English, French, and Portuguese traders to the island of St. Thomas. With the capital investment of these populations, the town of Charlotte Amalie eventually became a significant trading center in the Caribbean region. The elegance and opulence of the European worship centers - Lutheran, Moravian, Dutch Reformed, Jewish Synagogue, Catholic, Anglican, and Methodist - are visible evidence of the cultural and religious tolerance among the mercantile classes.

Eventually, St. Thomas evolved into a major center for trans-Atlantic trade during their 18th and 19th centuries. The island achieved its premier trade port status by 1815. Between 1825 and 1850, St. Thomas' highly urban population made it the largest Danish town after the capital of Copenhagen. In contrast, the island of St. John reverted to a self-sustaining economy, becoming the stronghold of eleven families.

THE AFRICAN POPULATION

The trans-Atlantic slave trade introduced the African and their creole offspring to the developing Danish West Indies. Ethnic origins are said to have ranged from the region encompassing upper Guinea to Angola, between the Senegal and Cuanza rivers. According to Neville A.T. Hall, in the book *Slave Society in the Danish West Indies:* " Despite the heterogenous nature of this population, they were able to achieve a coherence and sense of community among themselves."

In addition, as early as the late 1700s, the African population surpassed the European population. Free and enslaved labor were utilized in services related to commerce, production, and distribution of goods to meet the highly urban population on St. Thomas. The demand for personal services led to a ratio of 68.7 men to 100 females by 1797. The population of freemen grew steadily between 1797 and 1835.

The census of 1831 reflects the diversity of skills possessed by the adult freeman population. Carpenters, masons, painters, stone-breakers and joiners were prevalent. In addition, the service industry included sailmakers, seamen, shoemakers, tailors and goldsmiths, among others. The high proportions of skilled and educated, free and bonded populations on the island of St. Thomas can be attributed to the mercantile economy of St. Thomas. This is contrasted with the skills required of the agricultural economy on other islands.

In 1797, only 24.8% of the black population was free. By 1835, the number increased drastically to 52.55% A significant number of the free population arrived from the French island of St. Eustatius and the Dutch island of Curacao, in addition to a lesser number from the British and Spanish-speaking islands.

In 1850, existing population numbered 11, 764. However, with the introduction of the steamship and telegraph communications, the importance of the trading center of Charlotte Amalie declined by 1870. As many of the inhabitants of St. Thomas sought economic opportunities elsewhere, the population reached a low in 1930 (7,035 inhabitants).

MODERNIZATION AND THE ST. THOMIAN SOCIETY

After World War II, culturally diverse populations began to repopulate the islands. Natives of the British Virgin Islands, who geographically gained direct access to St. Thomas, began to settle on St. Thomas in larger numbers. American "Continentals" arrived serving primarily as investors, administrators and service personnel Puerto Rican agriculturalists, primarily from Vieques and Culebra settled mainly on the island of St. Croix.

With the advent of the tourism economy in the 1950's and th installation of industries on the island of St. Croix in the 1960's workers from other English-speaking Caribbean islands migrated t the Virgin Islands. This population consisted primarily of person from St. Kitts, Nevis, Anguilla and Antigua. In the 1980's, immigran from Dominica and the Dominican Republic also began to arriv In addition, an increased number of Arabs, Indians, and Asian invested in business ventures following the economic decline other Caribbean islands.

Today, the population of the U.S. Virgin Islands consists of a estimated 101,809 persons (1990 census), with 50,139 persons o St. Croix; 48,166 on St. Thomas, and 3,504 on St. John.