

Sucky – sick Nurse and Beeston Hill

Below is a transcript of an examination of the Negress Sucky belonging to Beeston Hill Estate, following a complaint from overseer D. Finlay of the same plantation. Allow me to observe: that overseer Finlay's complaint has not in fact been proven or corroborated by the explanations of the other Negroes, and therefore there is reason to assume that he is of a somewhat hot-tempered nature and has treated harshly the aforesaid Negress, who is old, and who has only one arm, the left. It seems that he has both asked her to work too hard and, in the case at hand, thrown a basket of yams at her, and also mistreated her both with a whip and with his hands.

I therefore find no reason to recommend that the Negress Sucky be punished, nor do I find that overseer Finlay on his part had any reason or necessity to send her to the police station or the prison. Although it may be assumed that she, Sucky, may have offended by misplaced or maybe cheeky answers or by remonstrating with him that there was no need to cook more or different foods for the ill that day than had already been prepared, that was hardly an offence or crime that could not have been punished on the plantation, without troubling the police, whose duties hardly involve having to deal with such a minor incidence of disobedience, particularly as it does not seem to border on insubordination or other major crimes, such as might be considered detrimental to public law and order.

In view of the circumstances allow me the following observation: It seems as if overseer Finlay has made a habit without real reason of sending slaves from Beeston Hill to examination and confinement. I therefore recommend to His Excellency that he decides that he, overseer Finlay, must pay for board and other expenses related to the Negress Sucky's arrest, plus fees to the police for the examination.

Christiansted Police Office, June 4, 1830

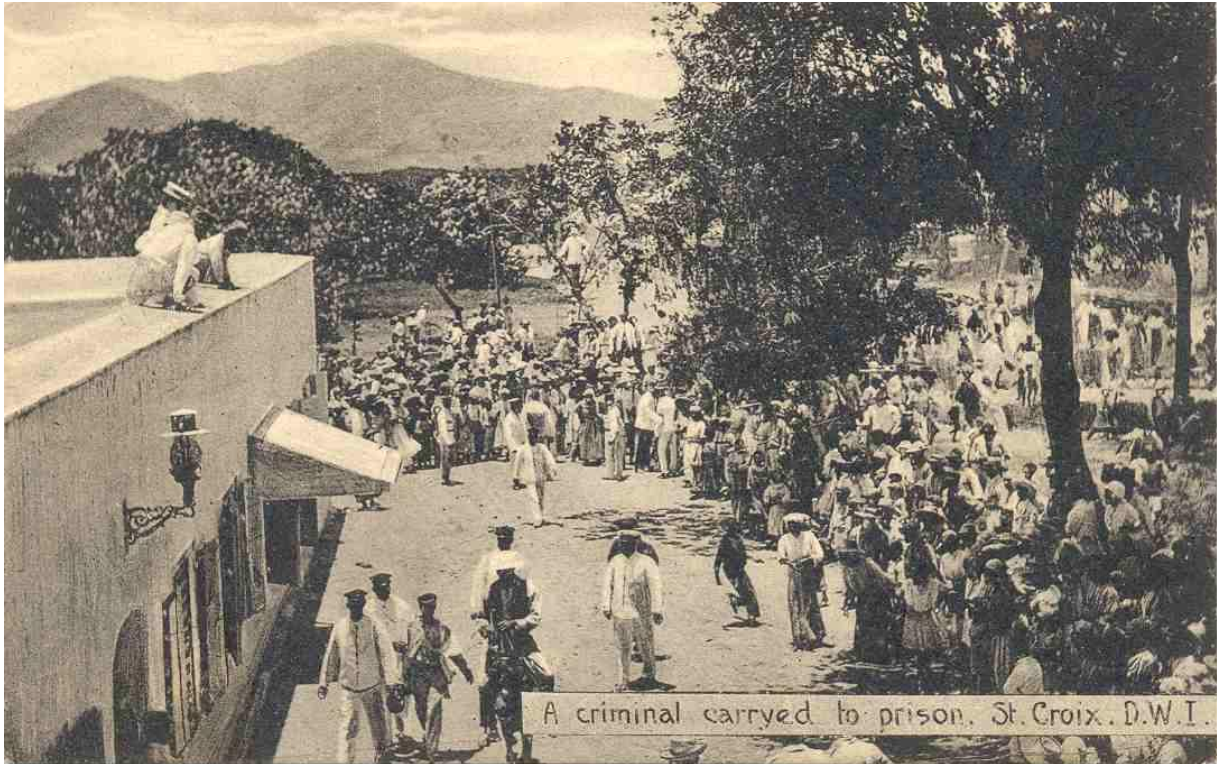
I remain your humble servant,

Friderichsen

His Excellency

Lord Chamberlain and Governor-General von Scholten,

Knight of Order of the Dannebrog



Friderich Friderichsen

As

Police Chief and Police Clerk

Christiansted Jurisdiction

On

St. Croix in Amrica

Declares that

On April 30, 1830 at 11 o'clock in the morning the court was set in the public courthouse in Kongensgade nr. 10, the undersigned presiding as appointed Police Chief and Police Clerk, and in the presence of the Police Sergeant Johne and Police Officer Nielsen.

Where was treated

New case

Nr. 6/1830 Police examination in relation to a complaint about the Negress Sucky belonging to Beeston Hill Estate.

The Police Chief observed that the Negress Sucky on the 22nd of the month was sent to the prison by overseer D. Finlay of Beeston Hill Estate, because she supposedly refused, in her capacity of nurse, to cook for the invalids in the sick house. The Police Chief has asked for D. Finlay's written statement, which arrived on the same day, but other affairs have so far held up the examination. The aforesaid complaint was now produced along with a letter from D. Finlay to the Police Chief dated the 24th of this month to the effect that three Negroes in the sick house at Beeston Hill Estate had had to eat dirt, about which the aforesaid Sucky must know something.

The submitted complaint reads like this:

Honorable Judge Friderichsen

Sir

Having This Morning between the Hour of 6 and 7 o'clock called the Sick Nurse of the Estate Named Sucky to take out the Sick Negroes allowance, she did not come to me I went to the Negro Houses at the Hour of 12 o'clock and told her to come to me for Said allowance, she did not come until I again sent for her, and when she came she refused to take thikker allowance, I told her, I had received Orders from you that the Negroes in Sick House must be attended to by her, and desired her to take up thikker allowance immediately she told me she would not or dammed if she would boil anything for them I gave her a few Strips over her Shoulders, and she then Made Answer she would not boil it for me nor any other Person. Said Woman Sucky has been in the habit of boiling the Negroes food, since I received Orders from you, and I cannot account for her not doing it Now I have sent her to you to request of her to pay more attention to the Sick Negroes furthermore I cannot get her to remain about the Sick House and whenever the Doctor. Jacobs comes there I am obliged to send to call her from the Negro House as to the correctness of the above I am willing to take Oath if required.

Yours m. obedient Servant.

David L. Finlay

Estate Beeston Hill 22 April 1830.

Produced at the Police court on April 30, 1830 in relation to case nr. 6/1830

Friderichsen

The submitted letter of the 24th of this month reads like this:

Honorable Judge Friderichsen

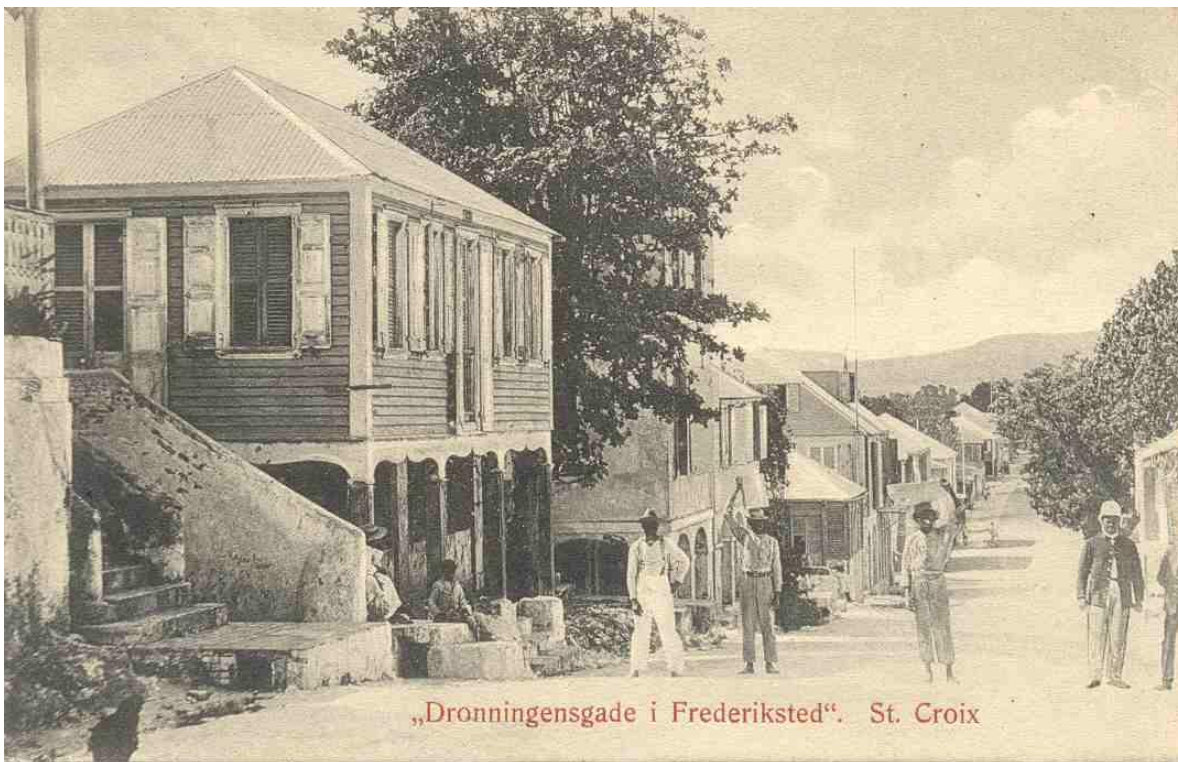
Sir

Having this Morning sent for Doctor Jacobs to See the following Negroes in the Sick House, say little Allick, Andreas, and Bervy he has declared to me the[y] must be rather eating of dirt or Something to leave them in such a swelled State, and if the[y] continue so the Consequence may be very serious, I must think the Sick Nurse Sucky must know something about thikker bikkeng in Such a swelled State, also of refusing to boil food and nourishment for them you will oblige me as she is now in the Court Yard to examine her on that Subject, I have consulted with Doctor Jacobs, and he thinks it proper I should I should let you know.

I have the Honor to be yours obedient servant

David L. Finlay

Beeston Hill 24 April 1830



Now appeared before the court the Negress Sucky, who explained that she does not know her age, but is believed to be between 50 and 60 years old. She says she was born on the coast of Guinea, from where she was brought her as an adult. She has belonged to Mount Welcome Estate, but together with her adult son Ellich, who is a carpenter, she was sold to Beeston Hill Estate some years ago. As she has lost her right arm, while she was still at Mount Welcome, she was put to work as a nanny for some children until about three years ago when Finlay came to the plantation and put her to work as a sick nurse.

She was confronted with the contents of the submitted complaint, which she denied. She says that on the 22nd of this month she cooked lunch for the sick Negroes in the sick house, yams for those who could

stomach it, but tongue for Fredericca and Ellich, who were running fevers and did not think that yams were good for them. She also had to take care of the Negress Judith's small child, and when at 12 o'clock the overseer called her, she went to him and answered as previously stated. He asked her who had given her permission to cook tongue, and that she was to cook yams, like he had told her, and give that to the sick. He did not care if they would eat or not.

She denies having spoken as in Finlay's complaint, and she denies having refused to cook for the sick, - which she does every day- , pointing out that she also has to fetch firewood. She furthermore says that she is always in the sick house whenever this is open, but as overseer Finlay usually keeps it closed and locked, she cannot sit outside on the stairs with the little child, which, as mentioned above, she must take care of, and therefore she goes back to the Negro houses. As for the claim that the Negroes little Ellick, Andreas and Berwey, aka Francois, have been eating dirt, she knows nothing of it and says they were not swollen when she left the plantation, as stated earlier. She claims not to know that they have eaten anything other than what she has cooked for them, namely yams, which is the only thing overseer Finlay allows the Negroes, because as soon as they come there, he withholds their usual rations.

In answer to the question where she got the corn flour from, with which, as explained, she cooked tongue for Fredericca and Ellich, she answered that they themselves had it in their houses, from where she got it at their instigation. The accused says to this that when, as explained before, she told overseer Finlay that she had already cooked lunch for the sick and he got angry about it, he took a basket full of yams and threw it at her so that she fell, whereupon he flogged her a number of times with a whip he had in his hand, and when the whip flew out of his hand, he beat her with his fists several times on her head and in her face. She says she still has a mark on the left cheek, where such a mark as from a blow or a small swelling still seems visible. To inform overseer Finlay of the accused Sucky's explanation, the examination was adjourned until further notice.

The court was adjourned

The accuracy of the above is certified by

Friderichsen

On May 8, 1830, at 11 o'clock in the morning Christiansted Police Court was set as above in the presence of Police Officers Nielsen and W. Bayn.

The case was continued.

Nr. 6/1830 Police examination in relation to complaint about the Negress Sucky belonging to Beeston Hill Estate.

Being summoned overseer Finlay appeared before the court and was read the explanation given by the Negress Sucky, which he claimed was totally untrue, and he referred to his written account of the events that had passed between him and her.

The Negress Sucky appeared before the court, and on being repeatedly asked if the overseer had not on the morning of the 22nd called her to prepare the sick Negroes' food, she answered: that early on the morning in question she was at the sick house when the overseer appeared and told her to prepare a laxative, in the form of salts for the sick Negroes, but he told her not to give it to them before he returned, which is what happened. After that he said that she should come and prepare the sick Negroes' food, to which she answered the overseer that Andreas did not want any yams as he was sick, and that Ellich had already given her flour to cook him tongue, and that she had also cooked tongue for Fridericca, and that Francois said that he did not want anything because he was vomiting, and that the fifth person in the sick house, Friderich, had been given yams.

The overseer Finlay denied that Sucky had said anything like that. Sucky admits that overseer Finlay came to the Negro houses around 12 to call her, or, as she says, asked why she had not come for the sick Negroes' food, to which she answered that she had had no firewood with which to cook the food and had had no time to leave, but had to wait until the Negress Judith, whose child she took care of, came home.

Shortly after the driver came up to her and said that that he had let the Negro Nicolay into the sick house and gave her the keys. He said that he had called her, and she went to him, when he asked why she had not come to pick up the yams for the sick Negroes. She answered, as she had already done, that she had given the sick that day what they had asked for. Only yams, he had said, and then the overseer took the basket with yams, which was in the entrance hall of his house, threw it at her so that she fell, and then hit her as explained.

The Negresses Charlotte and Rachael and the boy William were present. Finlay denies that last part of the explanation given by Sucky, and says that on Sucky's arrival at the house, as mentioned earlier, he only told her to come and take the yams for the sick Negroes, while with one foot he pointed to a basket of yams which was there, and he repeated this when she asked what yams, and when she refused to pick it up. She said that she could not cook the yams, and then he gave her a few lashes with a whip he had in his hand. He denies having thrown the basket with the yams at her, and on the way to the sick house Sucky said that she would see him damned before she cooked them, which the Negress Helene overheard. He moreover denies hitting her with his fist. The Negress Sucky sticks to her explanation and adds that she picked up the yams which had fallen from the basket while the overseer beat her, which overseer Finlay denies and says that he had the yams picked up and brought back to the cellar, and that he subsequently himself had to go to the kitchen to see to the cooking of the food for the sick, as he had Sucky locked up with the intention of sending her to the court.

In view of this the examination was postponed until Monday the 10th of this month at 11 o'clock in the morning, for which session overseer Finlay was asked and promised to send to this court the Negroes mentioned above. Then overseer Finlay was dismissed and the Negress Sucky was returned to custody.

The accuracy of the above is certified by

Friderichsen



On May 10, 1830 at 11.45 in the morning Christiansted Police Court was set and supervised as the previous session in the presence of Police Officers Andersen and Nielsen. The examination was continued.

Examination of

Nr. 6/183 Police examination in relation to complaint about the Negress Sucky belonging to Beeston Hill Estate.

Before the court appeared the Negroes Little Ellich, Francois and Frederich and the Negress Fredericca, all belonging to Beeston Hill Estate. The Negress Sucky was present. The aforesaid Negroes all explained that they were in the sick house on that Thursday last month when Sucky was sent to this courthouse by overseer Finlay. In the morning around 7 o'clock or so when Sucky was in the sick house, overseer Finlay appeared, but they all unanimously say that they did not hear him tell Sucky that she was to come and pick up the food ration for the sick Negroes. On the contrary, Francois and Fredericca say that they both on that morning came to the sick house and, in accordance with overseer Finlay's orders, had brought their own rations of food.

They heard overseer Finlay tell Sucky to take the same food rations and put them in the cellar, so that she could cook them later. Francois and Fredericca also say that Little Ellich later the same day said to Sucky that it was not necessary to cook him anything as he had a stomach ache and couldn't eat, and Fredericca says that, as she was running a fever, she did not believe that yams would be good for her, so she asked Sucky to cook her some tongue of flour which she had in her house, and which Sucky went and fetched at her request.

On the same day at around 12 o'clock Francois, Fredericca and Frederick say that they heard the overseer tell Sucky that she must come to pick up the foods for the sick Negroes and cook them, to which she answered that she had already cooked for the sick what they wanted and what they could eat. She also complained and said that, having only one hand, she could not both take care of a bay, peel and cook yams for the sick, and fetch firewood besides. But they did not hear her say that she was not going to do it, and Little Ellich says that although at that time he was in the sick house, he was asleep and so did not hear what was going on, but that he did wake up and heard Sucky cry.

Fridericca and Friderick also say that from the sick house they saw Finlay at the door to his house take a basket with yams which was there, and throw it at her, which, however, did not make her fall but made her lose her headscarf, and when she stooped to pick it up, overseer Finlay hit her both with a whip and with his fists. Francois says that she only heard some cracks of the whip, but not the rest, and Ellich says that heard or saw nothing as he was asleep. AS for the time spent in the sick house they say that they only got their usual foods up until Sucky was arrested, but after that overseer Finlay had given them sago or salep¹ why they do not know. They were dismissed.

Next appeared the Negress Helene, who, in relation to overseer Finlay's explanation, was asked if she had heard Sucky speak in such a manner as claimed by him, to which question she answered: No!, and that she met him carrying a bucket of water for the works. When she approached the sick house, she saw Sucky coming out, the overseer right behind her, but she did not see him strike her. Overseer Finlay did call Helene's name when she passed and she stopped for a moment, but as he did not continue, she went on her way and only saw Sucky and the overseer walk towards the sick house.

Helene was dismissed and Sucky was returned to custody, and this examination was thereupon postponed as several of Negroes mentioned during the last examination had failed to show up.

The court was adjourned

The accuracy of the above is certified by

Friderichsen

On May 11, 1830 at 11 in the morning Christiansted Police Court was set and supervised as the previous session in the presence of Police Officers Andersen and Nielsen.

The examination was continued

Examination nr. 6/1830 Police examination in relation to a complaint about the Negress Sucky belonging to Beeston Hill Estate.

The Negress Sucky was brought in from the prison.

¹ **Salep** from Arabic: سداب saḥlab, is a flour made from grinding the dried [tubers](#) of the [orchid](#) genus [Orchis](#) (including species [Orchis mascula](#) and [Orchis militaris](#)). These tubers contain a nutritious starch-like [polysaccharide](#) called [glucomannan](#). Salep flour is consumed today in beverages and desserts, in places that were formerly part of the [Ottoman Turkish Empire](#). The term *salep* may also refer to any beverage made with the salep flour.

Before the court appeared the Negress Betty, who on being questioned explained: that, being a house slave at overseer Finlay's house, she had, on the Thursday of last month when Finlay had Sucky arrested, in the morning between 10 and 11 given Sucky the keys to the sick house in order, as she says, to give the sick there their lunch. Charlotte noticed that Sucky carried on her head a tray with tongue and yams for, as she recalls, three people. Shortly after Charlotte left the house to go down to the works, and when some time later she returned, she heard Sucky scream and cry, and when she approached the sick house, she saw Sucky walking in that direction and overseer Finlay behind her with the keys to the sick house in his hands. She observed that he locked up Sucky in said sick house, but she did not see overseer Finlay strike Sucky, nor did she hear him say anything.

If overseer Finlay called Sucky, or had her called, on the morning of the day in question, Charlotte does not know, and she says that she did not see William there at the time in question, but she did see the Negress Rachael in the house. Charlotte is dismissed.

Then the Negress Rachael appeared before the court. She explained that she is a servant girl in overseer Finlay's house. On the Thursday of last month when Sucky was arrested, she had put a small basket of yams in the hall of his house by order of overseer Finlay. When Sucky shortly after appeared and overseer Finlay told her to take the aforesaid yams and cook them for the sick Negroes, she heard Sucky answer: that all the work she was ordered to do, such as taking care of the sick, caring for Judith's child, cooking for the sick and fetching water and firewood, which latter she had to walk far to get as such was not to be found at Beeston Hill (which Rachael confirms) was too much for her as she had only one arm. Overseer Finlay got angry on hearing this, and having thrown the basket of yams at her, he proceeded to strike her with a small tamarind whip which he had in his hand, and when this flew out of his hand, he went into the house and fetched a horsewhip with which he beat her several times. Rachael did not see Sucky fall because of the basket of yams being thrown at her, but she does say that overseer Finlay, while hitting Sucky, also took hold of her breast or her clothes and pulled her down, and with his hand or fist he dealt Sucky several blows on her shoulders and on her head. Furthermore Rachael heard Sucky say that her former owner did not give her so much work, and that, rather than this, she would be in court prison. It was after this that overseer Finlay took the key to the sick house and locked Sucky up. But Rachael maintains, on being repeatedly asked, that she did not hear Sucky say that she would not , or would rather be damned than cook anything for the sick Negroes.

As far as Rachael knows, the boy William was in the horse stable at the time in question, but she did not see him and does not know if he heard or saw anything of what has been explained. Rachael is sent home.

The Negress Sucky agreed with the explanations given, adding that since she had to take care of the little child until his mother came home from the field, she could not until then go and fetch firewood, for which she had to go to the neighboring plantations. All this and cooking and taking care of the sick, she found to be too much work for her. She was returned to custody, and the examination was postponed, so that these latest statements can be explained by overseer Finlay, whereupon the court was adjourned.

The accuracy of the above is certified by

Friderichsen



On May 25, 1830 at 11.30 in the morning Christiansted Police Court was set, supervised by the undersigned Police Chief and in the presence of Police Sergeant Hansen and Police Officer Nielsen.

The examination was continued.

Case

Nr. 6/1830 Police examination in relation to a complaint about the Negress Sucky belonging to Beeston Hill Estate.

The Police Chief observed that the two examinations of Attorney G. F. Borch and School Master Petersen and other current affairs had put off the hearing of this case until now. Overseer D. Finlay appeared before the court and was read the explanations given by various Negroes from Beeston Hill Estate on the 10th and the 11th of this month. He claimed that they were false, and maintains several times that the Negress Sucky had refused to cook for the sick Negroes, and had said that she would be damned if she did that for him or anybody else. As for the claim that the sick Negroes had been given no other foods than their usual rations, overseer Finlay produced an excerpt from the Estate Records from Nov. 28, 1827 until the 15th of this month on what purchases had been made of pearl barley, salep, and wine for the sick Negroes, and three bills on purchases of meat, poultry and sheep, slaughtered for the Negroes in the sick house, who, besides, have occasionally been given wine from his own house without this being registered. The estate itself also grows a good deal of salep close to two or three kegs a year, which has been given to the sick Negroes.

The submitted excerpt reads like this:

"Estate Beeston Hill the Sundry Nourishment has been used by the Negroes in Sick House when Sick

1827, Novbr 28. A Keg of Barly

1828, Febr. 9 2 [...] of Salup, a bottle of old Wine. For Negro Elsy when Sick

June 10 a Keg of Salup for the use of Negroes in Sick House

Novbr 26 -//- Barley for Negroes in Sick House

1829, Septbr 16 [...] of Sago and 2 [...] of Salup for Sick Negroes

1830, April 23 Tod Bottles of old Wine and 2 bottles Sago for Sick Negroe

Maii 15 10 [...] of Barley for Negroes in Sick House.

Submitted to the Police court on May 25, 1830 in case nr. 6/1830.

Friderichsen

The submitted bills read like this:

Estate Beeston Hill To David L. Finlay

1830

May 2 nd	To 2 [...] of Beef for the Negro Andrias which is Sick	0	4	0
May 9	To 4 [...] of Beef for Andrias	1	0	0
16	4 [...] -//- do -//- do	1	0	0
23	4 [...] -//- do -//- do	1	0	0
		[...]	3	4 0

Submitted to the Police court on May 25, 1830 in case nr. 6/1830.

Friderichsen

Estate Beeston Hill

1829 To Negro Lucretia

Decbr 12. To 4 fowls had for Negro Barvey when Sick p. 1 0 2

1830

<i>April 17</i>	<i>1 fowl for Negro Andrias</i>	<i>p.</i>	<i>- 2 -</i>
<i>19</i>	<i>1 do ditto</i>		<i>- 2 -</i>
<i>21</i>	<i>1 ditto ditto</i>		<i>- 2 -</i>
<i>28</i>	<i>1 ditto ditto</i>		<i>- 2 -</i>
<i>Maii 5</i>	<i>1 ditto ditto</i>		<i>- 2 -</i>
<i>8</i>	<i>1 ditto ditto</i>		<i>- 2 -</i>
		<i>Pd</i>	<i>2 4 2</i>

Submitted to the Police court on May 25, 1830 in case nr. 6/1830.

Friderichsen

Estate Beeston Hill

1828

1828

To David L. Finlay

Octbr. 28th

To a Sheep Kitd for the Negroes in the Sick House

Say Bill and Friderick

pd. 10 0 0

Overseer Finlay declared that he had nothing further to remark, upon which the Police Chief closed the examination to send a written copy to His Excellency the Governor-General. The court was closed.

Certified by

Friderichsen

In accordance with Christiansted Jurisdiction.