

Centennial Project Arts and Culture Corridor

Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas
Kings Quarter - Hospital Gade - Kongens Gade

Project Theme:

“In Search of Identity”



Transfer Exhibition 2015 – “In Search of Identity”

Photo: Senator Myron D. Jackson

Project Owner: Senator Myron D. Jackson in honor of the Ancestors

Centennial Project:

The Virgin Islands Cultural Heritage Institute Act – Act No. 4772, acknowledges the unique culture of the people of the Virgin Islands, which has evolved over many generations. The law also acknowledges the diverse cultural heritage of the Virgin Islands population, which includes Ciboneys, Taino, Kalinago, African, European, Caribbean and Creole influences. According to the mandate, “the preservation and promotion of a people’s heritage can be an affirmation of their existence, which in turn could have a strong positive effect on their political, vocational and social structures. In turn, each generation is obliged to pass on to its children and youth, the cultural identity that is at the root of its existence.” The law warns that a society that fails to preserve and promote its culture may lose its identity, its structural fabric, and ultimately, its reason for being. As a result, it is deemed “appropriate and necessary to preserve, protect and promote Virgin Islands culture in order to contribute to an understanding of the complex problems facing our society, to encourage unity and economic viability of all their contributions, and to celebrate the Virgin Islands example throughout the Caribbean as a people of strong belief in freedom and self-development.

The Centennial Commission Act establishes a Centennial Commission for the purpose of formulating plans and making preparations to commemorate and celebrate, in the year 2017, the 100th Anniversary of the transfer of the former Danish West Indies to the United States of America. The act calls for the development of libraries, museums, historical and archaeological sites, and exhibits, which include mobile exhibits. To deposit all non-monetary tangible personal property such as books, manuscripts and antiquities acquired by the Commission for preservation in the Virgin Islands libraries, museums, archives, and other designated depositories, or otherwise disposed of in consultation with the Director(s) of Libraries, Museums and Archives.

The collective memory is the soul of a people and community. It is our stories, artifacts, food and drink, symbols, traditions, images, vernacular architecture, belief systems, dance, music, sites of memory and more. “In Search of Identity” provides a framework to restore the identity of our people who were subjected to enslavement and colonization and had to endure the vestiges of slavery and institutional racism in its various colors. Attempts to strip the identity and culture of an African people, and unjust social and political policies created acts of resistance to European domination. Over the course of this five hundred year history, African and European retentions were preserved and New World creole cultures, expressions and traditions were born. Today, as we approach the 2017 Centennial of the transfer of a People and the sale of our home, the former Danish West Indies, to the United States of America, we have witnessed the transformations of our culture and society, and our struggle for self-determination continues.

“In Search of Identity” recognizes that the continuity and connection with this collective past requires immediate measures to preserve our collective memory. It also recognizes that in doing so it would foster a greater national pride and assist a

modern society to come to terms with our collective past and identity, celebrate our past and modern achievements, and foster a new national pride and a bright future.



“In Search of Identity” - The Abbots Sisters of Frederiksted 1900s- Photograph from the private Papers and Letters of the late Ms. Alma Latimer’s of St. Croix who relocated to Denmark

Historic Narrative:

The St. Thomas Centennial Project restores a 19th-century former Danish West Indian Military Hospital/School on St. Thomas, and adjacent structures and lots for the re-adaptable use and new construction for the establishment of an Arts and Culture Corridor. Once renovated, the site – which includes a former historic Lodge, residences and a community theater, will comprise a School of Art for Conservation and Museum Science, and a National Museum and Cultural Center.

The St. Croix Centennial Project restores a 19th century Danish school ruin located at Nos. 21, 22, 23 Hospital Street, Christiansted St. Croix. The Virgin Islands Government owns the structure and lots, and the steward of the site is the Department of Education. Previous efforts by the Government of the Virgin Islands earmarked the three-story neoclassical Building to be renovated, restored and converted into the Offices of the Lieutenant Governor. The structure was flanked by two new, adjacent two-story buildings. The re-adaptable use proposed is for a school of architecture and conservation.

Over the past 500 years of our history of colonization by Europeans, our Indigenous and New World ancestors have struggled with the social and psychological impacts of colonization, mental slavery and cultural identity. “In Search of Identity”

provides a historic, social, cultural and economic perspective on measures that can engage our people and communities with the complex layers of a better understanding of this historical past, a perspective of our accomplishments, the challenges we face today, and a collective perspective for our future. Through a two-year trimester series (2015-2016) of educational programs, initiatives, and collaboration on both sides of the Atlantic, this Project can be archived.

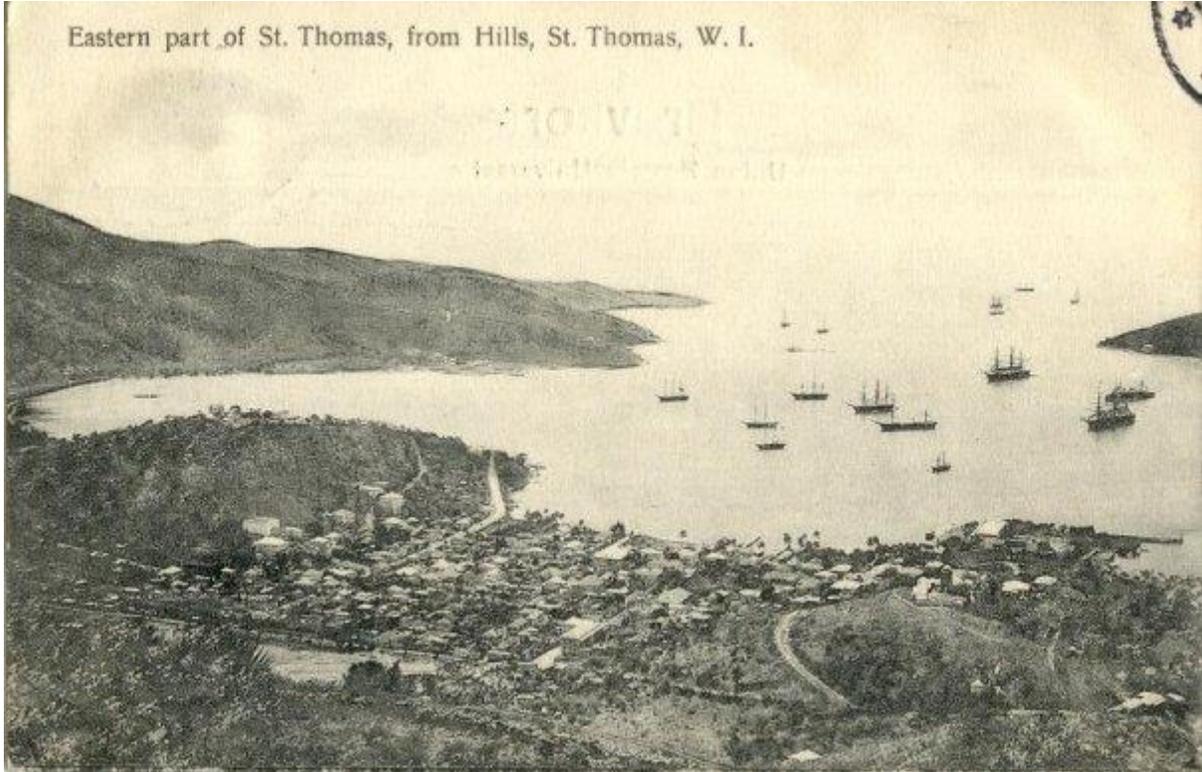


“In Search of Identity” – Identity Card of Ms. Marjorie Clendinen an Afro-Dane born on St. Thomas, Danish West Indies. Document from *the U.S. National Archives, College Park Maryland*

Project Location:

The Project location is located in the Kings Quarter of the town of Charlotte Amalie. This historic neighborhood, today referred to as “Upstreet,” was established around 1764–1765 for the expansion of the residential needs of the European and African populations of the growing town. Historically, when this Quarter was founded it was called New Town or East Savan. During the course of the last 250 years, this historic community has evolved and expanded around a footprint of 18th- and 19th- century private and government buildings and open spaces. This area has retained ninety percent of its historic footprint.

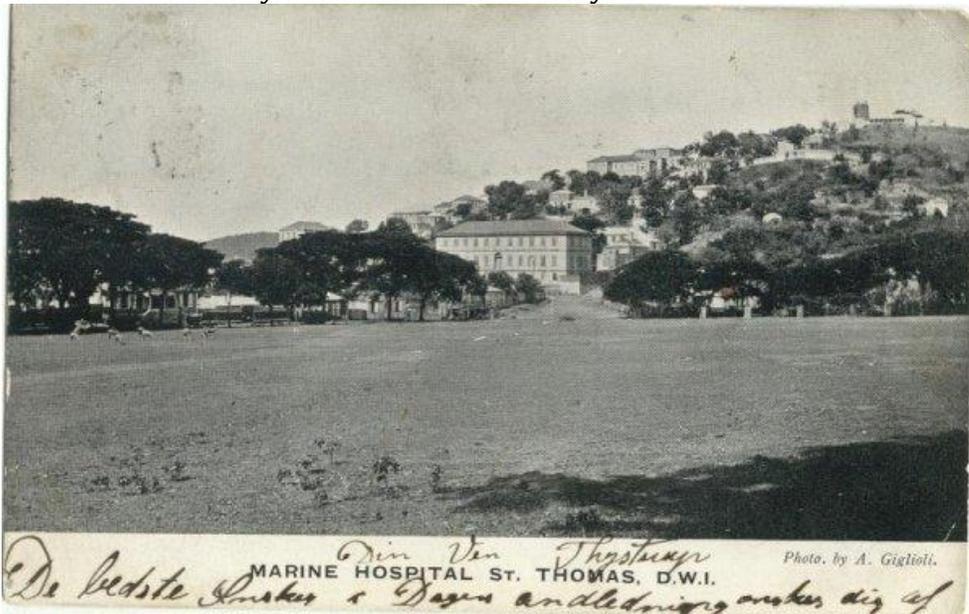
Within this historic town footprint, the functions of a Hospital, School, Theater, Cricket/Parade Grounds, Churches, Cemeteries, Agricultural Grounds, and a Public Square/Park were established for this residential neighborhood and the town's residents. Over the course of the past 250 years, the King's Quarter has continued to support and provide Virgin Island residents and visitors with health care, education, sports, arts, culture, entertainment, and government services. Thus, it continues to be an important mecca and corridor for health, education, government services, sports, parks, and arts and entertainment for the residents and visitors.

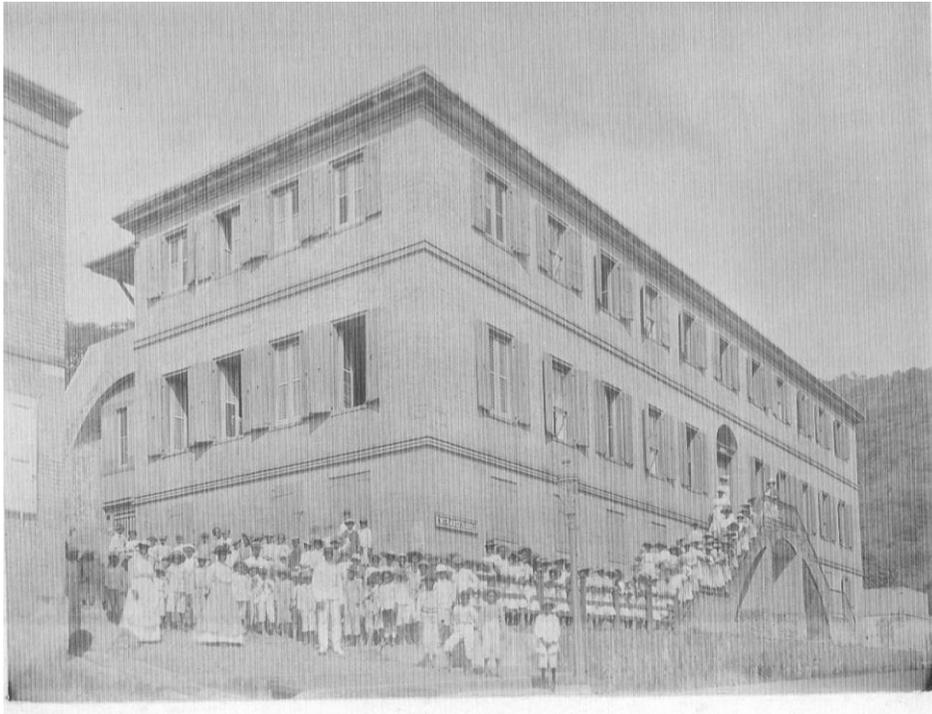




Archives

Images from a report on education during the Danish colonial period, housed at the U.S. National Archives at College Park, Maryland, and post cards from the Danish National Archives and the Virgin Islands Archives best illustrate the rich contextual social history linked to this longstanding structure that was dedicated to early education in the colony and American Territory.

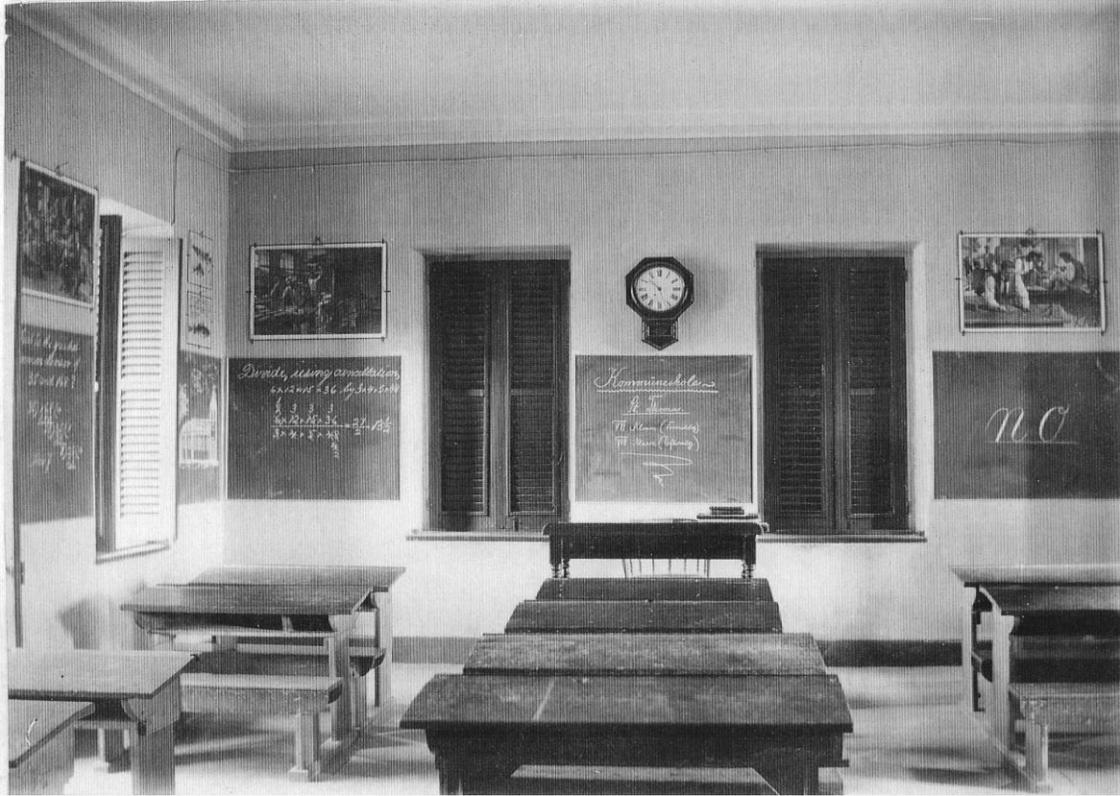




The Marine Hospital and Communal School, Danish West Indies



Classrooms of the Danish School, St. Thomas. Photos from the U.S. National Archives



Re-adaptable Use

Phase I – Danish Hospital and School, Hospital Gade:

The project proposes to restore for re-adaptable use the existing Danish/American 19th century three-story yellow brick structure for a School for the Arts and Conservation. The structure was built around 1860s by the Danish colonial government for a military hospital. Native masons and craftsmen were employed to construct this structure. During the Danish period it was later converted to a public Communal School that continued into the American period. The structure was recently closed due to concerns about its structural integrity and ability to withstand a significant seismic earthquake.

The Phase I of this project will be the conversion and re-adaptable use of the former Jose Antonio Jarvis Elementary School for an arts and conservation through an apprenticeship conservation learning center. The property is owned by the Virgin Islands Government. This will include exhibition space to facilitate educational outreach for arts and the humanities. This phase will also include the restoration of two adjacent, two-story brick structures that were purchased for the expansion of additional classrooms and offices during the modern era of the Jose Antonio Jarvis Elementary School. During the early American period the school was renamed the Abraham Lincoln School by the U.S. Naval Administration.

The second brick structure was a historic Freemason Lodge in the Danish era and in the early American period was converted into a residence. In the 1990s, the Virgin Islands Government purchased the property for the expansion of the school campus. The third structure is a former 19th century two-story brick residence that is presently in a state of ruin. This property was also purchased by the Virgin Islands for expansion of the former elementary school. These two adjacent structures are incorporated into the project proposal as a unit of the campus. It is my vision that these structures will provide for a collaborative effort that would explore joint educational and apprenticeship programs for the education and advancement of our youth and cultural community. The proposal calls for the collaboration with Virgin Islands, Caribbean, Danish and American institutions and non-governmental organizations.



Building I - The Jose Antonio Jarvis Elementary School on Hospital Gade

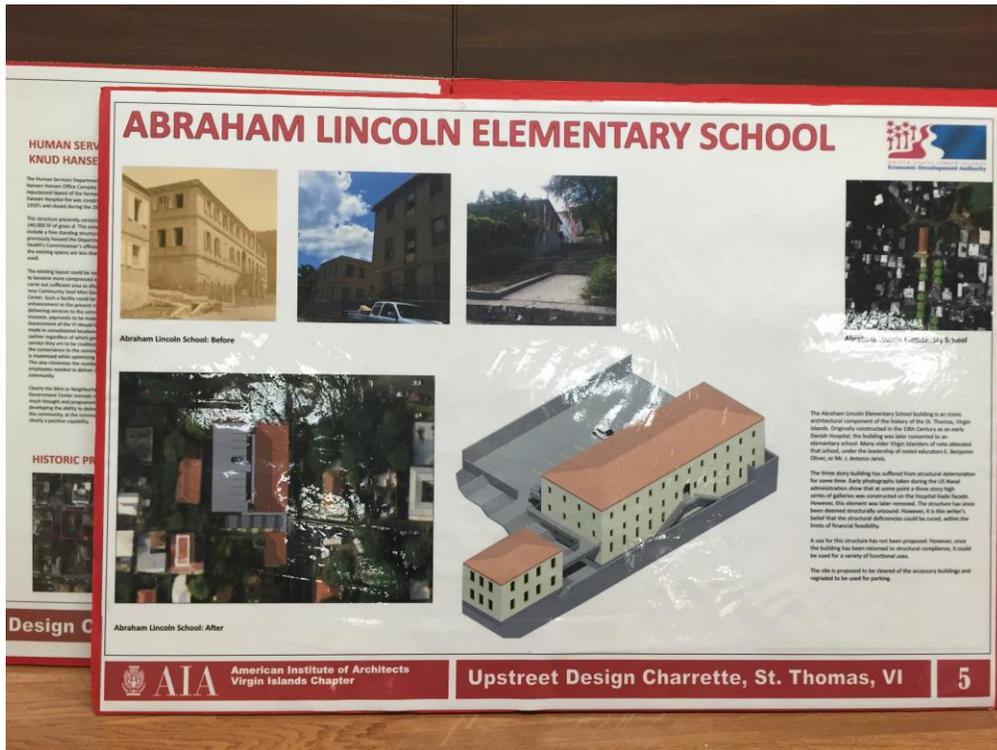


Courtyard of the former Jose Antonio Jarvis Elementary School

The Enterprise Zone Design Charrette Public Meeting for “Upstreet”



Mr. Robert de Jongh, architect with Senator Justin Harrigan, Ms. Yvette Finch, and Senator Jackson





Kings Quarter “Upstreet” Design Charrette by the Economic Development Authority and American Institute of Architects – Virgin Islands Chapter held in the summer of 2015.

During the summer, community residents and stakeholders met in a series of Design Charrette public meetings to address the revitalization of the “Upstreet” neighborhood. The readaptable use of the Jarvis Complex was addressed and the proposal for an Art and Culture corridor was proposed by Senator Myron D. Jackson and endorsed by the We From Upstreet, Inc. neighborhood organization. Community organizations were represented.





Building II - Historic Masonic Lodge and modern classroom annex of the adjacent Jose Antonio Jarvis Elementary School.



Building III - Ruins of a historic two-story brick and rubble masonry town house



Phase II - National Museum and Cultural Center

Phase II will require the purchase of combined private parcel lots and the transfer of a government parcel to construct a National Museum and Cultural - Civic Center. Given the absence of a 21st century museum and a cultural center in the St. Thomas district and Territory, along with the need to modernize and protect our historic artifacts, decorative arts, and art treasures previously housed in Fort Christian Museum, government facilities, private collections, and other institutions, this proposed facility is critically needed. The local population in the St. Thomas-St. John district is over 50,000 and over 1.7 million cruise ship passengers and crew visit the St. Thomas-St. John district annually. This proposed museum and cultural center would enshrine and showcase the collective memory and creative talents of our People. This site was historically the location of a community theater and civic center during the Danish and American period. Presently these combined lots are used as a private parking lot.

The cultural center will be linked to the museum will also provide a venue for the advancement of our cultural heritage. This also provides a venue to share our heritage with our visitors. The advocacy of the Virgin Islands Cultural Heritage Institute for the establishment of such a facility is long overdue. The Cultural Heritage Act “warns that a society that fails to preserve and promote its culture may lose its identity, its structural fabric, and ultimately, its reason for being.

Lots IV and V Kongens Gade

The proposed site of the National Museum, Civic/Cultural Center was formerly the site of a 19th century community theater and civic center historically known as the “Wendell” and “Apollo” Theaters located on Kongens Gade, King’s Quarter. Presently the lot is used for private parking.

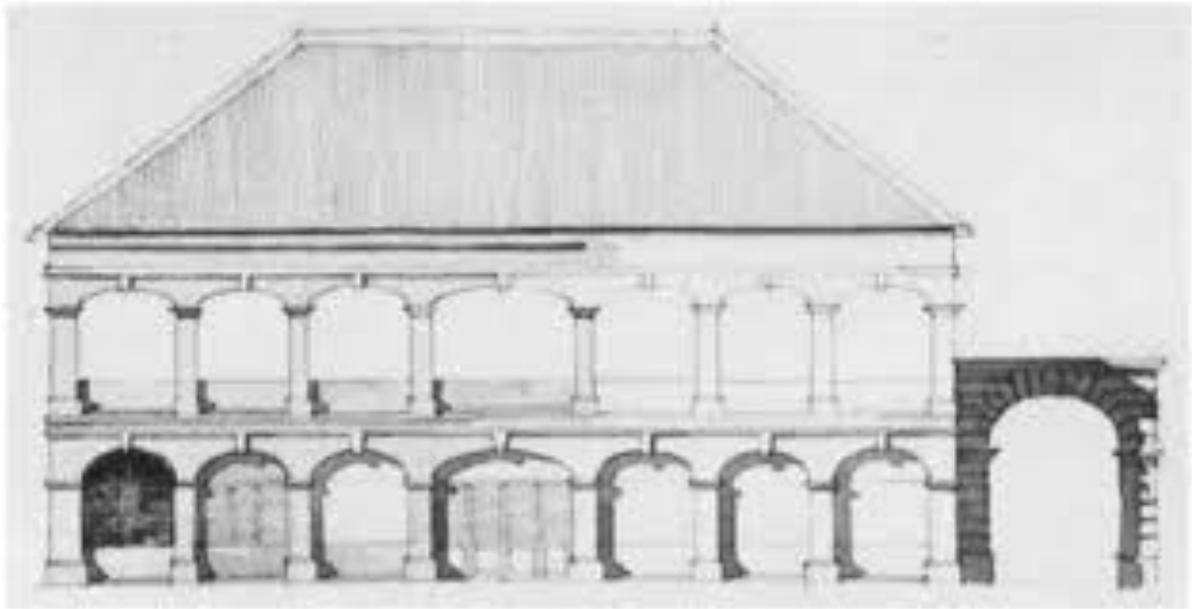




Affiliations

The proposed project will encourage partnerships on both side of the Atlantic. The Office of Senator Myron D. Jackson, Bygnings Frednings Foreningen, Transfer Centennial Commission, Department of Planning and Natural Resources, Virgin Islands Council on the Arts, Danish National Museum, Department of Property and Procurement, Department of Public Works, Virgin Islands Cultural Heritage Institute, The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Danish Maritime Museum School of Architecture of Denmark, University of the Virgin Islands, Department of Education, Smithsonian Institution, UNESCO, Museum Association of the Caribbean, and other Danish, West African, and Caribbean institutions and other organizations.





Project II
Mr. Gerville Larsen, Architect

“In Search of Identity – Architectural School”

The property in question is located at Nos. 21, 22, & 23 Hospital Street, Christiansted, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands which is owned by the Government of the Virgin Islands. The Virgin Islands agency presently controlling these parcels is the Department of Education. Previous efforts by the Government of the Virgin Islands earmarked the three-story Neoclassical Building to be renovated and restored, converting it into the Offices of the Lieutenant Governor. This singular building was to be flanked by two new, adjacent two-story buildings. The square footages for this complex were as follows:

3 Story Historic Structure w/ Mansard Roof: 8,500 s.f.

2 Story New Structure: 3,000 s.f.

2 Story New Structure: 2,000 s.f.

Total Enclosed Square Footage: 13,500 s.f.

The neighboring two-story historic structure which is separated by a Lovmand Arch is approximately 6016 s.f. Therefore, this compound has a total footprint of 19,516 s.f.



The book, *Surveys in 1961 on St. Thomas & St. Croix by the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts* by the School of Architecture has a write up on this historic property. Excerpts from this book are as follows:

"Hospitalsgade is named after the original town hospital located here at the end of the 18th century." Buildings "21-22-23 with their walls, stairs and doors constitute a solid boundary for the complex that lies behind, and were probably built around 1800 and converted and extended during Peter Von Scholten's period. Some of the conversions, including the door and the walls, were done by Lovmand in the 1830s. No. 23 once had two floors with a hipped roof and gable attics, as shown for instance in a photograph taken in about 1900 (fig. 162). About ten years later (fig. 166) it had its present design with three floors. Both versions were made of masonry. The buildings and walls are rendered and whitewashed, and the colours are shown in the illustration from 1961... The land registers show that nos. 21 and 22 were privately owned until about 1820, after which they were bought for use as an infantry barracks. The land register shows that no. 23 was already under public ownership in 1803 and used as a cavalry barracks and military hospital. After 1820 this house was also used as an infantry barracks."



From field investigations and research indicated on the Oxholm map of 1790, there was a structure on No. 23 that resembles the present footprint of the building. Partial demolition of the structure also revealed two covered historic brick-lined wells: one under the building's foundation and one adjacent to the building which reinforces the belief that there was a

residence on the site prior to 1800. The property has great historic value due to the fine architectural detailing created by the Architect Albert Lovmand who designed the two arches and elevated plaza space between the two- and three-story structures that still exist today. This compound has been used throughout the history of Christiansted as a residence, hospital, military barracks, Christiansted high school, jailhouse and police station to name a few.

Hospital Street is an important street in Christiansted with many stunning dilapidated and ruinous structures that should be restored and rehabilitated. By undertaking this important architectural conservation and adaptive reuse project, Hospital Street would have a large catalyst to incentivize other private property owners to rehabilitate their structures and reinvigorate the streetscape. As part of the VIEDA's Enterprise Zone Christiansted Town Planning winning entry, this site was designated as a University of the Virgin Islands Architecture & Building Arts School. This would create a college town component to the Christiansted town which would increase residential capacity and ancillary businesses within its historic district. It would also help create professionals trained with the wherewithal to provide the town and the entire U.S. Virgin Islands with much needed architectural conservation and preservation efforts for its cultural resources.

There is present interest in Architectural School partnerships between Denmark, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands which would bridge local and regional design practices with related methodologies from other parts of the globe. Presently, there is only one U.S. Building Arts College in Charleston, South Carolina and this newly formed institution could become the only one of its kind in the Caribbean. Clearly, a partnership with this American College of Building Arts is another logical pursuit which would potentially allow scholars and students to share vast technical experiences in building and design methodologies here in the Caribbean with their stateside colleagues. Within the Caribbean basin and especially in the Lesser Antilles, there is a continued desire to promote authentic cultural products that promote national pride amongst these countries. At this core philosophy, there is an enhanced need for proper conservation methods especially for historic properties. To date, some of these countries do not have any conservation and preservation best practices for their own cultural resources. The quality of institution being conceived at this location through the creation of the University of the Virgin Islands Architecture and Building Arts School could attract, in substantial numbers, individuals from these neighboring islands and

abroad who are pursuing training and scholarly research in these areas. The overall impact of creating a collegiate and scholastic complex in the historic town of Christiansted could have far reaching benefits to place, island, Territory and beyond: achieving a strong sense of Virgin Islands identity that fosters a resurgence in National Pride.

