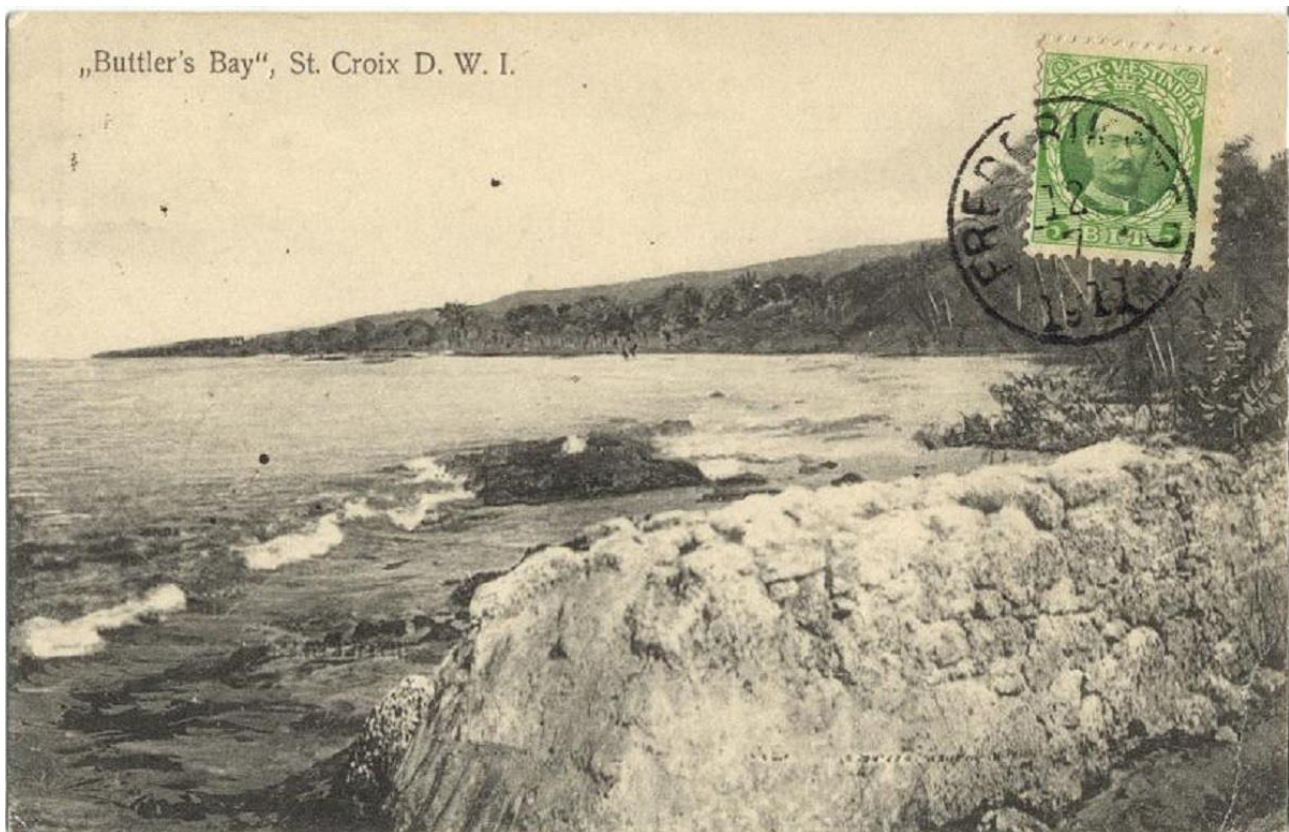


## BACKGROUND TO THE BUTLER BAY CASE

In May 1844, **Estate Butlers Bay**, which engrossed a total of 362.5 acres in Northwest A Quarter, was owned by widow Ann Sempill (born Ruan), whose husband John Rengger Sempill had just died on 17 February 1844. In that year the plantation had 160 acres of sugar cane under cultivation and was home to 106 enslaved individuals, two of whom - Moses Roberts and George Fancy – would play major roles in organizing the “Emancipation Rebellion” of 3 July 1848.



**William George** was born enslaved on Estate Butlers Bay circa 1804. Originally, assigned to field work, he had become one of three carpenters on the property by 1841. His parents are not documented, and it appears that he was not baptized until 1833, when he voluntarily joined Friedensberg Moravian Church in Frederiksted. In 1834, he and an older woman named Franky, also enslaved at Butlers Bay, had their infant daughter baptized with the name Dorothea in the same church. By 1841, William had switched religions and joined the congregation at St. Paul Anglican Church in Frederiksted.

William did not live to become free in 1848. On 5 May 1845, a year after this police case, he died of consumption (tuberculosis) and was buried at Butlers Bay. It can only be wondered if this long-term, infectious illness, played any role in his behavior in 1844. What can be certain is that it was of no consequence to the White authorities deliberating over his punishment, who viewed William not as a human being, but a social problem.

## Butler's Bay Biographical data

William George's daughter **Dorothea**, who did become free on 3 July 1848, died and was buried at Butlers Bay on 12 March 1849. Her mother **Franky**, also emancipated in July 1848, died 19 November 1851 on Butlers Bay.

**George**, who had only recently become the Driver on Butlers Bay in 1844, was born enslaved on that estate in 1813 and baptized in St. Paul Anglican Church the same year. His parents are not documented. Freed in the general emancipation of 1848, he died and was buried at Butlers Bay on 13 June 1851.

**Sally Gates**, born on Estate Butlers Bay in 1813, was a field laborer attached to the Big Gang in 1844. A month prior to the police case, she had married Cyrus James, an enslaved hostler of Butlers Bay, in the Moravian Church in Frederiksted. Freed in the general emancipation of July 1848, she remained on Butlers Bay until her death on 15 November 1864. During her long and trying lifetime she bore at least five children (4 of whom died before they reached one year of age), and was twice widowed: Cyrus James having died in 1858 and her second husband William Henry Mattison in 1862.

**Owen Culvin or Colvin**, the young Manager of Butlers Bay, was a Roman Catholic, born in Ireland ca.1822. In 1841, at age 19, he was employed as an overseer at Estate Hogensborg in Prince Quarter. In 1846, he was still manager at Butlers Bay. By 1849, he had moved to Estate Fredensborg in King Quarter. These frequent moves indicate that his career was not flourishing. And indeed, in 1850 he had left Fredensborg to become a mere overseer on Estate Lower Bethlehem in King Quarter. By 1855, he had left St. Croix.

**William Beech**, the administrator, or more accurately the attorney, for Estate Butlers Bay, was born in Dominica in 1782 and came to St. Croix with the British Army in 1808. After the British occupation he became administrator of the two large estates belonging to the Schimmelmänn family – La Grange, near Frederiksted, where he was living in 1844 and La Grande Princesse near Christiansted – a position that made him one of the most influential men on the island for the next 35 years. He was close to Governor-General Peter von Scholten, who appointed him as Inspector for several of the royal plantations. He also served as attorney for other privately owned sugar plantations like Butlers Bay. He died in Christiansted on 20 August 1865 and was buried in the city cemetery.



13. Frederik von Scholten: Udsigt over Butler's Bay på St. Croix. 1833. Akvarel.  
Nationalmuseet. Testamentarisk gave fra gouvernør L.C. Helweg-Larsen.