

DOCUMENT 1

I hereby take the liberty of forwarding to Your Excellency transcripts of the interrogation and police examination into the slaves June from Betzy's Jewel Estate and Bacchus from Strawberry Hill Estate. During the interrogation it was sufficiently established that the two Negroes have committed fraud by using witchcraft and treating diseases by means of Obeah. In view of the circumstances of the case I submit that June and Bacchus be punished with 100 to 150 lashes at the justice post in the fish market, and that they work in shackles for a period of 1 to 2 years.

As it is of the utmost importance that Obeah be fought down, I hereby suggest to His Excellency to ask the owners to keep an open eye on bad people and in the future report such acts.

As the case so far has been in my jurisdiction, I would like to point out that it is a mistake if it has already been sent to you, and I ask your forgiveness for that.

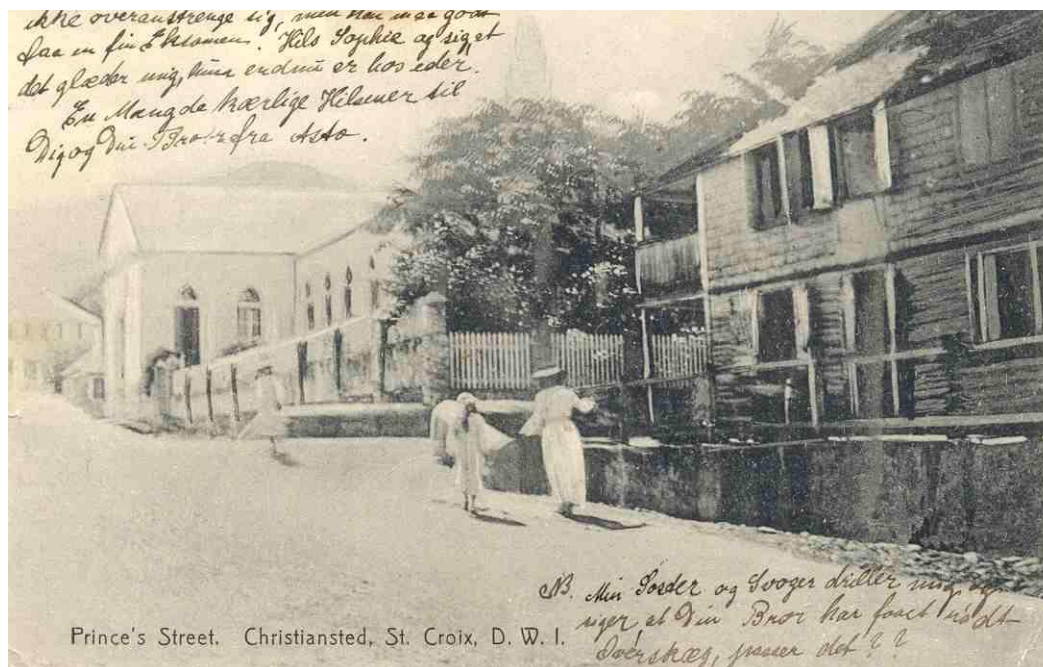
Christiansted Police, January 16, 1825

His Excellency

Lord Chamberlain v. Bardenfleth¹

Admiral and Governor-General

Knight of the Order of Dannebrog



¹ Johan Frederik Bardenfleth, 1772-1883

DOCUMENT 2

Andreas J. Andreson

(Royally appointed Town Clerk and Police Chief in Christiansted Jurisdiction on St. Croix in America)
proclaims:

1824:

On Sep. 25 at 11 o'clock in the morning the court was set in the public courthouse at 10 King Street, the undersigned presiding as acting Police Chief and Police Clerk, and in the presence of the Police Sergeants Johne and Petersen.

New examination on the same day: No 58/1824, Police ____ contra June belonging to Betzy's Jewel

The Police Chief stated that the owner of Betzy's Jewel Estate, Captain (Peter) Markoe, had reported that one of his Negroes by the name of June had practiced magic and had therefore been apprehended on Little Princess Estate and been returned to her home with a note from the manager (Owen) Sheridan. The note has been sent to the police and is produced here. The Negro June was arrested and placed in custody.

The letter reads like this:

Sir Captain Markoe

I send with an escort a Negro who says that he belongs to Betzy's Jewel Estate (he is said to make a living of practicing Obeah). He has succeeded in making 8 Negroes on the estates Little Princess and Golden Rock believe that their fellow servants have poisoned them with Obeah, and that no medicine will cure them, but that with his magic and Obeah both inside and outside their houses, he can cure them of their pains with a potion. Nothing can make them believe otherwise, and as a result of this belief they have been useless on the property for 9 months. Last night I took a bag of "Obeah stuff" away from him, and now I hope not to see him here again.

Yours sincerely,

I remain your obedient servant

O. Sheridan

Little Princess, Sept. 12, 1824

The letter was produced in court.

The manager of Little Princess Estate, O. Sheridan, brought in a bag of canvas which contained a number of small items, such as some chicken feet tied together in twos with string, a lock of hair, an old tooth, a piece of chalk, some pieces of glass, some sea shells etc. The bag was found in June's pocket when he was arrested in the Negro compound at Little Princess and was sent to his owner together with the note.

Relating to the episode Sheridan explains that, on being arrested, June put up a great deal of resistance when he took his bag away from him. When he finally got the bag from him and asked him about the contents, he refused to speak. It was the Negro Jørgen who on Sheridan's order arrested June and took him come. Jørgen told Sheridan that he had confessed to having been in two houses on the neighboring estate of Golden Rock at the Negroes Tony and Betsy, who were both ill.

Jørgen arrested June in the evening at 9 o'clock on the road between Golden Rock and Little Princess.

Now June, who is owned by the Betzy's Hill Estate, appeared before the court:

He was no longer handcuffed. He was born on the coast of Guinea, does not know his age, but is believed to be 50 years old. He is of the Moravian persuasion. He explains that he was on his way home from town when he was arrested by the watchman Jørgen outside Golden Rock Estate. He had been in town to sell a chicken and some small items when he was arrested.

He denies on that night or at any other time having visited any of the Negroes at Golden Rock Estate, and he denies ever having visited any of the Negroes at Little Princess – with the exception of the Negro David, whom he visited once last year when he was sent by his master to look for runaways Negroes, and that he spent one night there and had some food. But he has not been there since then.

The small bag with the various items was produced, and June explains that it was given to him about a year ago by the Negro Christian from the Walbergaard Estate. At that time he was ill and therefore approached Christian, whom he knew beforehand, and was given the advice to carry these things on him. That would cure him, and he also said that if against expectations it did not help, he was to return the bag to him. When Christian died he kept the bag and has had it with him whenever he has felt ill. In that way the bag has given him relief. But June denies having used the remedies or anything else – not on the Negroes on the estates Little Princess, Golden Rock or any other estate.

June was returned to custody and the examination adjourned

Certified by A. J. Andreson

On Sept. 20, 1824 at 10.30 the court was set in the public courthouse at 10 King Street, the undersigned presiding as acting Police Chief and Police Clerk, and in the presence of the Police Sergeant Johnne and Police Officer Blacklow.

The examination was continued.

The Negro Jurgen, who belongs to Little Princess Estate, appeared, and he explains on being questioned that he does not know the Negro June very well and has only seen him once at Little Princess. He saw him come out of the Negro David's house. June tried to stay hidden when he saw Jurgen, who has heard that June is a dangerous person with knowledge of magic. The same night that June was arrested (Sept. 12, at 9 o'clock p.m.) on the road between Golden Rock and Little Princess, he brought June in front of the manager

as instructed. Here he saw the little bag which was taken from June, and which is now in the courtroom, and the contents of said bag.

When on the following day Jurgen took June home to his owner by order of the manager, June told him that he had taken the items in the bag from different people, that he had learned this craft, and that he was paid for his work, that he cured those people who paid what he demanded, but that he only took things from those who did not pay the price he asked of them, but left things in their bodies until he got what he demanded.

June also told Jurgen that some of the Negroes at Golden Rock still owed him money, and among those were the Negroes Tony and Betsy and the Negro David at Little Princess. He has worked for these people by means of Obeah.

End of questioning of Jurgen

After this appeared the called-upon witness the Negro David, who is owned by Golden Rock Estate. On being questioned he explains that during the latest harvest the Negro June approached David, who worked in the boiling house, and told him that he had been sent to look for runaway Negroes, and asked him if he could put him up for the night, to which David agreed. The following morning June left his house without telling David, who by the way did not know him or of him, anything about being able to cure people.

Two days later June returned to David in the night and asked for shelter for the night. When on the way to his house David complained about back problems, June told him that he could produce a drink that could cure him. This drink was to contain a root of the so-called Dog Wood, which was to be dissolved in water. June offered to prepare the drink for David, and he was to pay 10 stivers for the bottle. The next morning when June left David's house, he was arrested for being suspicious, but was released again by the manager because he had a pass as a hunter for runaway slaves. When June did not return with the medicine as promised, David prepared the concoction himself according to June's recipe and immediately felt better.

June had not shown David the Obeah ingredients which were produced in court, and he said that he had not visited any of the other Negroes on the estates.

Sometime later David had met June on the road outside Little Princess, and on that occasion he confronted him with not having returned with the promised medicine. June made excuses and said that he had been ill and therefore he could not come, but he promised to return on a later Sunday.

However, David explained that June did not return until the morning of Sept. 12 and stayed there until lunch. After that he went into town with a basket and a chicken. David was in good health and did not ask June for the promised medicine. Nor did June speak of it, and David has not seen him since.

End of questioning of David.

Next the Negro Tony from Golden Rock Estate appeared. He explains that he has seen June on several occasions at Little Princess Estate. He has seen him walk on the road through the estate. But Tony has not

seen him enter or leave any house, and explains that June has only been at his place once. That was on the 12th of September about 4 in the afternoon when June came from the town to visit Tony, who lay ill in his house. Tony thought that he seemed drunk and did not want his company, whereupon he immediately left. Tony does not know where he went or if he went into another Negro house. Tony explains that June has never talked to him about being able to cure people, practicing magic, or anything like that, and June has never shown Tony any of the Obeah remedies that were produced in court.

End of questioning of Tony.

Next up was the Negro Paulus from the Little Princess Estate. He explains that he does not know the Negro June and has only seen him once at Little Princess. That was when June was arrested and released again. June has never visited him and he does not know of anyone on the estate who has had a visit from June.

On the other hand Paulus, explains that last year when he was sick with diarrhea, he approached the Negro Baccus, aka Peter, from Strawberry Hill Estate. He had been given to understand that Baccus could cure him. The first time he visited Baccus, he washed him with some water from a bottle and rubbed his back with it, besides touching him with his fingers and squeezing him on the back. And later Baccus showed him some objects which he told him he had taken out of his back during the treatment. He had removed the objects from his hip and his testicle. The objects were a piece of fish bone, a small piece of lead, and two small sea shells. After this he gave him a bitter drink made from some roots which he did not know.

Paulus had visited Baccus one other time without Baccus doing anything with him. Since then Paulus has not spoken to Baccus because he did not think that the cure helped him as he continued to feel ill. Baccus did not receive any payment for the treatment. He only was to pay if he was cured – otherwise he was not to pay. There was nobody else present during the treatment, which took place in an adjoining room. However, there were several people in the other room of the house. Paulus did not know any of them.

On the same day David from Golden Rock went to Strawberry Hill – but Paulus does not know his business and did not see him in Baccus' house. Nor does he know of anybody else who may have asked Baccus to help them.

He does state, however, that Baccus is supposed to have told him that it was some of Tony's helpers who had bewitched him by means of the items which Baccus had removed from Paulus' body. However, Baccus did not mention anybody by name.

The Negro David appeared before the court again and admits on being questioned that he has visited Strawberry Hill on a number of occasions. He maintains that he has not approached Baccus, although he had heard through the grapevine that he could cure people. He claims that he has relatives on the estates and that it was those that he visited.

All are dismissed and the examination adjourned

Certified by A. J. Andreson

On October 2, 1824 the court was set at 11 o'clock in the morning in the public courthouse at 10 King Street, the undersigned presiding as acting Police Chief and Police Clerk, and in the presence of the Police Sergeant Johnne and Police Officer Jerina.

The examination was continued.

The Police Chief produced a report from Police Sergeant Johnne. It reads as follows:

In accordance with Your Excellency's orders, I yesterday went to Strawberry Hill Estate to investigate if Baccus, aka Peter, who belongs to that estate, has practiced magic (: Obeah).

Baccus denies ever having dealt in magic (: Obeah). At his house I found a small parcel the size of an egg, which I assumed must contain things for Obeah. Baccus said that he had received the parcel from the Negro Castillo from Barrenspot Estate. It was to be used to rub his private parts. Baccus then bit a whole in the parcel and swallowed some of the contents. He would not hand over the rest and also tried to swallow that.

The parcel is produced in this court. It consists of a broken clay pipe, a piece of lead and other things. I ordered the manager Mudie to send the Negro Baccus to the prison house and that he himself should appear before this court today.

Then I went to Barrenspot Estate as the Negro Baccus had said that he had received the parcel from the Negro Castillo. Castillo was found and brought before me, but he declared that the accusations against him were fictitious and wrong.

Christiansted, Oct. 2, 1824

Your humble servant J. E. Johnne

His Honour Police Chief Andreson

Produced in Christiansted Police Court, Oct. 2, 1824

A. J. Andreson

David Mudie, manager on Strawberry Hill Estate, had been called as a witness, and he explained that he had heard rumors that the Negro Baccus was an Obeah man. He makes the Negroes believe that he can cure them, but he only knows of two cases that can be connected to Obeah. These are that a couple of years ago he met the Negro John from Little Princess at Baccus' house, and when he asked him his business, he answered that he had come to Baccus to be cured.

The second time he met the Negro David from Golden Rock Estate, who had also come to be cured by Baccus. They did not, however, tell him anything about the manner or by what means this was to happen. Mudie ordered them both to leave the estate immediately, and on one occasion he punished Baccus. He knows nothing more of these cases.

Then the Negro Baccus was called. He belongs to Strawberry Hill Estate, was born on the coast of Guinea, does not know his age, but is estimated to be about 60 years old. He is Roman Catholic. On being questioned he explains that he knows the Negro David from Little Princess, but knows neither Paulus nor

John. As for David, he arrived at his house about a year ago and complained that he was ill and demanded to be cured. He answered David that he knew nothing of such things. He denies having ever given him anything. The same day the manager met David at Baccus' house and he was punished.

The small bag was produced and shown to Baccus. He explains that it was for rubbing his testicles when they were swollen. He explained that the leaves in the bag he had had from the Negro Castillo from Barrenspot Estate. Castillo had given him the advice to mix them with some tobacco and smoke it in his pipe, whereupon he had crushed the contents and put a piece of lead in the bag, which he had then tied. That is how the bag was found at his place on his arrest yesterday. He denies having tried to destroy the contents of the bag when the police sergeant arrested him last night at his house, but claims that he had just bitten the bag to show that there was nothing dangerous in it.

He furthermore denies ever having cured people or having claimed that he could.

He says that the Negro from Golden Rock Estate, by the manager referred to as John, is called Daniel, but he denies having attempted to cure him or others who have visited his house and asked such services of him.

Next the Negro Castillo from Barrenspot Estate was questioned. He was shown the produced evidence and was confronted with Baccus' explanation thereunto. Castillo contradicted that explanation and calls the whole thing pure fiction and untrue, and he declares that he has never visited Baccus, nor Baccus him, and that he does not know Baccus at all.

This is contradicted by Baccus (page missing from the document)

(Castillo?) sticks to his explanation that Baccus has never talked to him of a cure. He does say, however, that he has twice seen Little David walk past his house, but that David has never been inside the house or done anything with him. He says, on the other hand, that it was Big David who met the manager at his house –but he still denies having had anything to do with him.

Paulus and Little David were questioned and stuck to their previous explanations – and were dismissed.

Next the Negro Big David was questioned again. He was confronted with Baccus' explanation and now admits that last year during harvest he felt ill and went to Strawberry Hill Estate to ask Baccus for help, as he had heard that he could help people. Big David did not find Baccus, who was at work, but met the manager, who turned him away. The manager subsequently punished Baccus after Big David had told him why he had come. He explained that he was never inside Baccus' house, but in another Negro house on the estate. He sticks to this explanation in spite of being confronted with the manager's contrary explanation.

Baccus was returned to custody, the others dismissed and the examination adjourned

Certified by A. J. Andreson

On Oct. 5, at 1.30 in the afternoon the examination was continued, supervised as before and in the presence of Police Sergeant Johne and Police Officer Jerina.

The Negro John Daniel from Golden Rock Estate was questioned. He explains on being questioned that 3 years ago he was very ill. He had heard rumors that Baccus from Strawberry Hill Estate had healing powers and that he had healed others. One early morning he went to Baccus' house, where he waited until lunch at 8 o'clock until Baccus came home. He asked Baccus for help to get well, and Baccus answered that he would see what he could do and asked him to wait until dinner at 12 o'clock, when he would be home.

Baccus did nothing that morning with John Daniel, who, however, was seen in the morning by the manager in Baccus' house and was turned away. He did not have a chance to speak to Baccus again and has not been to see him on a later occasion. He does not know of others whom Baccus is supposed to have cured, and can explain no more than he already has pertaining to the case.

John Daniel is led from the court and the examination adjourned

Certified by A. J. Andreson

On Oct. 20, 1824 at 1 o'clock in the afternoon the court was set in Christiansted in the court house at 10 King Street, the acting Police Chief and Police Clerk presiding, and in the presence of Police Sergeant Johne and Police Officer Shreihuber.

The examination was continued.

The Negro June from Betzy's Jewel Estate was questioned.

The owner of Cliftonhill and Betzy's Jewel estates and Captain Markoe explained upon being questioned that on more than one occasion they had been notified that the Negro June was involved in magic/Obeah. He has on several occasions found that June had in his possession objects similar to those produced in the court. He has taken those things away from him. He has also been told by the Negroes of that estate that June has said that he has knowledge of Obeah. Besides he believes that June is a bad person. But he has not been able to offer much information as to the case at hand. He does point out, however, that June has been arrested before and tried at the court for similar things.

The examination was closed and the court adjourned

Certified By A. J. Andreson

On Nov. 1, 1824, at 2 o'clock in the afternoon the court was set in Christiansted in the public courthouse at 10 King Street, the acting Police Chief and Police Clerk presiding, in the presence of Police Sergeant Johne and Police Officer Shreihuber.

The examination of the case of the Negro June from the Betzy's Jewel Estate continued.

Doctor W. Ruan appeared before the court and explained on being questioned that he has attended the sick Negroes on the estates Little Princess and Golden Rock. Here he has experienced that several of the sick Negroes, whose diseases he could not explain, were suffering from mental illnesses or, more specifically, from the delusion that they had been bewitched, and that they could only be cured by means of Obeah.

Dr. Ruan has also found similar cases among sick Negroes on other estates. He has no knowledge of what June may have done –nor what any of the others may have done- and therefore cannot shed light on to the current case. He can, however, tell the court about the above-mentioned condition among the Negroes and about their superstition.

The examination was closed and the case referred to the Governor-General.

Certified by A. J. Andreson

DOCUMENT 3

It is recommended that June and Baccus be punished with 150 lashes in the fish market and forced to labor in shackles on the estate for one year.

The estates are ordered to execute the punishment in accordance with the Police Chief's recommendations.

G. G. Jan. 19, 1824