south wall of Fort Frederik (Brown 1976:4).

1. All unfree in the Danish West India Islands are from to-day free.
2. The estate negroes retain for three months from date the use of the houses and provision grounds of which they have hitherto been possessed.
3. Labour is in future to be paid in agreement, but allowance of food to cease.
4. The maintenance of the old and infirm, who are not able to work, is, until further determined, to be furnished by the late owners.

The General Government of the Danish West India Islands.

St. Croix, the 3rd July, 1848

P. v Scholten.

The effect of this proclamation caused the rioters to immediately come out in favor of the Danish government. By July 7th it was noted "in the Fort there were about one hundred rioters, of which the greater part had been brought in by the friendly negroes from the estates" (Taylor n.d.:138). By the next day, 220 Spanish troops, part of a 580 man contingent sent by the



**FORT FREDERIK****Page 17**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Captain-General of Puerto Rico, at the request of von Scholten arrived in Frederiksted (Taylor n.d.:139). With this display of military force the Danish Chamberlain came to Frederiksted on July 9th, assumed the duties of Governor-General von Scholten, who had fallen ill, and commenced to try the rioters being held at the fort of which "several of the rioters had been tried by court-martial and shot" on the same day (Taylor n.d.:139).

Within a month of the Emancipation, the government on St. Croix adopted regulations called "Provisional Act to Regulate the Relations between the Proprietors of Landed Estates and Rural Population of Free Labourers." In fact, this act, written by planters, was designed to force the Black Virgin Islanders to continue laboring on their plantations by forcing them to sign up to work under exclusive contracts with the planters. The freemen had no bargaining power and with no place to go were forced into an institutionalized system of serfdom based on contract labor, with the yearly contract to be renewed on October 1st of each year (Boyer 1983:59).

Over the next three decades, conditions for emancipated slaves on all three islands did show improvement. On St. John, emancipation had led to the abandonment of sugar plantations, that were only marginally profitable even in the best growing years, as the former slaves successfully resisted any attempts to get them to sign labor contracts to work in the sugarcane fields. Eventually, the families of former slaves acquired the plantation lands and developed their own independent peasant culture based on subsistence farming developed over the previous hundred years experience of growing their own provisions (Olwig 1983:81, 86). On St. Thomas, emancipation arrived at the same time that island experienced an economic boom. During much of the nineteenth century, St. Thomas harbor was the halfway point for merchant shipping from North America and Europe bound for South America, and back. Many former slaves earned good wages loading coal on ships making transit stops at St. Thomas. Sugar plantations on this island gradually shifted over to the production of food crops to feed the work force centered on the harbor (Cinquino 1996:30-31).

On St. Croix, there was no change in the basic economy of the island. Rates for laborers gradually rose affording better wages for the St. Croix sugarcane field workers. Laws providing for better health care, education, housing, and food for field workers were implemented by the Danish colonial government (Olwig 1983:31-32). However, plantation owners still controlled the lives of the former slaves through the annual labor contracts and the prohibitions against leaving the island. This left the emancipated slaves resentful that they had simply replaced slavery for serfdom (Brown 1976:4-5). The healthy preexisting sugar economy of St. Croix would ensure there would be no abandoned sugar plantation lands to allow emancipated slaves to start their own farms. At the same time, the lack of any major harbor ensured the shipping transit trade, which would have provided an alternative to working on the sugar plantations for the emancipated slaves, never developed.

The apparent peacefulness among the emancipated slaves of the Virgin Islands caused the Danish government to withdraw the military forces stationed at Fort Frederik, and replace them with regular police (Taylor n.d.:151). In addition, the Danish Government had, in 1878, constructed the Central Factory to mechanically process the sugar cane on St. Croix, and offered increased wages for plantation workers willing to be employed at the factory with the annual expiration of their labor contracts. In anticipation, a large crowd of laborers assembled in Frederiksted on Contract Day, October 1, 1878.

**FORT FREDERIK****Page 18**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

While in Frederiksted a minor disorder evoked a response by police from Fort Frederik which the laborers interpreted to be an act of police brutality (Taylor n.d.:154-155). The ensuing violence became known as the 1878 Labor Riot and Fireburn. The crowd besieged the fort, where they were held off by the few police in the town and in a repeat of 1848, the white residents took refuge in local churches, and on-board ships in the harbor. Only this time a significant portion of Frederiksted was burned and looted, until dispersed by soldiers from Christiansted to the countryside where they proceeded to burn 53 plantations and hundreds of acres of sugar cane (see Figure 9) (Boyer 1983:70).

During that time the rioters attacked the Danish colonial police in Fort Frederik (Elliot 1992:18). A contemporary description of the assault on the fort was provided by Acting Policemaster H. Petersen:

Now began a murderous fire of brickbats, stones, conch shells and cannon-balls -- which the litter from old time were piled in the outer yard, -- in such a manner that the entire inner fort yard and the bastions were covered by missiles and we had great trouble in delivering our fire without getting crushed; in several places whence we might have fired, the prison cells were occupied by prisoners. The mob surrounded the Fort; they were in front of the Judge's office and in the stable yard, and threw their missiles at us with great violence . . . the three soldiers and the policemen present (some had been cut off in town) and two men from Town who had followed with the Police-Assistant into the fort . . . exhibited great courage and coolness, and fired on the mob so effectively, that after the expiration of half an hour about 5:30 PM . . . they drew away from the fort and went down to town [Petersen, cited in Lewisohn 1970:311].

Messengers finally got through to the commander of Fort Christian, in Christiansted, and a troop of twenty soldiers, under the command of Lieutenant Ostermann immediately left for the western end of the island. According to Robert S. Brown

Ostermann realized that his men could not force their way through the burning town, and led his troop around Frederiksted, past the lagoon, and entered the fort by the north gate. Working in small compact groups, the soldiers began the slow process of driving the mob from the town. This action, however, brought the rioters into contact with the plantations, east of Frederiksted, and the laborers began to burn and loot the hated estates [1976:5].

During the 1878 riot outlying plantation owners and their families were afraid to stay in isolation so they fled to Frederiksted and took refuge in the churches and, later the next morning, on ships anchored in the harbor (Elliot 1992:18). The rioters burned up many estate buildings, cane fields, great houses, sugar factories, and distilleries. Plantations were reported on fire "all over the western part of the island" (Lewisohn 1970:313-315).

Six of the mob's ringleaders were executed by firing squads at Fort Frederik, and two soldiers, killed by the rioters, were buried in the fort's garden. A few years after the riot the army troops were recalled to Denmark, and replaced by Danish police, or gendarmes. These gendarmes remained in control of Fort Frederik until March 31, 1917, when the islands were officially transferred to the United States (Brown 1976:5-6).

On October 1, 1879, to prevent a reprise of the riot of the previous year, the Labor Act of 1849 was abolished and with it, economic serfdom. In the future, all labor contracts would be negotiated individually and for various terms, but the economic boom of the sugar cane

**FORT FREDERIK****Page 19**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

plantations had disappeared - many Black Crucians emigrated to other Caribbean islands in search of better employment. By the time the United States acquired the Virgin Islands in 1917, the population of the island had dropped by 25% (Boyer 1983:71).

On March 31, 1917, *USS Olympia* (designated a National Historic Landmark in 1964) arrived in a pouring rain off Fort Frederik for the transfer ceremonies. The American warship had planned to anchor off Christiansted but was not able to cross the reef at the entrance to that harbor. Instead, it anchored in the deep waters off Frederiksted. A contingent of American Marines were brought ashore, and while half of them were taken across the island to Christiansted, the other half entered Fort Frederik. At four o'clock the gendarmes lowered the flag of Denmark and raised the American flag. The gendarmes changed position with the Marines and Fort Frederik became the headquarters for the first American troops on the western part of St. Croix (Brown 1976:6).

During the twentieth century, Fort Frederik served as a police station, jail, court, fire department, public library, and telephone exchange. The structure was vacated in 1973 and restoration as a historic site was completed by the Virgin Islands government in 1976 (Elliot 1991:17). At that time the fort was restored to its 1780 configuration, and it currently serves as an interpreted facility and local history museum (Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums 1990).

**FORT FREDERIK****Page 20**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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**FORT FREDERIK****Page 21**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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**FORT FREDERIK****Page 22**

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- Previously Listed in the National Register. Fort Frederik was listed as a contributing property in the Frederiksted Historic District nomination - listed August 9, 1976; Fort Frederik was individually listed in the National Register - October 8, 199.
- Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
- Designated a National Historic Landmark. September 25, 1997
- Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: 1959 #VI-49
- Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office US Virgin Islands
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums
- University
- Other (Specify Repository): Mr. Bruce Tilden  
Fort Frederik Museum  
Frederiksted, St. Croix  
U.S. Virgin Islands 00840

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**Acreage of Property: **2 acres**

UTM References: Zone Northing Easting

**A 20 1959800 300240**

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary for Fort Frederik begins at a point marked A on the shoreline on Figure 6. The boundary line runs east for 320 feet to a point marked B on the western edge of a paved road.

**FORT FREDERIK****Page 23**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

The boundary line then runs north for 300 feet to a point marked C on the western edge of the paved road. The boundary line then runs west to the shoreline for 300 feet to a point marked D. The boundary line then runs south along the shoreline for 300 feet to a point marked A.

**Boundary Justification:**

The boundary for Fort Frederik includes the masonry fort, the sea battery, and the stable area. These represent the total nationally significant properties associated with Fort Frederik. This parcel also contains a portion of an archeological site identified by Corps of Engineer surveyors in 1991 (see Figure 6). However, not enough archeological investigations have been accomplished to determine the relationship of this site to the fort. It is presently considered a non-contributing property in this nomination.

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**FORT FREDERIK**



**FORT FREDERIK**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

**Page 25**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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**Figure 1. Plan of the first level of the Danish Fort Frederik as it appeared in 1778. Plan was draw by Lt. Oxholm. Plan provided by Mr. Bruce Tilden of Fort Frederik, in Frederiksted, St. Croix.**

**FORT FREDERIK**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

**Page 26**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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**Figure 2. Plan of the second level of the Danish Fort Frederik as it appeared in 1778. Plan was draw by Lt. Oxholm. Plan provided by Mr. Bruce Tilden of Fort Frederik, in Frederiksted, St. Croix.**

**FORT FREDERIK**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

**Page 27**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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**Figure 3. Plan of the Danish Fort Frederik as it presently appears. Plan is from a visitor's brochure (Anonymous 1990) provided by Mr. Bruce Tilden of Fort Frederik, in Frederiksted, St. Croix.**

**FORT FREDERIK****Page 28**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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**Figure 4. Spanish map of 1647 of the island of St. Croix, called Santa Cruz by the Spanish. Map shows the location of the mid-17th century English earthwork fort in the vicinity of the present Fort Frederik. Map provided by Mr. Bruce Tilden of Fort Frederik, in Frederiksted, St. Croix. Note that the top of the map is oriented to the south.**

**FORT FREDERIK**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

**Page 29**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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**Figure 5. Drawing (1952) of the western interior portion of Fort Frederik showing early twentieth century hipped roof and wooden attachments to the second story Commandant's Quarter. These were removed in the 1976 restoration. From Brøndsted (1952:319).**

**FORT FREDERIK**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

**Page 30**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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**Figure 6. Drawing of the Fort Frederik area showing the association of the fort, sea battery, and stables, with a multi-component prehistoric and historic archeological site located to the north of the fort, and partially included within the National Historic Landmark Boundary (Elliot 1992:29).**

**FORT FREDERIK**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

**Page 31**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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**Figure 7. Map dated 1754, showing the island of St. Croix and the plantation boundaries established by the Danish surveyors. It also shows an enlargement of a map of the town of Frederiksted and Fort Frederik, then under construction (Brøndsted 1952:165).**

**FORT FREDERIK**

**Figure 8. Enlargement of a Oxholm's 1799 Map of the Frederiksted area showing the town, Fort Frederik, and sea battery (Brøndsted 1952:213).**



**FORT FREDERIK****Page 33**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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**Figure 9. Engraving that appeared in "Illustrated World" in November of 1878, showing the Danish troops fighting the rioters during the Fireburn Riot of October 1878. From Brøndsted (1952:454).**

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY  
August 25, 2021



Fort Frederik  
Frederiksted, St. Croix, USVI  
Mark Barnes, Ph.D.  
1996

Neg-National Park Service, Atlanta  
View of Commandant's Quarters from the  
interior courtyard  
Photo #1



Fort Frederik

Frederiksted, St. Croix, USVI

Mark Barnes, Ph.D.

1996

Neg-National Park Service, Atlanta

View from Commandant's Quarters looking  
Northwest into the interior of fort.

Photo #2



Fort Frederik  
Frederiksted, St. Croix, USVI

Mark Barnes, Ph.D.

1996

Neg-National Park Service, Atlanta

View from Commandant's Quarters looking west  
at sea Battery

Photo #3





Fort Frederik  
Frederiksted, St. Croix, USVI  
Mark Barnes, Ph.D.  
1996

Neg-National Park Service, Atlanta  
View from roof of western part of fort  
looking North at stables  
Photo #4