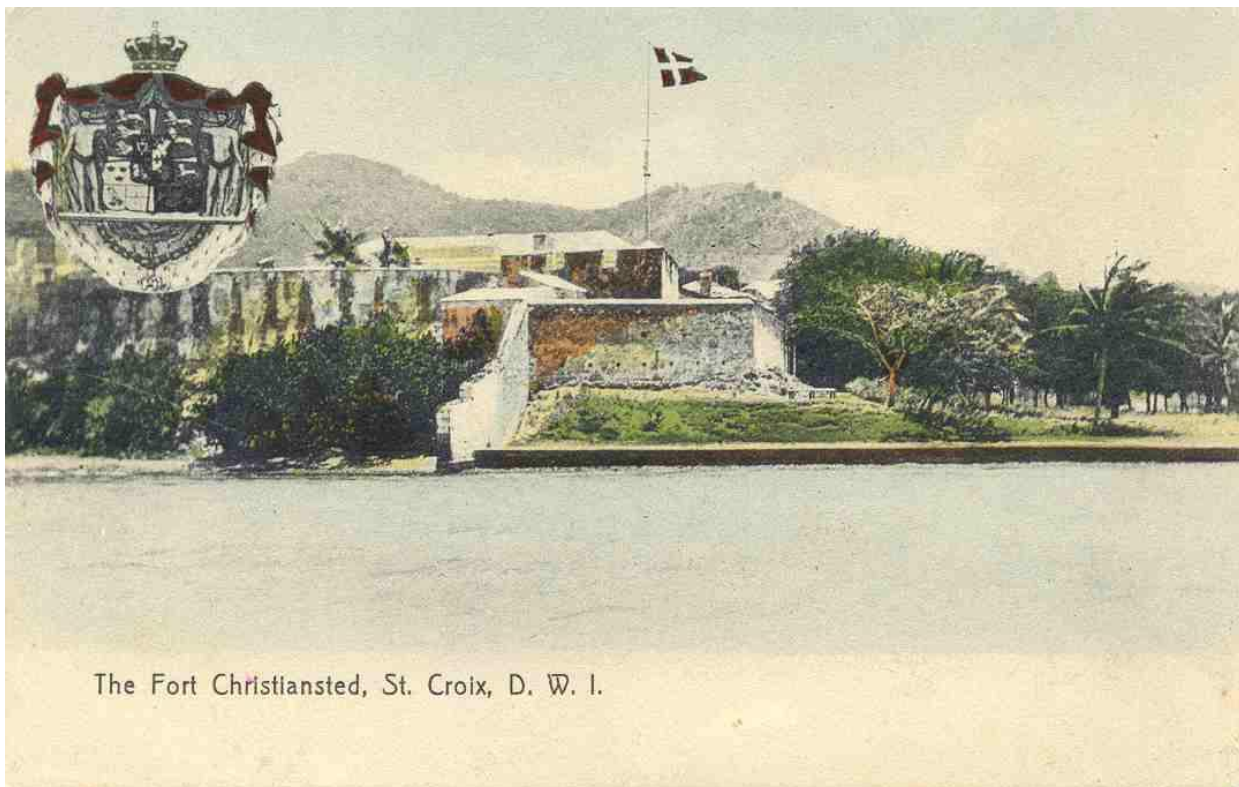


## ESTATE CANE BAY PROTEST INCIDENT 1828

In 1828, Estate Cane Bay encompassed 333.25 Danish acres that extended over four plantation grounds in Northside B Quarter – Northside B 21, 26, 27, 28. Its founder was Cornelius Hendricksen Janzoon, a Dutchman from St. Eustatius, who claimed Northside B 26 and 28 in 1751 and was producing sugar there by 1755. Hendricksen added Northside B 27 in 1766. His successor, Daniel Pappen annexed Northside B 21 in 1770.

The owners in 1828 were James C. Burrell, Thomas R. Ford and Robert Smith, who had acquired the property in 1818. In the ten years prior to the disturbance of 1828 they embarked on an expansion program that included construction of a windmill and increasing the amount of cane land from 90 to 125 acres. In 1829, the enslaved population numbered 80 persons (44 males; 36 females), down from 92 individuals five years earlier. By 1835, the number of enslaved workers had fallen to just 50 individuals. This data suggests that the enslaved population was under considerable duress, as the new proprietors drove to expand sugar production and income at the expense of the laborers.

Very little information has been found respecting the whites identified in the Police records. The plantation owners -- James C. Burrell, Thomas R. Ford and Robert Smith -- were all Englishmen, who came to St. Croix around 1815. Burrell and Ford were employed as plantation managers, while Smith was a merchant based in Christiansted. Burrell was resident manager of Cane Bay on behalf of the partnership. John Plaskett of England was the owner of Estate North Star, which borders Estate Cane Bay on the west.



The Fort Christiansted, St. Croix, D. W. I.

## **Enslaved Protagonists – Biographical information from St. Croix Population Database**

### **1. Simon aka Simon Simon**

Creole, born enslaved ca. 1809 on Estate Cane Bay and baptized in Anglican Church. His parents are not known. In 1829, he voluntarily joined the Moravian Church and had appraised value of 500 Pieces of Eight. Between 1830 and 1841, he had a relationship with Sophia Amalia of Estate Canaan (referred to in his testimony), with whom he had 7 children. By 1841, Simon was employed as the driver on Estate Cane Bay and said to have a “good” character. Freed on Cane Bay in 1848, he became a fisherman, working initially on Estate Jealousy. Between 1855 and 1860 he lived on Estate North Star with his “wife” Hanna/Johanna and their children. The family cannot be found in the 1870 census. However, in 1880, Simon, now a widower, was back on Estate Cane Bay with his sons Andrew and Joe. All three were making a living as fishermen. On 17 June 1893, Simon died of old age on Cane Bay and was buried there.

### **2. Moreton or Morton**

Creole, born enslaved in Christiansted ca. 1805 and baptized in the Lutheran Church. No baptism record could be found and his parents are unknown. He was brought onto Estate Cane Bay in the 1820s by Robert Smith, who had purchased him from Mr. Shaw (probably Henry B. Shaw, an estate manager in the 1820s). In 1829, he is said to be 30 years of age with an appraised value of Ps. 450. On the 1841 census return he said to be 36 years old, unmarried, belonging to the big gang with a “good” character. He was freed on Est. Cane Bay in 1848, and was still living there as a first class laborer in 1850. He is not found in the Database after that year. Most likely he left St. Croix.

### **3. Abraham aka Abraham Edwards**

Creole, born enslaved on Estate Cane Bay in 1806 and baptized in the Anglican Church. No baptism record found and his parents are not known. In 1829, he said to be a field laborer with an appraised value of Ps. 525. In 1830, he voluntarily joined the Moravian Church. On the 1841 census return, he was listed as a member of the big gang and said to have a “good” character. Freed on Estate Cane Bay in 1848, he remained on that plantation for the rest of his life. In 1846, he married Anna Catharina of Estate Cane Bay. Between 1850 and 1870, he was employed as a driver. He also worked as a watchman and rat catcher. In 1887, he died and was buried on the estate.

### **4. Nelson aka Nelson Andrew**

Creole, born enslaved on Estate Cane Bay ca. 1800 and baptized in the Anglican Church. Later he voluntarily joined the Moravian Church. In 1829, he had an appraised value of Ps. 500. On the 1841 census return he was unmarried, supposedly belonged to the Moravian Church, a member of the big gang and said to have a “bad” character. He was freed on Estate Cane Garden in 1848 and still living there in 1850 as a first class laborer. Between 1852 and 1860 he worked on Estate Montpellier in Queens Quarter along with his wife Mary, who he married in 1852. In 1870, he was a widower working as a third class laborer on Estate La Vallee. He died and was buried on Estate Cane Garden on 4 October 1871.

### **5. Goodluck aka Peter**

African of the Mokko nation, born ca. 1792, it is not clear when he reached St. Croix. He was brought onto Estate Cane Bay sometime between 1808 and 1824. In 1829, he had an appraised value of Ps. 400. On the

1841 census return he was a member of the big gang and said to have a “good” character. In 1842, he was baptized into the Moravian Church with the name Peter. Freed on Estate Cane Garden in 1848, he continued living alone on that plantation until his death and burial there on 11 December 1861.

## **6. Paris**

African, born ca. 1793. It is not documented when he reached St. Croix. He was brought onto Estate Cane Bay sometime between 1808 and 1824. In 1829, he was said to be a field laborer with an appraised value of Ps.300. On the 1841 census return he was an unmarried, pasture man attached to the big gang with a “good” character. But, in 1846, he was said to have a “bad” character. He was freed on Estate Cane Bay in 1848 and was still working there as an unmarried third class laborer in 1850. He cannot be found in the Database after 1850 and there is no record of his death. In the censuses he was said to belong to Moravian Church, but he cannot be found in the church records.

## **7. Becky aka Benigna**

Contrary to the police report she was, according to the head tax lists, censuses and church records, an African of the Congo nation, born ca. 1783. She was brought onto Cane Bay in 1796 and put to work in the cane fields. In 1829, she had an appraised value of Ps. 200. She was baptized into the Moravian church in 1823 with the name Benigna. On the 1841 census return she was an unmarried house servant/washer with one living child and said to have a “good” character. She was freed on Cane Bay in 1848, and elected to remain on the plantation. In 1851, she married Samuel aka Smart, an African of the Mokko nation, also freed on Cane Bay in 1848. He died in 1851. She continued living and working on Cane Bay until her death on 11 January 1869.

## **8. Caroline aka Caroline Jonas**

Creole, born enslaved on Estate Cane Bay ca. 1810 and baptized in Friedensthal Moravian Church on 29 July 1810. Her parents were Elizabeth, an enslaved Creole born on Estate Cane Bay and John enslaved to Johnson (probably the Johnson who owned Estate Glynn). In 1829, she had an appraised value of Ps. 450. On the 1841 census return she was listed as an unmarried member of the big gang with 2 living children and a “bad” character. In 1846, she had 4 living children, still unmarried and considered a “bad” character. Freed on Estate Cane Bay in 1848, she appears to have remained on the estate for the rest of her life. In 1851, she married Johnson aka Jonas, a 63 year-old African of Estate Cane Bay with whom she had had three children Ester, Rose and Julius in the 1840s. The couple is recorded as living together on Cane Bay when Johnson/Jonas died and was buried there in 1867. Caroline’s date and place of death is unrecorded.

## **9. Jane**

Creole, born enslaved on Estate Cane Bay ca. 1810 and said to have been baptized into the Moravian church. Her parents are unknown. In 1829, she was valued at Ps. 425. On the 1841 census return, she was an unmarried member of the big gang with no living children and considered to have a “bad” character. In 1846, she was still unmarried, without children, working in the big gang and said to be of “good” character. She was freed on Estate Cane Bay on July 3, 1848 and died there four months later in November.

## **10. Susanna aka Maria Susanna Thomas aka Susanna Hendricks**

Creole, born enslaved on Estate Cane Bay ca. 1815. Her parents are unknown. In 1829, she had an appraised value of Ps. 250. On the 1841 census return she was listed as an unmarried member of the big

gang with one living child and said to be of “good” character. She was freed on Estate Cane Bay in 1848 and remained there as a laborer the rest of her life. In 1849, she voluntarily joined the Moravian Church. In 1851, she married David Hendrick (called Howard in the 1870 census), a son of Caroline (above) born on Cane Bay in 1836. The couple lived and worked on Cane Bay until Susanna’s death of dysentery on 7 August 1872.

### **11. David – the Driver**

Creole, born enslaved on Estate Cane Bay in 1786 and baptized in the Anglican Church. Brought up as a field laborer, he had become the head driver by the 1820s. In 1829, he had an appraised value of Ps. 800, which made him the most valuable enslaved person on the plantation. In 1821, he joined the Moravian Church. During the 1820s, he had two children with Maria Magdalena an enslaved field worker on Estate Prosperity located about 1.5 miles west of Cane Bay. He died and was buried on Estate Cane Bay on 17 April 1834.

### **Comments**

The Cane Bay disturbance of 1828 reflects several important trends of period. First, it shows a growing feeling among the enslaved population that there were basic standards of treatment that should not be violated with some kind of protest or response. This is also manifest in the Sprat Hall incident. Second, it reflects a tendency, which was becoming widespread throughout the island, for peaceful collective action on behalf of better working conditions and maintenance. In nearly all such cases, the enslaved sought to play off Danish authorities against plantation owners and administrators. Even when the collective action failed and resulted in punishments, as in the Cane Bay case, authorities and administrators were put on notice, and the end result was most often improved conditions. The increasing activity of the enslaved as agents in shaping their local circumstances would ultimately lead to the mass collective action that led to their emancipation in July 1848.

It is noteworthy that the long-standing tradition of maroonage, which was generally very individualized, here was being fused into this pattern of labor protest – the enslaved, in order to effect improvements in their lives, temporarily withdrawing themselves from work, sometime hiding in cane fields or woodland and negotiating improvements in exchange for their return to work. This collective “ameliorative maroonage”, which made its appearance in the first decade of the nineteenth century, was commonly practiced up to 1848.

Another aspect is that just about every participant in the protest was a member or would become a member of the Moravian Church – which raises the issue of that Church/faith’s role in slave protest prior to and after the 1820s. Is it possible that although the Moravian Church may have initially dampened and channeled protest into acceptable behavior – is it possible under changing economic, social and political conditions commencing around 1820 that its teachings and practices may have emboldened its converts to speak out and act against perceived injustices.

Finally, the post-emancipation history of the participants indicates the strong attachment that the Cane Bay protesters had to the plantation of their birth. Nearly all of them remained on the property after emancipation, which was the common response of many people freed in this section of the island, which was isolated by mountains, and where conditions of life and labor seem to have been better than

elsewhere on the island. Even today many older “northsiders”, who have a long tradition self-reliance and living off the land, consider themselves distinct from the rest of St. Croix.

