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Historic Timeline of the Caribbean: Amerindians to Present-Day (With a concentration on the history of the Virgin Islands in general and St. Croix in particular)

-4.5 billion years ago: formation of planet Earth

-70 to 50 million years ago: Caribbean islands emerge from Atlantic Ocean as the result of volcanic eruptions, sedimented rock formations, and/or coral formations. (Dinosaurs become extinct around 70 million years ago).

-2 million years ago: Homo habilis emerges on continent of Africa (Kenya)—first known stage in evolutionary line that would lead to humans.

-100,000 years ago: Homo sapiens—modern man—emerges on continent of Africa (Kenya).

-25,000-15,000 years ago: Asians cross the Bering Straight during the last Ice Age, entering North America, thereby becoming first recorded humans in the “New World.” By 5,000 years ago, they had migrated to the bottom of South America. *(Based on archaeological evidence, recent scholarship tends to date the last Ice Age at between 40,000 and 25,000 years ago, with human presence in the southernmost areas of South America dating from around 9,000 years ago).*

-15,000 years ago: approximate date of sophisticated cave drawings in the Pyrenees Mountains between Spain and France.

-5000 B.C.: diverse peoples begin populating the Caribbean islands from the northern regions of South America, but also possibly from Central America and North America.

-3000 B.C.: The Great Sphinx (though recent evidence indicates that the sculpture may have been made around 5000 B.C. or earlier, thereby altering long-established timelines on the history of civilization).

-2500 B.C.: great pyramids of Egypt built.

-2000-1000 B.C. (latest dates being around 200 A.D.): native peoples begin populating the Virgin Islands.

-500 B.C.- 200 B.C.: pottery-making/using peoples begin migrating to Caribbean islands from Orinoco River region of northern South America (present-day Venezuela),



CHANT

populating from Trinidad upwards. Earliest evidence of pottery-use in Virgin Islands dates to 200 A.D., (or 700 years after pottery was first introduced to Caribbean region).

-1200 A.D - 1500 A.D.: Taino presence in the Virgin Islands and Greater Antilles.

-Undetermined Pre-Columbian date(believed to be circa 1300 A.D.) to present day:

Island Caribs (also called Kalina or Kalinago)

-October 12, 1492: Christopher Columbus encounters the “New World,” landing on one of the islands in the Bahamas, which was inhabited by a Taino people called the “Lucayans.” He named the island “San Salvador.” (Called “Guanahani” by the native people. Today it is called Watling’s Island) (By 1546 the Taino population in Greater Antilles, estimated to be between one and three million upon Columbus’ arrival, becomes extinct).

EARLY HISTORY OF AFRICANS IN NEW WORLD

-(1492: Alonzo Pietro, a mulatto, is pilot on board “Pinta” [captained by Pinzon]).

-November 14, 1493: Columbus sails into Ay-Ay, at what is believed to be present-day Salt River, naming the island Santa Cruz (Holy Cross). After a fierce encounter with the island’s inhabitants, in which one of Columbus’s men dies from a Carib arrow, Columbus calls the site “Cape of the Arrows.”

-(1501: Juan de Cordoba, despite 1501 Spanish decree banning importation of enslaved Africans into the New World for fear that they would teach the Spanish language to the Native Americans, sends a black slave to Hispanola to sell goods to the colonists [By the late 1490s, many West African black people had been taken to Spain and Portugal as slaves, thereby learning Spanish and Portuguese]).

-(1502: Nicolas de Ovando, appointed governor of Hispanola by Spanish Crown, is allowed to carry black slaves, born in Spain and Portugal, with him to the island).

-(1505: Permission to import 17 enslaved Africans to Hispanola granted).

-(1530: “Nuestra Senora de Begona” transports 300 enslaved Africans directly from Sao Tome to Hispanola. [Prior to “Begona,” ships transporting enslaved Africans would return to Spain for administrative purposes before heading to the New World with the enslaved “cargo”]).



CHANT

-SEVEN FLAGS OF ST. CROIX:

-1493: **Spain**

-1625: **Holland** (and **England**—Dutch near what would later become Christiansted, English on the southwestern coast. Dutch expelled by English in 1646. Englishmen from Barbados bring enslaved Africans to St. Croix in 1631).

-1646: **England**

(1650—1200 Spaniards from Puerto Rico massacre and expel English)

(1650—France (Enslaved Africans from Senegal provide labor); 1651 Phillipe de Lonvilliers de Poincy acquires the island as his private domain. He grants Sainte-Croix, as well as all his private possessions in the West Indies, to the Order of St. John of Jerusalem (better known as Knights of Malta), of which he was a leading knight, in 1653).

-1653: **Knights of Malta.**

-1665: **France** (acquires St. Croix from Knights of Malta). French, in effect, become first colonizers of St. Croix, establishing approximately 90 plantations on the island for the cultivation of tobacco, cotton, indigo, and sugar cane. A French capital is established in the vicinity of present-day Estate Judith's Fancy. 30 years later, however, in 1695, King of France declares colony unsuccessful and orders inhabitants to burn and raze island and depart with enslaved Africans to Sainte-Domingue (present-day Haiti).

-**June 15, 1733, Denmark:** final contract to purchase Sainte-Croix from the French signed in Copenhagen by the Danish West India and Guinea Company. Purchase price was 750,000 livres and established precedent by becoming the first case of the purchase of an island in the Caribbean by a nation. (Other acquisitions had been the result of conquest, "unauthorized" occupation [since Spain had claimed the Caribbean for itself upon Columbus' arrival in 1492], default, swap, or treaty).

-1917: **United States** purchases St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas from Denmark for 25 million dollars in gold.

-1666: Denmark attempts to establish colony on unoccupied St. Thomas, but the colony fails within a year. (Dutch vessels transport enslaved Africans to St. Thomas).

-1671: Denmark acquires an unoccupied (except for interlopers), uncolonized St. Thomas by default

-1672: Denmark establishes colony on St. Thomas



CHANT

- 1673:** Slaving vessel delivers 103 enslaved Africans to St. Thomas

- 1717:** Denmark acquires an unoccupied (except for interlopers), uncolonized St. John by default

- 1718:** Denmark establishes colony on St. John

- 1732:** Count Zinzendorf dispatches two Moravian Brethren to St. Thomas to convert the enslaved population to Christianity. Because of the concept of “Pietism,” which requires that each Christian encounter God through reading the Bible on his own, the illiterate amongst the Moravian-converted enslaved population begin learning how to read. In 1734, missionaries were sent to the recently acquired St. Croix to convert and teach its enslaved population, thereby officially beginning the history of formal education on that island.

- November 23, 1733:** Enslaved Africans, primarily those formerly of the Akamu Empire, seize St. John’s fort Fortberg and take control of St. John for seven months until the Danes receive military assistance from neighboring colonial powers, mainly the French of Martinique. Approximately 50% of the rebels were women.

- November 16, 1733:** Danish West India and Guinea Company sends instructions to Frederik Moth, St. Croix’s first governor, to choose a suitable location for the establishment of a town to be called Christiansted in honor of King Christian VI of Denmark-Norway. (Norway would remain politically linked to Denmark until 1816)

- September 1, 1734:** first settlers arrive from St. Thomas and immediately begin building fort Christiansvaern, which is largely completed by 1749.

- May 2, 1735:** Governor Moth reports layout of first street in Christiansted (Strand Street).

- October 19, 1751:** Frederiksted town established in honor of King Frederik V of Denmark-Norway. (Fort Frederik largely completed by 1760).

- 1755:** Danish West India and Guinea Company dissolved and St. Croix becomes a Crown colony. Capital of Danish West Indies moves from Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas to Christiansted, St. Croix, where it would remain until 1871, when the capital was temporarily reverted to Charlotte Amalie following two devastating hurricanes in 1871, which caused more extensive damage to St. Croix than to St. Thomas. Charlotte Amalie remains the capital of the Virgin Islands to this day.



CHANT

-**1759**: Rebellion believed to have been scheduled to take place during Christmastime, is detected and aborted when one of the participants begins boasting of the impending insurrection.

-**by 1768**: Peter Tongerloe, a “free Negro,” was the owner of Estate Catharina’s Hope, located east of Christiansted, and a townhouse at No. 25 Company Street. He also owned 10 slaves.

-**by 1773** (75 years before Emancipation): many enslaved in the Danish West Indies—especially those of the Moravian faith—could read and write.

-**1787**: Danes establish public schools (two in Christiansted, one in Frederiksted, and one in Charlotte Amalie) to educate the island’s free black and enslaved populations, thereby becoming the first nation in the history of the Transatlantic Slave Trade to officially educate its New World black population. The public education, available at a small fee, focused on reading and memorization. Extra instruction in writing and mathematics could be obtained at an additional cost. The Danes (their official religion being the Lutheran faith), recognizing that the Moravians had had more experience in the educating of the black population through the Moravian Missions, utilized Moravian instructors and administrators in the Danish public schools. [Moravian instructors would remain the educators of choice of the Danish West Indies school system until 1872] (Because St. Thomas and St. John were settled before St. Croix, and because most of the early settlers of St. Thomas and St. John were Dutch rather than Danish, most of the enslaved in the Danish West Indies spoke a Dutch creole. By 1770 it was being written and printed in books—mainly Bibles, prayer books, and hymnals—for use by the black population. Because St. Croix, however, was primarily settled by the English, Irish, and Scottish, and because Christiansted became the capital of the Danish West Indies just 22 years after the Danish acquisition of the island, English creole eventually replaced Dutch creole in the Danish West Indies as the every-day language spoken by the black population. By 1841 English creole had replaced Dutch creole in the Lutheran churches of the Danish West Indies. This transition is what accounts for English being the language of the Virgin Islands, even from before the American era).

-**ENDING OF THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE**—when the various slave-trading European nations decided to stop going to Africa to obtain additional Africans for transport as slaves to the New World. Slaves could be bought, sold, and shipped within the New World, however. The institution of slavery would not end until emancipation occurred in the various nations).



CHANT

- January 1, 1803:** Denmark (and Norway)
- May 1, 1807:** United Kingdom (England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales)
- January 1, 1808:** United States
- 1813:** Sweden
- 1814:** Holland (Netherlands)
- 1814:** Spain (Agreed to stop slave trade—except to her possessions)
- 1815:** France
- 1816:** Portugal (Agreed to end slave trade north of the Equator. Therefore Portugal continued shipping to Brazil, her largest colony utilizing labor of enslaved Africans)
- 1820:** Spain (except to Cuba)
- 1852:** Brazil

-**1801:** British occupy the Danish West Indies for three months (during the Napoleonic Wars)

-**1807-1815:** British occupy the Danish West Indies (during the Napoleonic Wars).

-**March 19, 1820:** John Gutliff (General Buddhoe, General Bourdeaux, Moses Gotleib) born enslaved at Estate La Grange, Frederiksted. At age 28, on July 3, 1848, he would rise to fame as the leader of the rebellion which resulted in Emancipation in the Danish West Indies.

-**July 10, 1830:** Camille Pissarro (1830-1903), “Father of Impressionism,” born on St. Thomas.

-**January 18, 1832:** After six destructive fires devastate Charlotte Amalie between 1804 and 1832, a more restrictive building code is promulgated which requires that buildings on Main Street be of masonry construction and have fire-proof roofs.

-**August 3, 1832:** Edward Wilmont Blyden (1832-1912), father of “Pan-Africanism” (the Back-to-Africa/Africa-for-Africans movement which inspired Marcus Garvey), is born on St. Thomas.

-**1839:** Free, compulsory primary education (ages 6-13) established during the administration of Governor Peter von Scholten. Eight schools built on St. Croix, five on St. Thomas, and four on St. John. Again, Moravian educators utilized. Unlike the schools of 1787, which were located within the towns, the 1839 schools were built to serve the rural populations. First of the “von Scholten schools” opened its doors to students on May 16, 1841 (at estate La Grande Princesse. It is still used as a school today). [1814:



CHANT

Free education for Danes in Denmark]. Recognizing that emancipation was imminent, Danes see free, public education as means of preparing enslaved population for freedom.

-July 28, 1847: Royal Decree promising freedom to the enslaved in twelve years (1859) but granting freedom to children of the unfree who are born after the issuance of the 1847 Decree. (Dissatisfaction with the terms of the Decree; Denmark's transformation into a constitutional monarchy [as opposed to one in which the king had absolute power]; Denmark's war with Germany; and the April 1848 Emancipation of enslaved Africans in the French West Indies led to much unrest in the Danish West Indies.

-July 3, 1848: by 12:00 noon, approximately 8,000 enslaved Africans (approximately one-half of the island's enslaved population), led by General Buddhoe (John Gutliff), demand freedom outside the gates of Fort Frederik in Frederiksted.

-July 3, 1848 at approximately 3:00 p.m.: Governor-General Peter von Scholten, for fear of mass destruction and bloodshed, declare the people emancipated.

EMANCIPATIONS IN THE NEW WORLD

-August 1, 1834: Great Britain (England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales), *to take full effect in 1838.*

-October 9, 1847: Sweden

-April 27, 1848: France

-July 3, 1848: Denmark (by rebellion)

-January 1, 1863: United States

-July 1, 1863: Holland

-July 29, 1880: Spain (all colonies except Cuba, which received emancipation in 1886)

-May 13, 1888: Brazil (Brazil received independence from Portugal on September 7, 1822, thereby ending Portugal's official involvement in the Transatlantic Slave Trade and embarking on its own, which would endure for another 66 years).

[Haitians claim their emancipation from France in 1803 after defeating the French at war].



CHANT

-**January 26, 1849:** Harsh, post-slavery Labor Law binds the formerly enslaved to one-year contracts on plantations and compensates laborers—depending on class—fifteen cents, ten cents, and five cents per day.

-**December 24, 1852:** Military patrol, after being stoned, open-fires on crowd in vicinity of Sunday Market, Christiansted, killing three and dangerously wounding seven others, when revelers refuse to comply with a government order prohibiting masquerading within town limits.

-**September 22, 1857:** Mathilda McBean born at Estate Robe's Hill in Frederiksted to Cecelia Simmonds ([McBean] in 1863) and William McBean. Mathilda McBean will attain local fame at age 21 because of her involvement in the 1878 Fireburn.

HISTORY OF POST-EMANCIPATION LABOR IMMIGRATION TO ST. CROIX

-After Emancipation in July of 1848, many of the formerly enslaved refused to work on plantation, even for the wages offered under the 1849 Labor Law. Instead, they moved to Frederiksted and Christiansted, oftentimes living with relatives and securing a living through the various professions and trades available to black people at the time: joiner, cooper, fisherman, seamstress, baker, shoemaker, cooper, blacksmith, etc. Between the nine-year period of 1850 and 1859, the number of plantation laborers declined by 20% (from 9,173 to 7,304), with a corresponding population increase occurring in the towns of Christiansted and Frederiksted. As the towns filled up and job opportunities became increasingly scarce, Crucians began seeking employment in other islands, especially St. Thomas, Puerto Rico, Tortola, and Vieques.

-In response to the decreasing labor force, some planters, through private initiatives, sought laborers from other nations. Between 1849 and 1851, for example, a few planters turned to Portugal for laborers, but the effort was expensive and the Portuguese tended to leave field work for other employment at the earliest opportunity.

-**1855-1861:** government institutes immigration program to seek laborers from Cape Verde Islands, Africa, Madeira, Venezuela, and China. Government also attempts to negotiate deal with President Lincoln to send refugee slaves from the southern states as well as Africans liberated from captured slaving vessels to St. Croix to work as laborers. The initiatives amount to nothing.

-**1862:** Danish government enters agreement with British government to allow East Indians from Calcutta to be shipped to St. Croix as laborers (as had been the practice in Trinidad, British Guiana, and the French West Indies). **In June of 1863** the first shipment of 318 East Indians arrive to St. Croix. In 1868, however, at the end of their five-year



CHANT

contracts, only 37 decided to remain in the islands, the others citing unbearable working conditions as the reason for their return to India.

-(Between 1859 and 1862, almost 700 Eastern Caribbean laborers, mainly from Barbados, had been sent to St. Croix through immigration agents commissioned by the Danish government in an attempt to defray labor losses due to mortality, emigration, and attrition. The effort was far short of what was required to satisfy the island's labor needs).

-1863: driven by unemployment and hunger in their homeland, 2,000 laborers from Barbados are enticed by immigration agents to migrate to St. Croix. (As a result of the loss of surplus labor in Barbados, the Barbados Assembly enacts law in 1864 significantly curtailing the recruiting efforts of immigration agents. Consequently, only seven immigrants came to St. Croix directly from Barbados in 1864).

-1864-1870: at least 2,200 additional laborers come to St. Croix from other Eastern Caribbean islands, mainly Antigua, St. Kitts, and the Dutch Antilles.

-By 1870: 2,870 of the approximately 5,000 immigrant laborers who had come to St. Croix between 1859 and 1870 had, more or less, settled permanently on the island, partly because of the guaranteed wages under the 1849 Labor Law. (Those who elected not to remain had left, presumably, because of the harshness of the 1849 Labor Law and higher wages available elsewhere in the Caribbean). By 1870 approximately 20% of the black population on St. Croix had come from the Eastern Caribbean.

-1890s-1910s: immigrants from Montserrat and Sts. Maarten/Martin

-1920s-1940s: immigrants from Puerto Rico, Vieques, and Culebra

-1940s-1960s: immigrants from Eastern Caribbean (mainly Antigua/Barbuda, St. Kitts/Nevis)

-1940s-1970s: immigrants from the Middle East (mainly Palestine and Jordan).

-1960s-1970s: immigrants from Trinidad, Dutch Antilles (mainly Curacao and Aruba), and French West Indies (mainly St. Lucia and Dominica)

-1980s to present: immigrants from Dominican Republic

-1865: Hassel Island canal cut, allowing free-flow of sea water into and out of Charlotte Amalie's harbor, thereby reducing stench and disease

-1866: Manassah Christian, born enslaved in 1826 at Estate La Grande Princesse to J. Christophe Christian and Anna Rachel, acquires 218 acres of Estate Mt. Welcome—along with its stone greathouse, factory, and former slave dwellings, all in a state of ruin. Within five years, however, Christian had made such significant progress on his plantation that his efforts were brought to the Danish authorities. On December 13, 1871, Christian was nominated for a medal from the Danish Agricultural Society, which was duly awarded.



CHANT

-October 29, 1867: Devastating hurricane hits the Danish West Indies, killing approximately 500 people.

-November 18, 1867: Devastating earthquake, followed by a tidal wave, (tsunami) hits Danish West Indies about 10 minutes before negotiators from Denmark are scheduled to gather at Government House, Christiansted at 3:00 p.m. to discuss the pending United States' purchase of St. Thomas and St. John. Seven-gun American war-steamer USS Monongahela washed ashore into Frederiksted town, reaching as far as the present-day vegetable market, then taken back out to sea with the reflux, being deposited upon a reef in the harbor. The sale of the islands, including St. Croix, would not occur until 1917, fifty years later.

HISTORY OF VIRGIN ISLANDER EMIGRATION

- 1860s:** Crucians leave St. Croix in search of economic opportunity in St. Thomas
- 1890s:** Virgin Islanders begin leaving the Danish West Indies for New York
- 1904 to 1914:** Virgin Islanders begin leaving islands for Panama during the final phase of the construction of the Panama Canal.
- 1900 to 1915:** Virgin Islanders leave the islands for job opportunities in the sugar cane industry in the Dominican Republic.
- 1918:** Virgin Islanders begin mass migration to New York, one year after Transfer. The migration would continue until the early 1960s.
- 1950 to Present:** Virgin Islands "brain drain." Young, educated Virgin Islanders remain abroad after receiving university educations on the U.S. mainland.
- 1980-Present:** Virgin Islanders migrating to Georgia, Florida, and Maryland in search of economic opportunity.

HISTORY OF MAJOR RECORDED HURRICANES IN THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

- 1695, July 20
- 1707, September 11
- 1714, July 26
- 1729, September 22
- 1733, July 11



CHANT

- 1742, September 29
 - 1748, July 20
 - 1772, August 31 (Witnessed and written about by Alexander Hamilton [1755-1804] while living on St. Croix)
 - 1793, August 13
 - 1819, September 21
 - 1825, July 26
 - 1830, August 30
 - 1837, August 2
 - 1866, September 28
 - 1867, October 29
 - 1871, August 21
 - 1871, October 23
 - 1876, September 13
 - 1899, August 7
 - 1916, October 10
 - 1928, September 12
 - 1989, September 17 (“Hugo”)
 - 1995, September 16 (“Marilyn”)
 - 1999, November 17 (“Lenny”). Also called “Wrong-Way Lenny” because the storm originated in the Pacific and reached the Virgin Islands via the Gulf of Mexico rather than the normal Caribbean hurricane route, which comes via the Atlantic. The storm was also unique in that it arrived in November, considered late for Atlantic hurricanes.
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-1876: Caspar Holstein (1876-1944), born Caspar Joseph. Crucian millionaire, philanthropist, and inventor of numbers game “Bolito.”

-October 1, 1878: Fireburn. After 30 years of dissatisfaction with the slavery-like 1849 Labor Law, Crucian laborers set fire to the town of Frederiksted and the western plantations, the objective being to burn all the way east to “Bassin Jailhouse.” Over 400 laborers were arrested, and 12 were summarily executed by firing squad. Eventually, 40 people were tried and sentenced, with four women, “The Queens of Fireburn,” emerging as heroines: Susanna Abrahamson (Queen Susanna), better known as “Bottom Belly”; Mathilde Mc Bean (Queen Mathilda); Mary Leticia Thomas (Queen Mary); and Axeline Elizabeth Salomon (Queen Agnes). As a result of Fireburn, the Labor Law of 1849 was



CHANT

repealed on October 24, 1879, thereby allowing laborers to freely seek and secure employment, on and off the island.

-July 19, 1882: Four “Queens of Fireburn” arrive at Copenhagen on board the ship “Thea” to begin serving their prison sentences at the Women’s prison in Copenhagen for their involvement in the 1878 Fireburn. The July 20, 1882 issue of the daily newspaper “Nyt Aftenblad” reads, “Four negresses, who are sentenced to hard labor for life for their participation in the rebellion on St. Croix arrived yesterday on the bark “Thea” to the capital to serve their sentences. They will today be transported to the Women’s Prison on Kristianshavn.” [The four women were in fact transported on July 19th, the date of their arrival, to the women’s prison].

-September 28, 1884: David Hamilton Jackson, Crucian judge, lawyer, editor, councilman, and labor leader, born at Estate East Hill to Wilford Jackson and Eliza McIntosh Jackson.

-1884: Ashley Totten (1884-1963) born on St. Croix. Totten received national attention for his founding role of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, a labor union to protect champion the causes and interests of New York’s porters.

-1890 to 1950: Golden Age of the black, Crucian businessman/tradesman/landowner.

-September 1, 1892: Coal Workers Strike in Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, led by coal worker and bamboula dancer “Queen Coziah.” St. Thomas, being situated in the center of the Caribbean and being naturally endowed with the region’s best deep-water port, had developed a thriving industry as a coaling station for steam ships. Coal workers, primarily women, were paid one penny per basket of coal, oftentimes resulting in a day’s pay of one dollar (significantly higher than that of agricultural workers, who were earning around 20 cents per day). When the Mexican silver dollars with which the workers were customarily paid by the shipping companies became undervalued by about 20% (The Mexican silver dollars had been brought to St. Thomas by exiled Mexican president/emperor Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna [1795-1876] during his third exile from Mexico [1855-1874] and were in wide circulation during his stay on the island [at least 1858-1869] and beyond.), workers demanded payment in Danish dollars. Led by “Queen Coziah,” coal workers gathered and, brandishing sticks and stones, demanded payment in Danish dollars or gold. Fearing the mass destruction which had visited St. Croix 14 years earlier in Fireburn, the shipping companies acquiesced without significant incident.

-1904-1914: Danish West Indies laborers migrate to Panama to build the Panama Canal.

-March 16, 1905: Queen Mary of the 1878 Fireburn (Mary Letitia Thomas [Wattris]) dies and is buried the following day in the cemetery of Estate Williams Delight, the estate



CHANT

where she and her husband resided at the time of her death. There is no mention of her death in the St. Croix Avis.

-1906: Colonial Law of 1906. Law established, amongst other things, voting rights to persons who met certain property/salary requirements. Law also established two districts of administration: St. Croix and St. Thomas/St. John.

-1913: D. Hamilton Jackson (along with Colonel Crowe, Charles Ruebel, and Sammy Smith) started a night school at the Danish School on King Street, Christiansted for the purpose of teaching day-laborers how to read, write, and do arithmetic.

-1915: D. Hamilton Jackson travels to Denmark and is given an audience by King Christian X and the Danish Parliament in order to voice his grievances regarding health care, labor practices, etc., in the Danish West Indies. Jackson also petitions for freedom of the press since the local newspapers were government owned/controlled.

-November 1, 1915: First issue of D. Hamilton Jackson newspaper, The Herald, distributed across St. Croix. (The Herald remained in publication until 1922). “Readers” sent out into countryside to read the paper to any illiterate laborers.

-December 1915: D. Hamilton Jackson (along with Ralph Bough) organizes the first labor union in the Danish West Indies, called the St. Croix Labor Union. Membership quickly grows to over 6,000, and the organization eventually purchases and subdivides several estates, namely Rust-Op-Twist, La Vallee, Grove Place, Cane Bay, and Hard Labor, thereby allowing laborers to purchase land on St. Croix. The Labor Union Bank is established.

-February 26, 1916: After six weeks of work stoppage, laborers, organized by the two-month-old Labor Union, win a victory over the island’s plantocracy, resulting in higher wages and better working conditions. (Jackson strategically timed the strike at the beginning of the sugar cane harvest season. When planters forced striking laborers to leave their plantation-village residences, laborers sought refuge at churches and at black-owned residences in the towns. Black merchants supported the laborers by providing food, clothing, etc.).

-October 1916: Success of St. Croix Labor Union encourages St. Thomas laborers, mainly female coal workers organized by George A. Moorehead into the St. Thomas Labor Union with a membership of about 2,700, to demand wage increase from one cent per basket of coal to two cents. The Danish West India Company, Ltd. grants the coal workers the wage increase.



CHANT

-March 1, 1917: At a mass meeting in St. Thomas, it is decided, after much debate, that the name of the islands would change from Danish West Indies to American Virgin Islands upon the official transfer of the islands. (Some other names considered were: Dewey Islands, United States West Indies, American West Indies).

-March 31, 1917: Danish West Indies transferred to United States of America.

-1917 to 1927: Virgin Islands under Navy rule (February 27, 1931 Pres. Hoover transfers administration of islands to Department of Interior, where they remain until today).

-1918: Many Virgin Islanders begin migrating to United States, mainly to New York City's Harlem neighborhood, in search of economic opportunity.

-1919: Alton Augustus Adams, Sr. composes the "Virgin Islands March."

-1921: Rothschild Francis, an elected member of the Colonial Council from 1921-24, establishes "The Emancipator," a newspaper created to champion of the causes of the masses. (See below).

-1921: Originally created during the naval administration of the Virgin Islands, the seal of the Government of the Virgin Islands has been in use as the islands' official seal since July 21, 1921 despite there never having been an executive order for its adoption and use. In 1933 the Secretary of Interior allowed for the continued use of the seal for government purposes.

-1922: Rothschild Francis (1891-1963), born on St. Croix to Albert and Mathilda Francis, travels to Washington, DC to meet with congressional committees to discuss status as well as the economic and political conditions of the Virgin Islands. Francis presents his plan, drafted in 1921, which proposed a structure of government for the territory. Assisted by mainland organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union, The National Urban League, and The American Federation of Labor, Rothschild's plan was granted a hearing in the sub-committee in the Department of Interior though the plan ultimately failed to receive congressional approval. Francis' plan is regarded as the forerunner of the 1936 Organic Act, which established civilian government in the American Virgin Islands. As a result of Francis' efforts, he is oftentimes regarded as "The Father of the Organic Act."

-1922: Virgin Islands flag, designed by secretary of the naval vessel "Grib," is officially accepted.



CHANT

-February 25, 1927: U.S. citizenship granted to Virgin Islanders. (The right to vote was also conferred along with citizenship, though the voting right was tied to property ownership and income, thereby effectively denying many black people the power of the vote.

-1930: The West Indian Sugar Factory, Ltd. (popularly referred to as the “Bethlehem Sugar Factory”), a company owned primarily by Danish shareholders, closed its doors, displacing over 1000 workers and effectively crippling the St. Croix economy.

-1930-1950: Federal Government’s Homestead Program. As part of Roosevelt’s Dew Deal, over 3000 acres of St. Croix farmland are made available to eligible Black and Hispanic (only U.S. citizens between the ages of 21 and 55 were eligible) small farmers on a lease-purchase basis, the objectives being create a land-owning middle class and to abandon the one-crop (sugar cane) economy which had been the way of life in the islands since the late 1600s, opting instead for a diversified crop-base which could sustain the consumption demands of the local population. Plots tended to range in size between three and ten acres and were priced, in general, between \$29 and \$49 per acre. In addition, by 1938, 52 new, two- to four-room houses were built on St. Croix for Homestead families. Approximately 350 local farmers participated in the program. In the end, the program failed mainly because of VICO: after 1934, small farmers continued producing sugar cane, rather than a full range of crops for local consumption, on their small plots, resulting in an increase in imported agricultural products. By the final years of the Program, the planter class owned even more of St. Croix’s agricultural land than it had before the Program.

-1932: Charlotte Amalie High School graduates its first 12th-grade class.

-July 8, 1934: President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, in order to witness the conditions of the Virgin Islands himself, visits St. Croix.

-1934: Federal Government purchases The West Indian Sugar Factory, changing the company’s name to Virgin Islands Company (VICO) and employing over 1,400 field and industrial workers. By 1937, VICO laborers were being compensated at rates of 80 cents to \$1.00 per day.

-January 29, 1935: Civilian Conservations Corp (CCC) inaugurated. Part of the New Deal, the Corp was a semi-military organization open to young men between the ages of 18 and 25. Enrollees lived in the camp for two years, were paid a monthly salary between \$12 and \$45, and received on-the-job training in agriculture (reforestation, soil erosion, establishing parks, etc.), carpentry, and road construction. Most of the mahogany trees



CHANT

which flank Queen Mary Highway today were planted during by the young men of the CCC. The project ended locally in 1941.

-October 10, 1935: Queen Mathilda (Mathilda McBean [Williams]), dies at age 78 at Estate Hogensborg and is buried in the Catholic section of the Frederiksted Cemetery.

-1936: Christiansted High School graduates its first 12th-grade class.

-June 22, 1936: President Roosevelt signed the bill which would become known as “The 1936 Organic Act of the Virgin Islands of the United States,” thereby replacing the Temporary Government Act of 1917 and several codes, some of which had been carried over from the Danish era.

-1945: Virgin Islands witnesses embryonic stages of a tourism industry, attracting military personal who had visited the islands during World War II.

-1946: Winston Spree Simon performs a steel pan concert during the 1946 carnival, establishing himself as the inventor of the instrument. By the early 1950s, steelbands had become popular throughout the Caribbean.

-1946-1950: William Hastie appointed as first black governor of the American Virgin Islands. (After serving his term as governor, Hastie accepts President Truman’s offer to serve as first black Circuit Court judge. Virgin Islands Legislative Assembly then cables President Truman, recommending Morris Fidanque De Castro for governor).

-1949: Liberty Day is established as local holiday in honor of the right to free press, championed by D. Hamilton Jackson. In 1981 “Liberty Day” (popularly referred to as “Bull and Bread Day” because of the beef and bread traditionally served at the holiday’s observance events), celebrated in Estate Grove Place in tribute to the Labor Union’s purchase of the estate, is changed to “David Hamilton Jackson Day.”

-1950: Morris Fidanque de Castro—first native governor of the Virgin Islands.

-July 22, 1954: Revised Organic Act. Act provided for, among other things, the abolishment of the use of language, literacy, property, income, race, sex, color, or religion as criteria for voting.

-1952: Government-sponsored/organized carnivals in the Virgin Islands. (Before 1952, beginning with the first arrival of Africans, the ancient traditions of the masquerade and street theater were observed and performed during the holiday seasons: Christmas, Epiphany, Whit Monday, Easter).



CHANT

-September 1, 1957: Virgin Islands Code adopted, establishing a new body of statutory law for the Virgin Islands and repealing or superseding all prior local laws. (For example the 1906 Colonial Law, enacted during the Danish era, and the 1920/21 codes which had brought the Virgin Islands under the American system of statutory and common law).

-January 1962: Virgin Islands government, under the guidance of Governor Ralph M. Paiewonsky and Senator Earl B. Ottley, enters into an agreement with Leo Harvey of the Harvey Aluminum Company authorizing the company to construct a 25 million dollar aluminum processing plant on the island's south shore. The agreement represented the island's first major step in its transition from a centuries-old agrarian society into an industrial one.

-1962: College of the Virgin Islands founded. Lawrence Wanlass served as its first president. In 1986, the College of the Virgin Islands became the University of the Virgin Islands.

-1964: Virgin Islands Legislature declares first Monday in September of 1964 to be observed as West Indian Solidarity Day throughout territory. By 1968, however, due to overabundance of alien labor and increased crime, attributed to the alien population, Crucian and Crucian-Puerto Rican sentiments towards the Eastern Caribbean immigrant deteriorated. By 1970, the term "alien" is being used as an expletive.

-September 1, 1965: Virgin Islands government, under the guidance of Governor Ralph M. Paiewonsky and Senator Earl B. Ottley, enter into an agreement with Leon Hess of the Hess Oil Refinery Company of New Jersey authorizing the company to construct an oil refinery on the south shore of St. Croix.

-June 30, 1966: VICORP (popularly referred to as "Bethlehem Sugar Factory) closed its doors, thereby officially ending St. Croix's 300-year-old sugar cane industry.

-March 1968: "Rounding up" of illegal aliens for deportation to their home islands begins.

-August 23, 1968: Elective Governor Act. Act provided for first election for Governor of the Virgin Islands to be held on November 3, 1970.



CHANT

-November 17, 1970: After the results of the November 3, 1970 gubernatorial election necessitated a run-off election on November 17, 1970, Melvin H. Evans emerged as the first-elected (and last-appointed) governor of the Virgin Islands.

-1970: *Hosier v. Evans*, 8 V.I. 27 (D.C.V.I. 1970), the landmark judicial opinion which held that Title 17, section 82 of the Virgin Islands Code which states that “all children shall attend school” applies to all children lawfully in the Virgin Islands, regardless of whether they are aliens or not. The ruling resulted in severe overcrowding of the local public schools during the 1971-72 academic year, the immediate solution for which was double-sessions (half the students attending school from 7:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, and the other half attending school from 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.) Prior to *Hosier v. Evans*, children of alien residents were required to attend the islands’ private and parochial schools. (In 1967, the public school enrollment in the Virgin Islands was 11,507. By 1974, just three years after the court’s ruling was put into effect, however, the enrollment had skyrocketed to 24, 343 as alien residents utilized immigration laws to bring their children who had been left in their home-islands to the Virgin Islands to live and attend the local public schools). Three elementary schools were hurriedly built (Pearl B. Larsen, Alexander Henderson, and Alfredo Andrews), their first commencement exercises taking place in 1973; and additional teachers, primarily from mainland U.S.A., many of whom had little experience with island life or Caribbean culture, were brought in to educate Virgin Islands’ students. The decline in the quality of public education in the Virgin Islands is believed by many to have begun in 1971, the effects of that tumultuous year still being felt today.

-1970s: Towns decline as former sugar cane plantations are subdivided for housing developments. Cultural expressions suffer as a result.

-February 28, 1971: Teamed with local police under the direction of Governor Melvin H. Evans, agents of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and agents of the U.S. Border Patrol, in the middle of the night, conduct a major sweep of the island, apprehending many of the island’s illegal alien population.

-September 6, 1972: Fountain Valley murders. Five to seven masked, armed gunmen entered the clubhouse area of the Fountain Valley Golf Course on St. Croix, where they encountered approximately 16 people, including staff and guests. After taking cash from the clubhouse shop and snack bar and ordering the people in the clubhouse to lie on the floor, shots were fired, leaving eight dead and four wounded. The F.B.I. was called in and began arriving by September 7. As several people killed were Caucasian, many people viewed the crime as racially motivated and linked to some Black revolutionary movement. By September 12, five suspects had been arrested. The crime received much



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national attention, resulting in the demise of tourism/outside investment on St. Croix. The impact of the Fountain Valley murders is still felt on the island today.
