The Honorable Kenneth E. Mapp
Governor

The Honorable Osbert E. Potter
Lieutenant Governor

2015~

The Battery

ST. JOHN

Cruz Bay, St. John
United States Virgin Islands

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The Cruz Bay Battery, originally known as Christianfort, is an important reminder of the Danish Colonial era. The Battery was one of several fortifications on or near St. John used during that period.

Constructed in 1825 as a result of the 1733 slave rebellion, the Cruz Bay Battery housed a fortified courthouse and public prison. It was dedicated on December 5 of that year in a ceremony that was attended not only by the Vice Governor of St. Thomas, Peter von Scholten, but also by the Governor-General J.F. Bardenfleth of St. Croix. During that period, the three islands were governed by a Governor-General with a Vice Governor over St. Thomas and St. John. Peter von Scholten later became Governor-General and was responsible for freeing the enslaved Africans in the Danish West Indies in 1848.

James Wright, a former slave and master mason, built the Battery at the order of Peter von Scholten. Wright was born enslaved in 1775 on St. John. Around 1796, he joined the ranks of the free colored by purchasing his freedom from wages earned as a carpenter. He also served in the fire brigade and later received the Order of the Knight of Dannebrog for heroism while fighting a fire in 1832 on St. Thomas.

A plaque is set on the courtyard wall as a memento of the dedication of the Battery. The inscription in Danish is hardly legible today but in 1974 it was translated by Kenneth Olwig. It reads:

"The island of St. John has Governor Peter C. F. von Scholten to thank for this fortified house of Arrest. It was constructed by the Freedman James Wright born on St. John, who thereafter earned his Freedom with the Enterprise and good Behavior which gained his Superiors' Favor and his Fellow Citizens' respect, among whom he holds the position of First Lieutenant in the Fire Brigade on St. Thomas 1825."

The Battery has two floors. The prison cells were on the bottom floor, and the second floor, originally the courthouse, was soon converted as the residence of the Administrator. Although the building has been altered many times, much of the original character remains.

At the entrance of the Battery sit 18th century guns situated on replica wooden mounts which were built by Bob & Tom Pullen, and Don Bowry, and donated by members of the St. John Historical Society in 2003. As they did more than 200 years ago after the revolt of 1733 the guns face inland.

A fortification that has, in its various functions, housed criminals and commissioners, and has seen the transition of our Territory from a Danish Colony to an American Territory, the Battery is an inviolable reminder of our colonial past and courageous history.

Today the Battery serves as the Office of the Governor on St. John, and houses the Administrator's offices, as well as other Government agencies. From 1825 to the present, it continues to be the location of official functions on the island of St. John.

The people of the U.S. Virgin Islands began electing their own governor in 1970. Dr. Melvin Herbert Evans was distinguished as being the last governor appointed by the President of the United States and first elected governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands. His tenure as elected governor began in January 1971.

Other elected governors include: Cyril Emmanuel King, Juan Francisco Luis, Alexander Anthony Farrelly, Roy Lester Schneider, Charles Wesley Turnbull, John Percy de Jongh, Jr. and Kenneth E. Mapp. Governors Luis, Farrelly, Turnbull and de Jongh each served two terms in office. Governor Kenneth E. Mapp. and Lieutenant Osbert E. Potter began their term in office on January 5, 2015.