

St Thomas Historical Trust  
Status Report on Hassel Island  
Submitted to the Committee for Culture, Historic Preservation, Youth & Recreation  
Legislature of the Virgin Islands

March 8, 2016

In 2013 the Trust and DPNR entered into a Memorandum of Agreement for the Trust to assist DPNR with its three properties on Hassel Island: the Garrison House; Prince Frederik’s Battery; and Cowell’s Battery and Signal Station. These properties are all connected by a trail that leads from the dock (shown below) which is a 25 foot wide right-of-way over VI National Park property. In addition, the Trust was given a non-exclusive right to conduct public tours at Fort Christian.

The Trust, with the cooperation and guidance of Mr. Sean Krigger, acting Director of the Virgin Islands State Historic Preservation Office, the Trust has made significant progress in stabilizing, restoring and making available to the public these historic sites.

The first and most essential project undertaken, with a grant from the VI Port Authority, was to repair the dock which provides access to these properties. As shown in this photo, the dock



Figure 1 Access Dock before repair

was in a significantly deteriorated condition and unsafe for use. Through a very imaginative and relatively inexpensive project, Mr. Alan Wentworth and his crew at Sea Tow provided a solution to the repair.



Figure 2 Access Dock after repair

#### PRINCE FREDERIK’S BATTERY

The Trust received a grant from the American Battlefield Protection Program to do a detailed survey of Prince Frederik’s Battery and recommendations for its stabilization. This included research in archives in Denmark and England. This research provided valuable information on the Battery. One result was a detailed drawing of the Battery as built, drawn by Lt. Oxholm of Denmark in 1780. This allowed us to assign specific uses to each area.

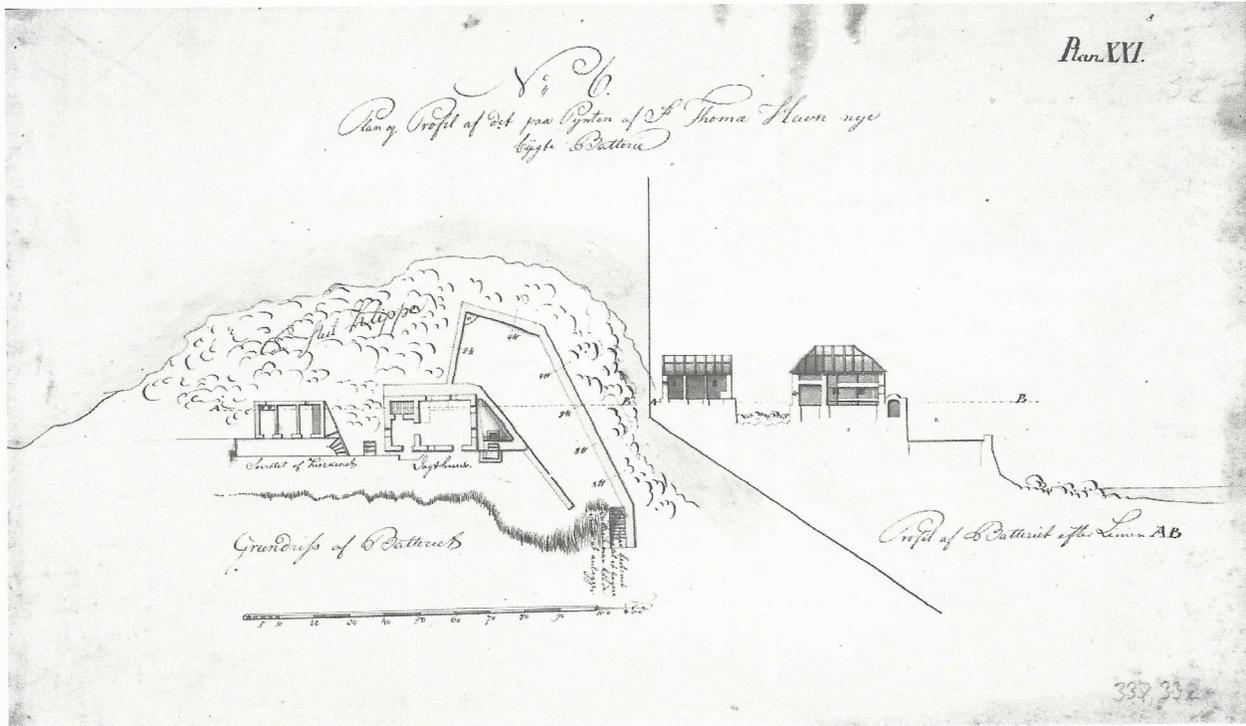


Figure 3 Plan and elevation of Prince Frederik's Battery 1780

Based upon the final report, stabilization of the Battery was commenced with funds received from local donors, including a substantial contribution from Isidore Paiwonski's descendants, the Cassinellis. Prior to the stabilization, the structure was in imminent danger in places of collapse. This photo shows the kitchen and latrine areas with missing mortar and substantial undermining of the footing.



Figure 4 Battery Kitchen and Latrine before stabilization.

After stabilization and some restoration work, the Battery should now be able to withstand the elements without substantial deterioration for a number of years, however ongoing vegetation removal is essential.



Figure 5 Battery after stabilization. Walls capped.

### THE GARRISON HOUSE

Although thanks to the efforts of Isidore Paiwonski the site had received some protection, the mortar was in poor condition in many places, the roof needed replacement and many of the shutters were in broken condition.



Figure 6 Garrison House before restoration

Again, with substantial contributions from local donors, especially the Cassinelli family, extensive renovation was undertaken. This included: vegetation clearing; a new roof; some replacement joists; rebuilt shutters inside and out; re-pointed and repaired stonework and a new stairway wall.

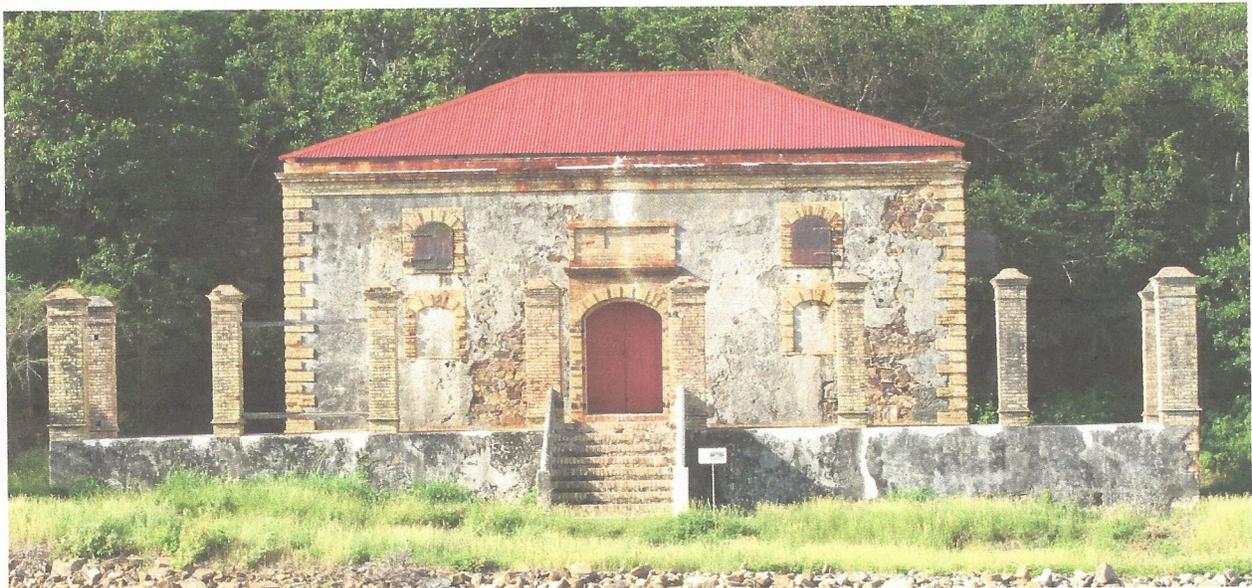


Figure 7 Garrison House after restoration

We are currently nearing completion of the planning phase for the installation of a museum reflecting the exciting history of Hassel Island, to be followed by its installation, generously funded by the Prior Family Foundation.

**COWELL'S BATTERY AND SIGNAL STATION**

Upon acquisition of Cowell's Battery and Signal Station by DPNR from the VI Port Authority, the Trust proceeded to clear and stabilize the Battery.



Figure 8 Cowell's Battery and Signal Station before stabilization

The Battery was cleared of vegetation and the stonework and entry staircase were stabilized and restored to prevent further deterioration.



Figure 9 Cowell's Battery after Stabilization

This project was completed with a substantial and generous grant from Diageo VI, Inc.

The next project we hope to undertake is the renovation of the Signal Station, and eventually restoration of the signal mast which was used to communicate details regarding approaching shipping to the harbormaster and St. Thomas merchants.



Figure 10 The Signal Mast and staff, late 1800s

Under guidance from Mr. Sean Krigger of the VISHPO and substantial volunteer efforts by volunteers from Diageo VI, Inc., Mr. Vince Palancia of the Trust, and Mr. Alan Wentworth of Sea Tow, the Signal Station has been temporarily boarded up as a safety and security measure.



Figure 11 Volunteer Crew boarding up Signal Station

In order to complete the restoration of the Signal Station, as well as the installation of the museum in the Garrison House, the Trust will require a significant contribution from the VI Water and Power Authority in the form of re-electrifying the wiring to the Signal Station and running a new power connection to the Garrison House.

The Trust has conducted a significant number of tours to Hassel Island which have included these sites, including more than 1,000 local students, as well as residents and visitors, thus giving them a memorable exposure to the rich maritime history of the island.

Finally, recently productive discussions have been held with Mr. Krigger and with Mr. Levi Farrell regarding cooperation between the Trust and DPNR on proceeding to make Ft. Christian available to the public. We hope to see definitive progress in the near future.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Charles W. Consolvo', written in a cursive style.

Charles W Consolvo

Member, Board of Trustees, St. Thomas Historical Trust