1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: **FORT CHRISTIAN**

Other Name/Site Number: **Christians Fort**

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: **N/A** Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: **Charlotte Amalie** Vicinity: X

State: **US Virgin Islands** County: **St. Thomas** Code: **030** Zip Code: 00802

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property		Category of Property	
Private:	___	Building(s):	X
Public-Local:	___	District:	___
Public-State:	X	Site:	___
Public-Federal:	___	Structure:	___
		Object:	___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
1	1 buildings
___	___ sites
___	___ structures
___	___ objects
1	1 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 0

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ Entered in the National Register
___ Determined eligible for the National Register
___ Determined not eligible for the National Register
___ Removed from the National Register
___ Other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	Government Defense	Sub:	government office fortification
Current:	Recreation & Culture	Sub:	museum

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: Other - 17th and 18th century Danish Military; Late Victorian - Gothic

Materials: Stone

Foundation: Stone
Walls: Stone, Plaster covered
Roof: Fired brick, supported by wooden beams
Other: Fired brick paving in courtyard

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Introduction: Fort Christian, or Christians Fort, was constructed in the 1670s to protect the Danish colony on St. Thomas. The fort is a rubble masonry seventeenth-century fortress consisting of curtain walls enclosing a square, with an irregular diamond-shaped bastion on each corner. The fort is typical of fortresses of the Baltic area of that century. Behind the curtain walls and bastions are rooms formerly containing gun batteries, government offices, the residence for the colonial governor, and the colony's first church. The interior courtyard of the fort is a brick-paved open area that once contained a large thick-walled tower along the north side of the courtyard. In 1874, this tower was demolished and the northern curtain wall was replaced with a Gothic Revival style building incorporating a prominent clock tower (figures 1 and 2).

Environmental Setting: The harbor of St. Thomas, with its easily defended narrow entrance, large roadstead to accommodate numerous ships, and broad flat beach on the north side of the harbor to land supplies and load plantation produce, was an ideal location for the establishment of a colony that would depend upon seaborne trade. Along the eastern side of the beach was a slightly elevated rectangularly shaped rocky peninsula that jutted some 700 feet into the harbor.

In the 1670s, the colonists built their stone fort on the neck of this peninsula to take advantage of its natural defensive characteristics (photo 1). The east and west approaches to the fort were protected by a barrier of water and, later, by triangular-shaped stone fortifications (ravelins) projecting out from the curtain walls of the fort (Crain 1994:153). The south side of the fort was also protected by water, but did not have a ravelin. Additional protection on the south side of the fort was provided by the construction of a water battery. On the north, or land side, which was the traditional approach into the fort, the elevation was not so steep. Therefore, the Danes enhanced the defense of this approach by constructing a wooden palisade across the neck of the peninsula. During the seventeenth century a barrier of prickly pear cactus was maintained between the wooden palisade and the stone walls of the fort to further impede attackers. This approach area to the north of the fort was always maintained by the Danes as an open defensive area, and today consists of two small park areas (figure 1). The wooden palisade was replaced with a stone ravelin projecting from the north side of the fort in the 1720s (photo 2). The site of Fort Christian "commanded the flanking beaches of the peninsula, the entrance to the harbor, and all parts of the bay" (deJongh and Gjessing 1982:18).

By the 1820s, when Fort Christian was rendered obsolete by improvements in the range and power of naval gunnery, it no longer was deemed necessary for the defense of the island. The soldiers were relocated from the fort and quartered in a barracks building (the present-day Territorial Legislature) constructed on the peninsula between the fort and the water battery. Throughout the nineteenth century, the water areas east and west of the fort were filled in to create flat land surfaces upon which open park space and dock facilities were constructed. In the 1870s, the ravelins on the north, east, and west sides of the fort were removed, although portions of the east ravelin are extant.
Within the fortification was a square brick-paved open space. Along the north side of the open space was a squat three-story high stone tower, or keep, called Trygborg. Twenty-six and one half feet high and 90 feet in circumference, the tower was intended as a self-contained last ditch defensive position if an enemy carried the outer walls of Fort Christian (photo 3). The first floor was a large storeroom for ammunition and provisions. The walls of the upper two floors were studded with embrasures for both small arms and light cannon.

In 1874, Trygborg, the northern curtain wall, and northern ravelin were torn down. That part of the fort was replaced with a Gothic Revival style building featuring a prominent clock tower (photos 4 and 5). In the mid-twentieth century, further land filling occurred along the whole northern shoreline of the harbor upon which a two lane highway (Veterans Drive) was constructed. This road ran along the south side of the fort, separating it from the water battery and barracks. The reclaimed land on the west side of the fort became Emancipation Garden, while the reclaimed land on the east side of the fort became a parking lot. The northern approach to the fort, which once contained land side defenses became two small park areas (figure 1).

Description: From the beginning, Fort Christian was considered the most important structure on St. Thomas, as it provided security for the newly founded Danish colony against attacks by other colonial powers and pirates. According to Robert deJongh and Fred Gjessing:

> The site selected [for the fort] was a low hill on a small peninsula jutting out at the approximate center of the north shore of the bay of St. Thomas harbor. It was opposite the entrance to the bay and extended 700 feet into it. Immediately behind the rocky shoreline, the peninsula had level ground only a few feet above the sea. The hill occupied the center of the peninsula. It was defined by fairly steep slopes towards the east, south and west. On the landward side, the hill sloped more gently down to the lower terrain to the north that separated the peninsula from the steeper rises further inland [1982:18].

The fort site faced water on the west, east, and south sides of the fort with a water battery on the extreme south face of the peninsula for protection against attack. The north side of the fort was protected from attack from the land side with a wooden palisade stretching across the peninsula, and a barrier of prickly pear cactus that surrounded the fort. Later fortifications were added on the exterior of the east, west, and north curtain walls in the form of ravelins (photo 2). The northern palisade, prickly pear cactus barrier, and ravelins (with the exception of partial remains on the east side of the fort) are gone.

The land and sea areas surrounding Fort Christian have changed considerably through the gradual in-filling of the water areas on the west and east sides of the fort. The area to the north of the fort, where the Danish military once had a ravelin, is now open space. On the south side the open area between the water battery and the fort has been filled in with a 1820s barracks structure, three mid-twentieth century United States Coast Guard buildings, and Veteran's Drive. On the east side most of the ravelin was removed, as were numerous buildings constructed by the U.S. Navy (1917-1931). The area east of the fort is now a parking lot. On the west side, the ravelin has been removed and a fire station was built in the area in the 1950s (photo 6 and figure 1).

The extant portions of the seventeenth and eighteenth fort structure consist of: the east, west, and south curtain walls; all four diamond-shaped bastions; and the interior rooms built within the bastions and against the curtain walls. The nineteenth century portion of the fort consists of the northern curtain wall and rooms built behind this curtain wall, and the Gothic Revival clock tower. All of these historic features are intact (figure 2).

Recent restoration efforts by the Territorial Government have resulted in the restoration of the roof, or gun deck, of the fort and the gun batteries within the west curtain wall of the fort (photos 7 and 8). This work has also removed the twentieth century frame additions to the south side of the fort and a concrete roof installed over the historic gun deck or roof by the U.S. Navy, between 1917 and 1931.

The area of the fort that has seen the greatest change is the interior space formed by the curtain walls and bastions. Originally, the mass and height of the exterior curtain and bastion walls formed the defense for the cannons of the fort and served as the back wall for a number of structures built within the fort, some of wood

and some of stone. Changes in the function of the fort and deterioration of structures necessitated numerous rearrangements of the interior.

By the 1730s most of the fort had reached its present shape. The southeast part of the fort, due to the irregularity of the rocky outcrop on which it was constructed, was the only two-story area. The height of the outer walls allowed for the construction of a lower series of masonry rooms in this area. Above this was a second tier of masonry rooms built against the outer curtain walls (photo 9). At the same time the southeast and southwest bastions had been completely filled in with rooms. The northwest and northeast bastions were only partially filled in, leaving small spaces open in the middle of these bastions. The roof of the masonry rooms behind the curtain walls and bastions formed a continuous gun deck for the cannons. Two stone guard posts were built at the tips of the northwest and southwest bastions (photo 2).

In 1874 the seventeenth-century north curtain wall between the northeast and northwest bastions and the internal tower (Trygborg)were removed. A Gothic Revival style entrance and clock tower were constructed, between 1874 and 1878 (photos 4 and 5).

The only non-contributing building within the boundary of the Fort Christian National Historic Landmark is a 1950s fire station along the west side of the fort (photo 6 and figure 1).

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
Nationally: X Statewide:__ Locally:__

Applicable National Register Criteria: A X B__ C__ D__

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A__ B__ C__ D__ E__ F__ G__

NHL Criteria: **Criterion 1**

NHL Theme(s):
1. Peopling Places
6. encounters, conflicts, and colonization

Areas of Significance: **Exploration/Settlement, Military**

Period(s) of Significance: **1671-1917**

Significant Dates: **N/A**

Significant Person(s): **N/A**

Cultural Affiliation: **N/A**

Architect/Builder: **Governor Jørgen Iversen**

Historic Contexts: **II. EUROPEAN COLONIAL EXPLORATION & SETTLEMENT**
D. Other European Exploration & Settlement
1. Scandinavian (Danish)

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

Summary Statement of Significance: Fort Christian, or Christians Fort, was constructed in the latter part of the seventeenth century (1672-1680) to protect the Danish colony of St. Thomas. The fort served as the center for Danish colonial community life during much of the nearly 250 years of Danish rule of St. Thomas, until the transfer from Danish colonial rule to American authority in 1917. It housed the site of the first Lutheran church, the Governor's residence, governmental offices of the colony, the prison, and was the principal fortification protecting the settlement of Charlotte Amalie from attack by other colonial Caribbean powers.

Background History

On his second voyage to the New World, Christopher Columbus took a more southerly course across the Atlantic Ocean hoping to encounter the islands of the Caribs he had been told about on his first voyage. Columbus took this route as he wanted to chart a quicker route from Spain to the Indies. On November 3, 1493, only 21 days after leaving the Canary Islands, his fleet sighted the island of Dominica, at the southern end of the Lesser Antilles (Highfield 1995:52).

Traveling northward among the Lesser Antilles, Columbus landed at an island he called Guadalupe (present-day Guadeloupe Island). He spent eight days on this island and found the first evidence of the Caribs (Highfield 1995:52). On the morning of November 10, 1493, the fleet left Guadalupe and cruised northward naming various islands after Catholic saints. They reached the island of Saba, on November 12th, whence they turned to the west in the direction of St. Croix Island (Morison 1939:80; Highfield 1995:54). Arriving at St. Croix on the morning of November 14th, Columbus coasted along the north side of the island looking for a place to debark and meet with the native peoples. Dr. Chanca, the expedition's physician, noted they could see the present-day American (St. Thomas and St. John) and British Virgin Islands north of St. Croix at this time (Highfield 1995:58).

Following brief and bloody contact with the Native Americans on the north side of St. Croix, at Salt River Bay (Columbus Landing Site, designated a National Historic Landmark in 1960), on the afternoon of November 14, 1493 the fleet raised anchor and sailed north to St. Thomas and St. John. The fleet did not land on either of these islands. However, it was during this part of the voyage that St. Thomas, called Santo Thomas by Columbus, was named.

During the first decades of the sixteenth century the native peoples on the present-day American Virgin Islands were beset by Spanish slavers (Highfield 1995:132-133) attempting to acquire labor for the Puerto Rican gold mines. In January of 1511 the St. Croix Caribs joined with Puerto Rican Tainos to attack and destroy a Spanish settlement on the Añasco River, in Puerto Rico (Caron 1988:1). By Spanish decree the Caribs became enemies of the crown who were to be exterminated (Cissell 1993:3; Highfield 1995:76). Thereafter, Spanish expeditions from Puerto Rico regularly raided the American Virgin Islands for Carib slaves. By 1515, Juan Ponce de Léon, Governor of Puerto Rico, described these islands as deserted (Sauer 1969:192).

Throughout the rest of the sixteenth century the American Virgin Islands were for the most part abandoned. They were too close to Spanish Puerto Rico for native peoples to maintain a safe permanent settlement, while the Spanish had no interest in using the islands as a colony. Instead, they became staging areas for almost

annual Carib raids on the Spanish in Puerto Rico in the 1520s and 1530s (Highfield 1995:134). In all probability the American Virgin Islands, including St. Thomas, were sporadically inhabited by Caribs until the beginning of the seventeenth century (Highfield 1995:134).

The first European country to attempt to permanently settle St. Thomas was an ill-fated colonial effort by Denmark, in 1666. Under Governor Erik Smit a small colony was established on St. Thomas, presumably in the area of the present fort, but that attempt ended when the Dutch attacked the colony and the colonists elected to return to Denmark after only eighteen months (deJongh and Gjessing 1982:2).

To prevent foreign interference with any future colonization attempt, King Christian V in 1670 signed a treaty of alliance and commerce with Great Britain. In that way, the British -- the most powerful colonial presence in the Lesser Antilles -- would not oppose Danish efforts to colonize St. Thomas (Dookhan 1974:37).

In 1671 the Danes' second attempt to colonize St. Thomas began with the establishment of the *Dansk vestindisk-guineisk Kompagni* or Danish West India and Guinea Company, "to carry on business in the West Indies" (deJongh and Gjessing 1982:1). In the following year (1672) St. Thomas was successfully colonized (Westergaard 1917:31-32). The Danes later acquired the rights to the island of St. John through the founding of plantations on that island in 1717. The Danish West India and Guinea Company purchased the practically abandoned French island of St. Croix in 1733. The Danes took possession in the following year completing Danish colonial holdings in the New World (Westergaard 1917:37, 128, 208).

The Danish, like other European colonial powers in the Caribbean, used imported African slave labor to produce tropical products, such as sugar, rum, cotton, indigo, and tobacco. All of these products were in great demand internationally. By the late eighteenth century, the plantations on St. Thomas were predominately given over to the raising of sugar cane, and the production of molasses, rum, and brown sugar for export. However, the expense of transporting, maintaining, and policing a captive labor population would prove to be less economically profitable for St. Thomas than inter-island trade.

The Danish West India and Guinea Company was under contract to the Danish government to organize the Lesser Antilles islands into profitable colonies. To this end the Company established slaving stations along the Guinea coast of Africa. Between 1698 and 1754 the Company transported over ten thousand slaves from Africa to the Danish Virgin Islands. It is estimated that over one quarter of the slaves perished at sea. This was a much higher loss rate than suffered by other European slavers (Boyer 1983:17).

When the contract of the Company ended in 1754 the Danish government continued the transport of African slaves with a similar loss ratio. In 1803 the Danish slave trade officially ended. The end of the trade was recommended by the Great Negro Trade Commission which illustrated the trade as equally unhealthy to Danish sailors.

> Of the 2,004 Danish sailors who sailed in the Danish slave ships in the twelve-year period of 1777 to 1789, a total of 691, or more than one-third, died during the voyages [Boyer 1983:37].

Acting on the Commission's recommendations, the King's edict of March 16, 1792 set the date of the end of the slave trade at December 31, 1802, "in order to permit the planters time to stock up on the number of slaves" (Boyer 1983:37).

As early as 1690 Governor Johan Lorentz of the Virgin Islands proclaimed a policy of execution or mutilation

as punishment for runaway slaves (Boyer 1983:24). Within the Danish islands

> ... a special tax was levied on planters to indemnify those among them for any legally killed or injured slaves, thus removing a powerful economic constraint against the maiming and killing of slaves [Boyer 1983:24-25].

Throughout the eighteenth century, and into the early decades of the nineteenth century, the Danish slave laws were still being enforced, although they were considerably relaxed during the two British occupations of the islands in the early nineteenth century (1801 and 1807-1815) (Boyer 1983:28). Added to this was a growing free-colored class that served in the Free-Colored Militia, owned property, ran businesses, and even possessed slaves, and that was petitioning the Danish King for their full rights as citizens (Boyer 1983:42).

After emancipation of the slaves in 1848, sugar cane production dropped off to practically nothing on St. Thomas. As the importance of tropical products grown on St. Thomas declined, the major economic aspect of the island became the transit trade of goods that were traded in the neutral port of Charlotte Amalie. This trade had begun in the second half of the eighteenth century following its designation as a free port in 1764 (Cinquino 1996:30-31).

The first half of the nineteenth century was a period of growing prosperity for St. Thomas. The excellence and size of its harbor and the location of St. Thomas, midway between North and South America and within cruising range of the new steam-powered ships from Europe and the United States, made St. Thomas an ideal transhipment point. The island was not only prospering, it was also optimistically predicting further growth and development.

The prosperity of St. Thomas began to taper off in the last half of the nineteenth century, due to natural disasters and technological changes. In late 1867 St. Thomas was beset by two major natural disasters in rapid succession. In October a devastating hurricane hit the island, followed in November by a tidal wave, both of which destroyed great numbers of ships in the harbor. These two natural catastrophes did great damage to the town, the harbor, shipping facilities, and St. Thomas' reputation as a safe harbor (Brønsted 1952:299).

Advances and improvements in the steamships of the period eliminated the need for using St. Thomas as a coaling station for ships from North America and Europe on their way to South America. St. Thomas' transit trade and usefulness as a coaling station was coming to an end. The gradual loss of population that resulted from the declining economy of the island also affected the St. Thomas community. Following World War II, with the increase in air transportation and the development of tourism, the population of St. Thomas has again grown in numbers.

History of Fort Christian

As early as the 1620s Danish merchants developed trading companies along the lines of the British, Dutch, and French West India Companies to trade Danish goods for tropical products available only from the Caribbean. Danish trading ventures of this time usually consisted of sending individual ships sponsored by the merchant companies to trade at ports in the New World, trade practice which usually produced substantial profits for these companies. By mid-century the Copenhagen based West India Company proposed the creation of a Danish colony in the Caribbean. In 1665 the company secured permission from the crown to settle a colony on St. Thomas in the West Indies. The first Danish colonization effort reached St. Thomas on March 30, 1666, under the command of Erik Smit who had been appointed Governor for the new colony by the West India Company.

Governor Smit and numerous other colonists soon died. The remaining settlers were not able to complete a defensive fortification, believed to have been located in the vicinity of Bluebeard's Castle on a hill east of the present location of Fort Christian (Lightbourn 1973:1; deJongh and Gjessing 1982:1-2, 17).

The loss of settlers due to illness meant the colony did not have the manpower to construct a defensive structure for its protection. The newly founded colony soon found itself embroiled in international politics that would doom its existence without the means to protect itself from other colonial powers and pirates.

According to deJongh and Gjessing,

> In 1665 war had broken out between England and Holland in which France joined on the side of the Dutch. By the following year it had spread to the Caribbean. Initially this appeared to offer the Danish colony an advantage.
>
> Dispossessed individuals from English and Dutch possessions sought refuge on St. Thomas and augmented the depleted labor force of the Danes. However, it provided the justification of French, Dutch and English freebooters to raid the new colony, ostensibly to capture the refugees but in reality also to secure such supplies and equipment the small force could not defend.
>
> After eighteen months of harassment and deprivation the survivors of the expeditionary force, who since the death of Erik Smit had been led by the Lutheran minister Kjeld Jensen Slagelse, decided to abandon the settlement. They made their way back to Denmark by stages [1982:2].

In early 1671 a rechartered West India Company was created to attempt to reestablish a Danish colony on the island of St. Thomas. The Company selected as the Governor of the colony Jørgen Iversen. Iversen had gone to the British Caribbean Island of St. Christopher (present-day St. Kitts) at the age of 13 as an indentured servant in 1651. Over the next fifteen years he rose to become a full partner in a Dutch trading concern in the Caribbean, from which he learned the lessons necessary for a successful colony (deJongh and Gjessing 1982:2-3).

Between Iversen's arrival on St. Thomas in May 23, 1672 until July 4, 1680, when he was relieved, he succeeded

> ... in creating a community out of the multinational and racial components of the colony and steer it towards a promise of prosperity while building Christians Fort, carrying out an inter-island trade for the company and establishing plantations on St. Thomas [deJongh and Gjessing 1982:3].

Iversen understood the threats facing a new colony in the far off Caribbean, and how the lack of a fort had doomed the first Danish colonization attempt. He appears to have given a high priority to the construction of the fort. Shortly after landing on St. Thomas, Iversen issued orders that "all [colonists] should assemble to [militia] service on Sundays in the Fort by beat of drum," the penalty for non-compliance being 25 lbs. of tobacco (Lightbourn 1973:1). The completion date of the fort is unknown but is presumed to have been mostly finished in time for the French attack of 1678.

It was during Governor Iversen's tenure that he not only had Fort Christian constructed, but also one of its outlying hilltop gun and watch towers -- Skytsborg in 1679 (designated a National Historic Landmark in 1994) (deJongh and Gjessing 1982:12). According to Robert deJongh and Frederik Gjessing

> An Army Lieutenant had been included amongst the Company's functionaries of the proposed colony. He was to advise Governor Iversen in all military matters and provide the technical knowledge needed for the design and construction of a fort. To insure that this was done according to the standards of the times, a copy of Admiral Freitag's treatise on the construction of forts was included among the books that Jørgen Iversen brought out to guide him in his duties as the governor. This 17th century work provides layout[s] of fortifications, explanations of the military functions of their different parts and served as a design handbook for military engineers [1982:17].

Unfortunately, the Lieutenant died on the voyage from Denmark to the Virgin Islands, so "Iversen was left to make his own decision[s] regarding the fortification" location and shape (deJongh and Gjessing 1982:18). Iversen probably used Admiral Freitag's book in planning the layout of Fort Christian.

Later governors of St. Thomas, and even Iversen, would acknowledge the disadvantages of the site he chose for Fort Christian, however, the "sense of urgency that an adequate if not ideal fort had to be erected rapidly for the defense of the colony, must have been the basic considerations of the decision" to site the fort on a slightly elevated area on the beach, rather than higher up out of the range of any seventeenth-century artillery fire from ships and from hills to the north and east of the fort (deJongh and Gjessing 1982:19). To help defend the exposed location of Fort Christian, two gun towers were later built on hilltops above the fort, a technique pioneered by the seventeenth century Scandinavian military architects Gottfried Hoffmann and Erik Dahlberg.

As to the style of the fort, Iversen chose to construct a typical seventeenth-century thick-walled square fortification with projecting diamond-shaped, or Vauban, bastions at each corner. The irregular shape of the hill on which the fort was constructed required that the bastions not be uniform in size (figure 2).

In the interior courtyard was constructed a fortified tower (Trygborg), or keep, that was a story higher than the main fort (photo 3). This type of fortification with internal keep would have been familiar to Iversen and had played an important role in military engineering in the Baltic Sea region, where during the seventeenth century the kingdoms of Denmark and Sweden fought over control of the sea lanes leading into the Baltic. The two preeminent military engineers during this conflict, Gottfried Hoffmann of Denmark and Erik Dahlberg of Sweden, utilized low thick-walled fortifications to protect towns and key defensive points, often in combination with outlying fortified towers (Dahl 1992:6; Duffy 1985:191).

As noted by Christopher Duffy, in *The Fortress in the Age of Vauban and Frederick the Great, 1660-1789,*

> The surest signs of [Erik] Dahlberg's presence were, however, his idiosyncratic multi-storeyed casemated towers, which he employed variously as island batteries, hilltop forts and inner keeps [1985:195-196].

Gottfried Hoffman, during the mid-seventeenth century, also constructed fortresses with outlying and internal tower works at Fredericia and Helsingborg, Denmark (Dahl 1992:6).

Throughout the troubled seventeenth century, the contenders for control of the Baltic - Denmark and Sweden - also undertook efforts to establish colonies in the New World. Sweden established a military outpost called Fort Christina (designated a National Historic Landmark in 1961) in the vicinity of present day Wilmington, Delaware, where they traded for furs until the colony was captured by the English in 1664. The Danes were more successful in establishing and holding a colony in the Caribbean.

The Seventeenth Century

We do not have a clear picture of the original seventeenth-century fort built under Iversen's direction. However, it is believed the outer walls of all four bastions of the present fort, internal tower or keep (removed in 1874), and the south, east, and west curtain walls can be attributed to the first building phase (figure 2) (deJongh and Gjessing 1982). Housing for the governor, the troops, and government officials, and the colony's church appear to have been accommodated in wooden and stone structures in the interior of the fort. To provide additional soldiers for the defense of St. Thomas, Iversen, in 1674, secured from the island planters an agreement "to perform guard duty on a rotating basis at the fort in return for easement of taxes" (deJongh and Gjessing 1982:20).
Accounts kept by Governor Iversen between 1672 and 1680 tend to indicate that by 1676 the internal tower, the outer curtain and bastion walls, and buildings within the fort were substantially finished. These accounts also indicate that between 1676 and 1680, the majority of the work on the fort consisted of carpentry and finishing work (deJongh and Gjessing 1982:21).

One of the main features of Christians Fort was a squat three-story high tower, called Trygborg, on the north side of the fort. Twenty-six and one half feet high and 90 feet in circumference the tower was intended as a self-contained last ditch defensive position if an enemy carried the outer walls of Christians Fort.

The first floor was a large storeroom for ammunition and provisions. The walls of the upper two floors were studded with embrasures for both small arms and light cannon. This was the first military tower that can be documented on St. Thomas.

The push by Governor Iversen to complete the work on the fort would shortly be rewarded. In the fall of 1676, the United Kingdom of Denmark-Norway became involved in a European war with France as one of the adversaries. The conflict had been expected for a couple of years and had been the reason for securing the planters agreement to perform guard duties at the fort.

With the outbreak of the war in Europe an attack on St. Thomas by forces from the older, more populous and better established French colonies was anticipated and feared. In preparation for the attack the guard duties of the planters and other inhabitants of St. Thomas at the fort were stepped up and planters and their families were allowed to live in the fort [deJongh and Gjessing 1982:21].

In February of 1678 a force of some 60 French settlers from neighboring St. Croix launched an attempt to seize St. Thomas Island. Fortunately, Governor Jørgen Iversen's fort proved too strong to storm. As the attackers did not have any siege cannon Fort Christian was easily able to withstand the brief siege imposed by the French from St. Croix. The French were forced to retreat after capturing a number of slaves which were carried back to St. Croix (deJongh and Gjessing 1982:22).

The defeat of the French in 1678, proved Fort Christian was a strong defense for St. Thomas against an attacking force without siege guns or enemy ships approaching from the sea. However, Governor Iversen realized that the French attacking force could have pounded Christians Fort into submission by erecting an artillery battery on the high ground east and north of the fort. For this reason Iversen ordered a tower fortification similar to Trygborg erected on Baggaertsbjerg Hill, a hilltop north of Christians Fort, in 1679 called Skytsborg or Sky Tower (Blackbeard's Castle) (photo 1). Such a tower would not only deny the high ground to an attacking force, but also serve as a watchtower providing a vantage point high enough to peer over Hassel

Island to scan the open ocean, thereby providing Fort Christian early warning of an approaching enemy (photo 10). Later in 1689 one of Iversen's successors had Schmitberg (Bluebeard's Castle) constructed on a hill east of the fort.

Iversen's letter of February 2, 1680 to the directors of the Danish West India Company indicated that Skytsborg had been erected at Baggaertsbjerg by that date. In it he wrote "Since I had the (Skytsborg) Watchtower erected at Baggaertsbjerg I did not fear a hasty attack so much." A 1687 English map of St. Thomas harbor depicts and describes a "small white tower" on Baggaertsbjerg Hill to the north of Fort Christian (photo 1).

It is possible that Iversen used the Company stone mason Simon Lamare, who had worked on Fort Christian and Trygborg tower, to construct Skytsborg in 1679. According to deJongh and Gjessing

> In August, 1674, Jørgen Iversen acquired for the Company a mulatto slave by the name of Simon Lamare. He was a mason and was to serve as the clerk of the works, for the construction of the fort [Fort Christian].
>
> The phrasing in the account book of this transaction is of interest. It states "brought Simon Lamare to serve the Company for seven years" [1674-1681], implying some sort of contractual agreement with Simon Lamare for his manumission after an agreed upon period of service [1982:20].

In July of 1680, Nicolai Esmit assumed the governorship of the island from Iversen and moved into the completed fort. According to deJongh and Gjessing, Iversen left a description of the fort which is summarized in the following manner.

> In plan it was an irregular parallelogram with east and west walls nearly parallel and the north wall roughly perpendicular to them.
>
> The dimensions of the fort from tip of bastion to tip of bastion were on the east, south, west and north side respectively 178 feet, 150 feet 6 inches, 193 feet 6 inches, and 170 feet. From center to center of the exterior of opposite curtains the fort measured east-west 115 feet and north-south 123 feet. The outworks of the fort were limited to a horseshoe shaped demilune in front of the east curtain and a palisade of wood posts surrounding the fortification.
>
> The palisade consisted of posts driven into the ground 2.5 feet and close enough together to prevent a man from squeezing between them.
>
> It started in the sea below and east of the S.E. bastion and continued around the land side of the citadel to a point on the shoreline below and west of the Southwest bastion and into the sea.
>
> The fort had no moat in the conventional sense. In place of it, prickly pears had been cultivated in the land between the palisade and the outer walls of the fortification and formed a dense and nearly impenetrable barrier for anyone who tried to approach the fort outside the regular access paths from the east and west. These were reached through gates in the palisades that could be locked and barred.
>
> The principal entrance to the fort was the sallyport in the east curtain just north of its center in a jog of the outer wall. For the southern half of the curtain was pulled 6.5 feet back from the face of the northern half. Thirty seven feet in front and east of the sally port was the demi-lune, a squat masonry tower, 1.5

stories high and with a rounded front towards the east.

The postern gate in the west curtain was [a] simpler affair. It was three feet wide and five feet high closed with a door made in three layers of planks covered on the exterior with iron.

On the exterior the walls varied in height. Since the fort was built around a hill that had its apex in the approximate center of the fort [the] projecting bastions required footings at lower grades than the curtain walls (photo 9).

Towards the east north and south the variations in the exterior heights were not great. Both the east and north curtain were 15 feet and the west curtain 13 feet 6 inches high. The faces of the north bastions between these curtains reached elevations of 17 feet 2 inches and 19 feet 3 inches respectively; a difference in height of only 2 feet 2 inches and 4 feet 3 inches from the nearest curtain wall.

Towards the southeast the variation was greater. The east face of the southeast bastion stood 23 feet 6 inches out of grade or 8.5 feet higher than the east curtain.

Towards the south the pattern reversed. For although the south face of the southeast bastion was a foot taller than the south curtain with its height of 21 feet 5 inches, the south face of the southwest bastion had a lesser elevation of 19 feet 3 inches.

It suggests that the hill towards the south extended southwest and that the builders of the fort had taken advantage of this feature of the terrain and in the plan layout of the fort deliberately extended the southwest bastion southward and thereby give Christiansfort its irregular outline on the bayside.

Between the salient angles of the two southern bastions the walls facing the sea, all had a width [or thickness] of 5 feet 4 inches. The east face of the southeast bastion was 4 feet 10 inches and the west face of the southwest bastion 4 feet 3 inches. The same dimensions is shown for the north face of the northwest bastion and both faces of the northeast bastion.

All other walls varied in width between 3 feet 3 inches, and 3 feet 9 inches except for the south flank of the northeast bastion which for some unexplained reason had a wall thickness of 6 feet 5 inches. The dimensions of the walls provided only temporary protection. The south walls were just adequate, but the other walls would not have withstood any prolonged battering of modern artillery of the late 17th Century.

Within the fortification walls Christiansfort had 21 buildings and structures. Most of these were built against the outer walls, some in banks without space between them while others were separated by passages. A couple of structures were freestanding and others although not built against the wall were attached to others and formed a group. The central part of the fort was open, but the courtyard to the south had several buildings.

The most impressive of these [courtyard] structures was the tower “Trygborg” (safecastle) erected in 1676. It was freestanding and stood in the northwest corner of the courtyard [deJongh and Gjessing 1982:24-26].

Nicolai Esmit’s tenure as governor would be short, as his own brother Adolf confined him in the prison in the

fort on July 7, 1683 and took over the governorship. Apparently Adolf "openly aided and trafficked with known freebooters and allowed them to sail under the Danish flag" (deJongh and Gjessing 1982:3). Adolf continued this commerce with freebooters and illegally traded with the French colony of St. Croix, with whom his country was still officially at war (Caron 1988:27-28). Adolf's downfall was caused by his seizure of British property. Governor William Stapleton, of the British Leeward Islands sent complaints to Denmark of the conditions in St. Thomas which had become in his words a "den of pirates" (deJongh and Gjessing 1982:3).

Probably the best evidence of Adolf Esmit's connection with pirates was the *La Trompeuse* affair. *La Trompeuse* was commanded by the French pirate Jean Hamlin, who had stolen the ship from English merchants of Jamaica in 1682. Throughout 1682 and 1683 Hamlin seized over three dozen ships, many English, and resold them and their cargos in St. Thomas. On July 27, 1683 the English vessel *H.M.S. Francis*, under the command of Captain Charles Carlile, caught up with *La Trompeuse* in St. Thomas harbor lying under the guns of Fort Christian. As the *Francis* approached the pirate ship, she found herself under the fire of both *La Trompeuse* and Fort Christian. Carlile backed off, but that night his men boarded *La Trompeuse* and burned her. Later it was learned that Hamlin had been the guest of Governor Esmit in the fort during this action (Dookhan 1974:109-111).

> He [Hamlin] has eaten and banqueted with Esmit and has slept with Esmit in a room. He has brought much gold. Esmit would not deliver the said Hamlyn to the English. Furthermore, Esmit sent Hamlyn together with his comrades and pirates out of the harbour with a barque ... belonging to the company [Dookhan 1974:111].

In spite of his problems Governor Esmit did cause some improvements at the fort to be accomplished,

> ... [he] built four good rooms and an office against the Western Curtain of the fortification; each of the rooms having two doors and a lock and was floored with Dutch fire bricks (figure 2). The large room was tapestried with gilt leather, the ceiling painted red and the beams white, while the second room was hung with leather, on which were painted biblio-historical pictures, the ceiling being painted yellow and the beams red [Lightbourn 1973:3].

Adolf Esmit also had the western curtain wall height raised by some four or five feet and caused the water battery to be constructed during his governorship (1683-84) (Lightbourn 1973:4). Governor Esmit had good reason to strengthen his fortification as the British Governor of Nevis "had driven the Danes from St. John, taken away all the cattle from Buck Island and Water Island and declared British rights to St. Thomas" and "an English brigantine had plundered the West end of the island (of St. Thomas) and taken off 60 slaves" (Lightbourn 1973:4).

Eventually, the West India Company's concern over the Esmit family caused them to send out a new governor, Gabriel Milan, in 1684. According to Lightbourn

> The Company seem[s] to have had some fear of trouble on Milan's arrival, for in his instructions he is charged to "proceed carefully on his arrival at St. Thomas and in the event of A[dolf] Esmit raising any difficulty, or refusing to give over the fort, he is to take over the command of the island by force. He is further to guard against Esmit's cunning and be polite to him, but as soon as he has secured the power Esmit and family must be confined and sent home by the first opportunity" [1973:3].

Milan would carry out his orders and transport both of the Esmit brothers and their families back to Denmark. However, foreign intrigues would continue to plague the colony. Milan wrote the Company in July 1685 of the British cutting lignum vitae trees on St. John and that the Spanish from Puerto Rico had "landed on St. Thomas and taken off 54 slaves" (Lightbourn 1973:4).

In the same letter, Milan complained about the state of Fort Christian, claiming it

> ... "is a bad fortification, for every one who moves [about] in it can be shot down from the hills, round about;" he admits that "the fort itself is composed of strong wall[s]," but that "it is built disorderly and irregularly, the loop holes for the cannon and muskets being arranged only for firing straight out of," and that "the Curtains, not being supplied with breastworks, are very narrow and consequently dangerous to walk on in the wind at night" [Lightbourn 1973:4].

Governor Milan's tenure lasted until September 27, 1687, when Adolf Esmit and his family returned to assume the governorship of St. Thomas. In this year the first complete description of the fort was made and later reprinted by Lightbourn.

> The S.W. point or [King's] Bastion.
>
> The Southern Curtain.-Here are: One room, called the flat house, which has 9 windows, of which 7 with iron rails [bars]. Under this is a cellar with a door and a small hole in the wall with iron rails. On the western side is a dungeon.
>
> By the small cistern is a small apartment with door and window, the partition being of boards. The small cistern.
>
> The S.E. point, or [Company's] Bastion-to which there is a railing [barred] door with hinges and bolts on the top of this is a small room (photo 9). A new house stands in the center of the enclosure, it is floored with Dutch fire-bricks, roofed with red tiles and has 8 windows with shutters and 3 doors.
>
> The Eastern Curtain-A cotton gin house, without door, roofed with shingles. The provision house with wood roof and 2 windows. A large gate, called Landgate, with a double door, completely iron bound. A Half Moon (properly termed Demilune) outside the large gate with a wood roof. The large cistern.
>
> The N.E. point or [Prince's] Bastion (photo 11), The Northern Curtain.-Against this there is a wood house, and close thereto an open corps de garde. The [Trygborg] tower.
>
> The N.W. point, or [Queen's] Bastion-on top of which there is a solid sentry box (photo 12). In the Bastion there is an oven.
>
> The Western Curtain.-Adjoining this is the physician's room, with 1 window with iron [bars] rails. Next to his [room is] a kitchen, roofed with red tiles, near the kitchen a small tobacco store room and next thereto is the small gate, called Watergate, iron bound.
>
> Four small apartments [the ones built by Adolph Esmit against the inside of the west curtain wall] (photo 8 and figure 2). In the largest there are a large window and 3 doors, the one of which is cut through horizontally halfway up. This large room is tapestried with gilt leather which commences to wear out.

> The second room has 2 half doors with hooks and has besides an entire door with a hook, this opens into the next small room which is hung with old gilt leather. Next to this there is a small room with 2 half doors with locks and a small window and a whole door, with bolt, leading to the last room which has 2 half doors with lock and 2 windows, of which the one is iron railed and the other supplied with wooden shutter with bolt. The 4 rooms are floored with Dutch fire-bricks. A small office, with lock and a small window. In this office there are 3 small air holes covered with lead. Under the office there is a small cellar, of same size as the office; it has a whole door with lock and a bar across it.
>
> To the South of the Fort there is a wall of masonry work. A water battery is erected [by Adolf Esmit] at the water's edge. The large Landgate has 1 and the small Watergate 2 railing doors. All the Prickly Pear around the Fort is overgrown by weeds, and has mostly died out [Lightbourn 1973:4-5].

Adolph Esmit's return as Governor of St. Thomas lasted a mere 24 days before his unpopularity with the colonists caused him to return to Denmark.

In 1688 another crisis occurred in response to dynastic wars in Europe. The Spanish from Puerto Rico occupied Crab Island (Vieques) and Anguilla thereby surrounding St. Thomas. This action made the Danes in St. Thomas very concerned as the Spanish had never abandoned their claim, by right of discovery by Christopher Columbus, to St. Thomas. Governor Christopher Heins, who had replaced Esmit, undertook a program of upgrading the fortifications of Christiansfort and Skytsborg. To provide more security he had the Landgate located in the Eastern Curtain wall closed up (Lightbourn 1973:6). Heins also had embrasures cut in the walls of Skytsborg tower for two large cannons capable of covering the harbor. He also erected a third tower to the east on Schmidtberg Hill, today called Bluebeard's Castle. The erection of this last tower in 1689 completed the seventeenth-century defenses of St. Thomas (Gjessing and Gardner 1958:1-3).

Throughout the 1680s supporting defenses around the fort were constructed

> Within the fortification several of the buildings that cluttered the central courtyard were demolished and replaced by structures against the [inside of the] curtain walls. This was to set a trend for future developments. The gradual levelling of the interior of the fort by overbuilding the structures against the east curtain and in the southeast bastion, thereby converting them into basements, was also initiated [in] these years and set a pattern for the later building activities [deJongh and Gjessing 1982:35].

In peacetime no soldiers were stationed at Skytsborg or Schmidtberg, while a skeleton force was maintained at Fort Christian. If an attack by other colonial forces or a slave rebellion was anticipated an alarm was sounded by firing a predetermined number of cannons at Fort Christian. This signal would call out all able bodied whites and free blacks to take up arms and report to one of the three fortifications. According to Lightbourn, "each of the four bastions of the fort was to have an officer with 20 men; Frederiksfort (Schmidtberg) was to have 25 men and the northern tower (Skytsborg) 9 men" (1973:7). Such an alarm occurred in May of 1694 when a slave insurrection was anticipated from the newly established plantations in the New Quarter, or present-day Tutu, an eastern suburb of Charlotte Amalie.

The Eighteenth Century

In spite of the modifications and work done on the fort in the latter part of the seventeenth century, by the first decade of the eighteenth century, the island government complained to the Company "that the thick walls of the tower in the fort admitted moisture, thus injuring the [gun] powder, and recommending that the tower be cased

with boards, as there was no place for building a powder magazine in the fort, excepting under the Church," which occupied the southwest bastion of the fort (Lightbourn 1973:9). The governor also recommended moving the church out of the southwest bastion as "such sacred services need not be done in such a place, but that the affairs of the Company would allow, at a future time, of the establishment of a proper Church, which would not be used, during the intervals between the prescribed holy services, for worldly, and, at times, impious acts, such as soldiers are inclined to" (Lightbourn 1973:9).

The Lutheran Church, which served the St. Thomas community had always been located within the fort, "sometimes quarters were set apart especially for the service of the Church, at other times we read of divine services being held in the armory or other convenient rooms" (Lightbourn 1973:9). In 1706 a wooden church was erected in the interior courtyard of the fort against the eastern curtain. This building, according to measurements made in 1724, was 49 feet by 25 feet (Lightbourn 1973:9).

The fort continued to deteriorate causing Governor Erik Bredal and then the Lutheran clergyman to leave the fort and move into dwellings in the surrounding town of Charlotte Amalie in 1716 and 1717. The reasons given were that the deteriorated condition of the fort made it unhealthy. Indeed, the first clergyman who inhabited the fort "died within 47 days after his induction and his successor declared his inability to reside in it" (Lightbourn 1973:9).

Finally, in 1724 Governor Otto Jacob Thambsen ordered a structural survey to be made of the fort. The survey convinced the Company to undertake a remodeling of the fort which was completed on April 30th, 1735. According to deJongh and Gjessing,

> The remodeling of the late 1720s and early 1730s was to result in the complete covering [roofing] of the southern bastions. The northern bastions retained their gorges but in reduced sizes for the rooms between the gorges and the outer walls were widened and enclosed by masonry walls toward the inner courts (figure 2). All the curtains and the bastions were furnished with flat masonry roofs that provided a continuous terreplein all around the central courtyard of the fort and served as its principal gundeck (photo 7) [1982:42].

The major changes to the fort consisted of the construction of ravelins (photos 2, 9, and 13) on the outside of the fort and the reorienting of access to the fort.

> In the plans for the remodeling of Christians Fort during these years an east ravelin was intended and considered to be adequate defense for the old sallyport ... Within the fort it gave the former gatehouse a greater depth and also provided a passage between the new and old curtain walls from the gatehouse to the southeast bastion at the lower level of the fortification.
>
> The plan [of] organization of Christians Fort was reoriented. The postern gate in the west curtain wall ... was blocked up. The original sallyport [in the east curtain wall] ... was retained and repaired but was only to serve as the access to the proposed east ravelin. The new sallyport was centered in the north curtain and a postern gate planned for the south curtain. The latter was still under construction in 1733 and when completed during the following couple of years had taken the form it has preserved to the present.
>
> As a protection for the new sallyport a ravelin was constructed between the north bastions. At the salient angle of the ravelin a vaulted gatehouse flanked by sentry boxes gave access to the steps and a ramp that

led down to the terrain north of the fort and served as the principal entrance to the fortification. Within the ravelin the grade was raised from 4 feet to 6 feet above the outside terrain making the ravelin wall that were 6 feet tall on the interior from 10 to 12 feet tall on the exterior.

The east ravelin was started, but by 1733 only half finished. When completed in 1735 the grade within had also been raised above the surrounding terrain and in this process the lower story of the old demi-lune was buried [deJongh and Gjessing 1982:43-44].

According to a 1733 description of the work in progress, in Lightbourn (1973), the new work in the fort is described in more detail in the following manner.

The South West, or King's Bastion, has an arch, under which there is a provision room. The North West, or Queen's Bastion, which is covered with bricks on beams, is a lodging place for 10 men and in this Bastion are found the kitchen and oven. The North East, or Prince's Bastion, which is covered the same as the North West Bastion, is a lodging place for 12 men and contains a dungeon. The South East, or Company's Bastion, which is covered as the former ones, contains the four rooms of the Governor. Outside, towards the yard, there is a wall with two arched gateways, representing a gallery; it is roofed and is in connection with the roof of the rooms; under this there are two dungeons. Under the Governor's rooms are a small cistern, the Governor's cellar, Provision cellars with entrance from under the church, and the Powder Magazine with walls of 5 to 6 feet in thickness, having the entrance behind the foundation of the church and a wall built outside, of which wall further mention is made later. Neither the Governor's rooms nor the cellars above mentioned were yet finished [in 1733]. the Southern Curtain contains the Governor's pantry, to the side of which sufficient space has been taken out of the breadth of the Curtain for a mason work staircase leading down to the small cistern, to the two dungeons under the gallery, and to the Governor's private cellar. At this point another step leads down to a small hole under the pantry, but was intended to lead to the opening into the projected breastwork on the South side of the fort; this opening was not quite broken through the wall yet, neither had any further work been done to the breastwork beside the foundation [this work was never completed]. Between the first mentioned step and the pantry, towards King's (S.W.) Bastion, there is a space or room, 26 feet by 20 feet, which is neither roofed nor supplied with doors nor windows; it has, however, towards the sea, two oval holes 2 feet high and 3 feet broad. The Western Curtain has six chambers for the lieutenants, the non-commissioned officers, the doctor and the clerk; it is roofed with planks and rock, but leaks already. The Northern Curtain is the *corps de garde* with its arch, at the back of which, in the yard, stands the old tower. In the center of the length of this Curtain is found the entrance into the fort, and outside of this there is a breastwork, which is enclosed by walls supplied with musket holes; these walls run from both Bastions and form a triangle [or ravelin], their point of junction holding the gate, to which a mason work step leads from outside. the gate is built in such a manner as to allow a space in which the sentry can take refuge in rainy weather. The Eastern Curtain contains, towards the North, a lodging house for some of the clerks, and next to this there is an open space in which the water is drawn up from the arched cistern below the house and the space; this cistern is called the large cistern. Next to the cistern is the descent to the gate, which is well supplied with means for closing out towards the Eastern breastwork where the lime is prepared for the building of them; of this breastwork only the foundation on the south side is built. The descent alluded to leads likewise to the cellars under the church and to the Cantine, and, further on to the passage which goes round the foundation of the church, of which previous mention was made, in to the powder magazine. Over the descent on the eastern side of the east end of the church and over the gate previously mentioned, a room is arranged for the secretary's office; it has a

> door to the yard next to the space in which water is drawn, and another door to the passage which runs behind the church over the passage to the Governor's rooms, but neither floor, windows nor doors are yet finished. From this Curtain, or rather, from the passage already described, the Church stretches its entire length into the yard; the church was built of wood in 1706, but afterwards the Northern side was built of thick wall, while on the Southern side as far as the Governor's rooms go, the defective wood work had been taken out and replaced by a wall. The wood work of the Church, which is still left is nearly rotten and is to be replaced shortly by wall work; the roof, according to the custom of the place, is of planks and shingles. The hospital and oven are outside the South West Bastion and the open space on the Western side towards the harbor where the lime kiln is [Lightbourn 1973:10,12].

Throughout the eighteenth century Denmark maintained a policy of strict neutrality in all European wars. This policy, coupled with the establishment of a free port in St. Thomas, proved more of an economic boon to the Danish West Indies than the planting of sugar cane. The commerce between belligerent nations was attracted to the island to transact business. In particular, the War of Spanish Succession (1702-1713), which involved all of the European colonial powers in the Caribbean except Denmark, proved an economic boon to the island of St. Thomas. All European powers and traders respected the neutrality of St. Thomas as a neutral Caribbean port of trade and to a certain extent encouraged its prosperity, as it provided a means of trade between otherwise belligerent European powers during the war. The colonial government was able to show a profit during the war years from its collection of transit trade taxes and issued a dividend to the Danish West India Company's investors (deJongh and Gjessing 1982:10).

As the warehouses and trading houses of Charlotte Amalie expanded to meet this trade the need for fortifications languished. The fort "area experienced little new construction in the half century between 1730 and 1780, partly because of the need to maintain open space around the fort for defensive purposes and partly because of water barriers" (Cinquino 1996:62). On the interior of the fort it was necessary, probably due to the leaky roof, in 1736 to rebuild the six rooms against the west curtain wall; and in 1752, the Church located in the courtyard was "ready to fall to pieces" and so was demolished (Lightbourn 1973:12).

Yet Fort Christian was still significant to the Danish colonial government. During the first half century of its existence the fort served not only as the seat of government of the Danish West Indies, but also the official residence of the governor and his administrators, the courthouse, clinic, treasury, and for most of these years as the place of worship for the Lutheran congregation [deJongh and Gjessing 1982:12].

With the acquisition of St. Croix from France in 1733, the Westindia Company had secured an island large enough to support literally hundreds of sugar plantations. In the following two decades, St. Croix's population surpassed that of St. Thomas. In 1755 the residence of the Governor of the Danish West Indies was moved from Fort Christian on St. Thomas to the more prosperous colonial island town of Christiansted on St. Croix Island (deJongh and Gjessing 1982:12).

By the 1750s, in spite of the extensive remodeling of Fort Christian completed in 1735, it was recognized that the fort was no longer adequate to the task of defending the island from attack. Various proposals for upgrading the fortifications were proposed but not acted upon (deJongh and Gjessing 1982:13-14). Outside the fort the growth of Charlotte Amalie necessitated, in 1781-1782, the lagoon east of Fort Christian being drained, filled in, and parceled out to settlers (Cinquino 1996:62). Lt. Peter Lotharius Oxholm, who studied Fort Christian, had made the recommendation to fill in the lagoon.

> Its existence he claimed, and probably correctly, was in part the cause of the garrison's poor health

> condition. He comments on the stench that emanates from it during dry periods and was carried all through the town on the easterly breezes [deJongh and Gjessing 1982:58].

The Nineteenth Century

By the beginning decades of the nineteenth century there had been no major changes to the fort since 1735.

> When the British occupied St. Thomas in 1801-02 and again in 1807-15 [to deny Napoleon's fleets use of the islands], they fortified and established their garrison on the peninsula on the west side of the harbor as a more suitable location for its defenses than Christians Fort. The latter was never again considered seriously as a defensive position [deJongh and Gjessing 1982:14].

Most of the changes in the nineteenth century occurred in the area surrounding the fort. A fire that swept through the town of Charlotte Amalie on New Years Day of 1826 destroyed the old West India Company warehouses, which according to von Meley's town plan of 1807 were located where the Grand Hotel and Emancipation Gardens now stand, northwest of the fort. The only new building erected in this area was the Grand Hotel built in 1839, followed three decades later by the construction of Emancipation Garden in 1873, to the west of the fort on land reclaimed from the sea (figure 1) (Cinquino 1996:63).

South of the fort, a military barracks for enlisted men and non-commissioned officers was built in 1827-28, which today serves as the Territorial Legislature Building (figure 1) (Cinquino 1996:63). The troop's rooms in the old fort were converted to prison cells. The old water battery immediately south of these buildings was demolished shortly after the barracks were built. During the 1820s several other military structures were added to this area, but they were torn down after 1845 (Cinquino 1996:63).

In 1871 the capital of the Danish West Indies was again relocated. Charlotte Amalie once more became the seat of colonial government. The military functions of Fort Christian were practically nil. A proposal to convert the fort from a military installation to a police station, a function more in keeping with the times, was made and entertained. In 1874 it was acted upon and was the first major change to the structure in 140 years.

The major change to the fort itself was the blowing up of Governor Iversen's internal tower (Trygborg) on June 19, 1874. This was followed by the removal of the north curtain wall, northern ravelin, and north gate house, and the tearing down of most of the ravelin off the eastern side of the fort (photo 9). In demolishing part of the eastern ravelin the demi-lune constructed by Governor Iversen was uncovered, drawn, and then torn down.

> All the works between the two Northern Bastions were razed, and in their stead a new building of an entirely different appearance was erected with a clock tower over the entrance. To the East and West of the fort new yards were arranged by the erection of walls between the Bastions [Lightbourn 1973:13].

By 1875 the northern curtain wall had been "replaced by a new one in the then popular style of gothic revival" (photos 4, 5, and 14 and figure 2) (deJongh and Gjessing 1982:15).

The Twentieth Century

When the United States acquired the Virgin Islands in 1917, there had been no additional changes to the fort and its surrounding area by the Danish, although the historical importance of Fort Christian was noted by its being at the center of the transfer ceremony in 1917. The Virgin Islands were administered by the U.S. Navy during the

early period of American control (1917-1931). The Navy took over Fort Christian and the land areas to the south and east of the fort. Shortly thereafter, a Marine Corps barracks was constructed east of the fort on harbor lands reclaimed in the 1780s.

> In the following years a number of new structures were added to it. They included, among other, two steel radio towers, a communication center, an ice and refrigeration plant, cisterns, garages, a mess and a recreational hall, shops, storage buildings, etc., crowding the grounds of the fort and partly obscuring it and the old barracks building [deJongh and Gjessing 1982:15].

All of these twentieth century buildings to the east of the fort would be removed in the 1950s, with the construction of Veteran's Drive, and the area was converted to a parking lot which is its present use (figure 1) (Cinquino 1996:62). Veteran's Drive, which runs east-west along the filled-in shoreline of Charlotte Amalie, was built to run between the south side of the fort and the old Danish barracks. This construction required the in filling of more land to the west and east of the fort (deJongh and Gjessing 1982:16).

> Within Christians Fort work was confined to minor additions, repairs and to the installation of new utilities. Generally, it was done with faint regard to the historic fabric of the structure and lessened its architectural integrity [deJongh and Gjessing 1982:15].

During the period from 1917 to 1983 Fort Christian continued to serve the Virgin Islands as a police station and prison. However, in the early 1960s the island community began to voice concern about the preservation of the old fort, reflected in the Secretary of the Interior designating Fort Christian as the St. Thomas National Historic Site, in 1960. At this time the fort served as the Virgin Islands' prison facility.

In November of 1971, "with community support, the first elected governor (of the Virgin Islands), Melvin H. Evans, opened a small museum of local history in four (lower) rooms of the" southeast bastion. The museum shared the fort with the prison, which occupied all the rest of the fort with the exception of the southwest bastion, which housed the Civil Defense office of the Virgin Islands (D. Jowers, personal communication, 1996).

In 1974, under the terms of PL 92-4351 (The Submerged Lands Act), title to Fort Christian passed to the virgin Islands government. The St. Thomas National Historic Site was never activated as a unit of the National Park Service, although the Secretary of the Interior did designate Fort Christian as a National Historic Landmark on May 5, 1977. A National Historic Landmark nomination form was not required for the reaffirmation of a finding of national significance for the fort.

In June of 1982 the firm of Robert deJongh and Frederik Gjessing was retained by the Government of the Virgin Islands to undertake a historic structures report of Fort Christian, entitled *Fort Christian Historic Structure Report,* which

> ... gave a complete history of the fort from the Royal Archives in Copenhagen and the National Archives in Washington and other sources. Included in the report were measured drawings of how the building looked at various periods, [and] photographs especially taken during that prison period [D. Jowers, personal communication, 1996].

In 1983 the police and jail moved out of the fort. The Virgin Islands government provided funds to the Fort

Christian Museum to clean up the fort and remove the prison bars from the prisoners' cells. A gift shop and reception area were created in the rooms to the west of the north entrance, and a museum office and kitchen were installed in the rooms to the east of the entrance, allowing the majority of the fort to be opened up as a historic site (D. Jowers, personal communication, 1996).

In 1985, with funding from a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), the government of the Virgin Islands contracted with the firm of deJongh and Gjessing to develop overall plans and a scope of work for the restoration of Fort Christian. Based on their earlier historic structures report (1982), the restoration plan was "to retain the features still existing from the 1600's, the mid 1700's expansion and the 1874 north entrance and incorporate these into the museums plans" (D. Jowers, personal communication, 1996).

In 1990 the Civil Defense office, located in the southwest bastion, moved out of the fort and the first phase of restoration work commenced using $500,000 in HUD CDBG monies and $60,000 from the Virgin Islands Enhancement Fund (D. Jowers, personal communication, 1996).

> In 1990 a contract was awarded to Coastal Construction with the firm of deJongh/Gjessing drawing specific plans and specs for funds allocated and their supervision of the project. This phase took in demolition of [twentieth century] interior walls in the courtyard which formed corridors into prison cells and certain [police] offices in the west and south [curtain walls]. Demolition of [modern cinder block] walls in the narrow west [curtain wall] side cells, returning them to their 1730's appearance, new plumbing and bathrooms, [and] a handicapped ramp by the right side of the 1874 entryway [D. Jowers, personal communication, 1996].

This first restoration project of the west and south curtain walls lasted from 1990 until 1992 (photo 8).

A second phase of restoration saw $200,000, funded by HUD CDBG, go into the fort. The contractor was H & M Systems under the supervision of deJongh/Gjessing. Work included repair of the large rooms behind the east curtain wall and the rooms in the southeast bastion. It also repaired the roof/gun deck of these rooms and bastion. The work lasted from 1993 to 1994 (D. Jowers, personal communication, 1996).

In 1994 the Fort Christian Museum was informed that a major Intermodal State Transportation and Enhancement Act project for work on Veteran's Drive had been approved and funds from this project would be used to complete the restoration of Fort Christian, probably commencing work in 1997 (D. Jowers, personal communication, 1996).

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

__ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_X_ Previously Listed in the National Register. **May 5, 1977 (77001329)**
__ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
_X_ Designated a National Historic Landmark. **May 5, 1977**
__ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
__ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

_X_ State Historic Preservation Office **US Virgin Islands**
__ Other State Agency
__ Federal Agency
__ Local Government
__ University
_X_ Other (Specify Repository): **Mrs. Delores G. Jowers, Curator, Fort Christian Museum, P.O. Box 103, St. Thomas, USVI 00804**

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: **1.92 acres**

UTM References: Zone Northing Easting

20 2029040 296040

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary for Fort Christian is based on an on-site visitation to the fort in April 1996, in the company of Mr. Myron Jackson of the Virgin Islands SHPO Office and Ms. Dolores Jowers, Curator of Fort Christian. The boundary description is keyed to the enclosed sketch map (figure 1). A datum point was set at the base of the point of the southwestern bastion of Fort Christian. A line was projected in a generally southwest direction to the outside edge of the sidewalk. This is Point A. The boundary goes east along the outside edge of the sidewalk for 246 feet to Point B. From Point B the boundary goes due north for 356 feet to Point C (along the east side of a small road). From Point C the boundary goes across the small road and along the outside edge of a stone lined gutter bordering a open park area for 200 feet to the mid-point of the road leading to the entrance of the fort (Point D). From Point D, the boundary continues along the outside edge of the stone lined gutter of the other open park area for 100 to Point E. From Point E the boundary goes due south along the outside eastern edge of the street for 257 feet to Point F. Point F is located along the outside edge of the intersection of Fort Pladsen and Veteran's Drive. From Point F the boundary goes east along the outside edge of the sidewalk on the north side of Veteran's Drive some 37 feet to connect with Point A.

Boundary Justification:

Fort Christian was originally sited on a small peninsula which projected into St. Thomas Harbor. The boundary for Fort Christian includes the fortification area of this peninsula which contains extant seventeenth to nineteenth century standing remains of the fort. The boundary includes areas to the east, west, and north sides of the fort, which once contained ravelins that projected out from the curtain walls of the fort. On the northern side of the fort the boundary includes two small open park spaces. This area once held the ravelin that projected from the north side of the fort and other landside defenses which protected the fort when the fort was sited on a small peninsula. The open water or lagoon areas which once existed on the west and east sides of the peninsula were reclaimed from the sea and filled in between the late eighteenth and later part of the nineteenth century are not included in this boundary. The only non contributing building in the boundary is a 1950s fire station (photo 6) that occupies the area to the west of the fort on which the west ravelin once stood.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

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DESIGNATED A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK ON
May 05, 1977

Figure 1. Site map showing the boundaries of Fort Christian and the layout of the surrounding area. Map provided by M. Slater.