

Bjerget  
56-58 Hill Street  
Christiansted  
St. Croix  
Virgin Islands

HABS No. VI-36

HABS  
VI,  
1-CHR  
11-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HABS  
VI  
1-CHRIS,  
11-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

BJERGET

HABS No. VI-36

Location: 56-58 Hill Street, Christiansted, St. Croix, Virgin Islands.

ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. General Statement: Architectural character: This building is considered one of the finest examples of a St. Croix Town house. Its size, complexity of levels and the ample yards make it along with its outstanding views an ideal example of the style and level of life achieved in the island. The building in detail is plain, but the levels of arcades both in front and in back give a number of interesting spaces within the usual formal rectangular plan.
- B. Description of Exterior:
1. Orientation: This building is situated midway between Church and Queen's Cross Streets on the northwest side of the street with large yards to the sides and rear. It fronts six bays directly on the street as a first-floor gallery. Other gallery areas are on the basement level which is exposed as the lot is terraced down from the street; one is on the northeast end and another along most of the rear wall. Other semi-open areas are a small covered porch on the main floor, north corner, and a deck out on the roof off of the north corner room, second floor. The building has a small outbuilding on Hill Street to the southwest. Entrances are to the front gallery from the southwest, gates to the two side yards, doorways off of the rear and side yards, and a special servants' entrance by a wall passage into the basement with separate gate in the Hill Street wall southwest of the building proper. The high position of the house commands a fine view of the town from the rear second-floor deck.
  2. Foundation: The construction is the usual West Indian brick and limestone masonry with this particular building resting on rock outcroppings.
  3. Wall construction: The walls are stuccoed brick and rubble masonry with square cut windows and doors and round-arched galleries with square piers. On the front facade the four center first-floor bays are plain arched openings on capped square piers with recessed panelled railing and fluted keystones. The end bays project slightly with the arched openings containing recessed Tuscan half-columns. A molded band indicates the second-floor line in the center section and a window opening on the second floor corresponds to the arches. The gallery behind these open bays is reached from the southwest.

On the southwest second floor and northeast first and second floors the openings are regular. On the northeast the basement fronts an open arcade of four bays not aligning with the main floors. The rear consists of a basement double arcade above a series of cisterns with the main supporting walls of the structure behind the arcade. The open porch at the north corner main floor is made of unequal arches. Directly above is the small observaton deck set on top of the shed roof of the lower rear part of the building. The kitchen is slightly extended to the northwest and is over a cistern. The interior walls are masonry on the first floor and in the basement and hollow wood on the second floor to the plate line.

4. Openings: There are six bays along the front and rear and four in the two-story section along the sides; this latter division is not as regular. The openings are all square cut with flat arches and no keystones except for the four areas of arcades and galleries already mentioned.
  - a. Doorways: All exterior doorways are shuttered with interior double panelled jalousie doors. There are two gateways to the side yards from Hill Street; that to the northeast is a wood picket gate, that to the southwest is a recent grill wrought-iron gate. The smaller servants gate is between the large carriage gateway of the southwest yard and the main house; it opens on a small open passageway to the basement. The doors are equipped with three sets of strap hinges and box locks with brass handles.
  - b. Windows: All exterior window openings have wood shutters panelled on the inside with jalousies. Most windows have screens and a few on the northeast, both floors, have six-over-six-light double-hung sash.
5. Roof: The main roof is hipped galvanized metal on wood rafters. The kichen also has a hipped metal roof set into the shed roof of the rear lower section of the building. Eaves and leaders connect to the various cisterns which are activated for the house's water by a set of pumps.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: From the front gallery of six bays there are two entrances; the second from the southwest opens to a hall, the other door is to the main room which is three bays wide. To the southwest of the hall extending back to the kitchen are service rooms, three sets of stairs and a

- small bathroom. To the northeast are the two large main rooms with a one-bay wide enclosed three-bay gallery against the northeast exterior wall. A small stair spirals down from the front end of this gallery and the rear end is open in a two-bay porch. The kitchen and pantry are at the end of the hall in the rear.
- b. Second floor: The stairs to the second floor lead to a central hall running from the southwest end towards the northeast end rooms. To the rear of this hall are a large bathroom with large tile shower, a bedroom and the north corner room which has the small shed-roofed observation deck out its rear windows on the roof of the porch below. To the front of the hall are three bedrooms with a second bath fitted between the middle and northeast room. A single tray ceiling fits over all the rooms with wood partitions fitted in below.
- c. Basement: The basement in the front is set into the hill but on both sides and in the rear is open due to the site falling away to the west in a series of terraces. The main part of the basement is a large storage area around which on the northeast and rear arcades have been placed. The one on the northeast opens directly out on the northeast yard with two doors and two windows with flat arches. It is reached down the spiral stairs in the east corner. The rear arcade is two bays deep of plain arched openings four bays in length starting in the north corner. The interior north two bays have been filled in to form a small bedroom. The storage area behind this is visible through grilled windows. On the southwest one bay from the exterior is a passageway from front to back onto which the servants' private entrance is joined. Under the kitchen area is a large cistern. The rear of the front arcade also rests on a series of cisterns.
2. Stairways: The steps up to the front gallery are one bay wide of brick. The various steps to the rear of the house are also of brick set in between the house and the retaining walls of the gardens. The main stairway to the second floor is of wood, 5' wide and in two runs of seven and eleven steps. It is encased between the outer masonry walls and wood sheathing. The small first-floor bathroom is contained under the second run. The stairs in the northeast corner and off of the pantry against the southwest wall are concrete steps spiral in position but fitted into a rectangular space. The stairs to the southwest yard from the hall are wood, ten steps down and encased by wood sheathing.

3. Floors: Most of the floors are of wood boards of random width. The large bathroom is tiled; all showers are either ceramic tile or concrete. There are 9" square terra cotta tiles on the basement side arcade, wood and brick floors within the rear basement inner arcade and concrete elsewhere on this level. The front gallery is a colorful ceramic tile pattern. The first-floor floor rests on wood beams visible in the basement.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The exterior walls are stuccoed and washed red ochre. The interior masonry is plastered and painted in light colors. The wood walls on the second floor are hollow to the plate line with sheathing boards both sides and a single board thick above this level. All wood is painted. The ceilings on both the main floors are sheathing boards. On the first floor the flat ceiling combines with an exposed molded set of beams which intersect the main room in four equal areas with the northeast-southwest beam extended the length of the building. The ceiling on the second floor conforms to a tray set under the braced rafters of the roof. The basement ceiling is exposed sheathing on beams.
5. Doorways and doors: The interior doors are similar to the exterior jalousie panelled ones. Between the north porch and the enclosed northeast gallery a large arch is closed by a set of folding shutters.
6. Decorative features and trim: The second-floor walls have molded wood strips to the plate line, and small baseboards. The windows are in splayed molded wood frames. In the enclosed two bays of the rear basement arcade the openings have shutters over a banister. The gates are of wrought iron or wood.
7. Hardware: The windows and door shutters are equipped typically with strap hinges, hooks, circle pulls, bar locks, etc. The inner doors have metal box locks with brass handles and key holes.
8. Lighting: The building is wired. Four brass fixtures with large glass globes flank the main entries into the front center room. Numerous wrought-iron and glass lanterns are found.

D. Site:

1. General setting and landscaping: Three yards surround the building. The southwest one off of Hill Street has a large carriage gateway with recent wrought-iron gate, an outbuilding and a series of small terraces down to the rear with many varied trees and shrubs set in a formal arrangement of walks and steps. The rear yard is in two levels, one on the same general

level as the bottom of the side yard, the other 10' to 20' lower extending to Queen's Cross Street. The upper yards are enclosed by retaining walls on this western side and by higher walls along the front and sides. The yard is paved with brick and stone. The northeast side yard also is in terraced levels but of the same general height. It is off of the side arcade with a wood gate out to Hill Street.

2. Outbuilding: The one small masonry building sits in the south corner of the site adjacent to Hill Street. It has a low hipped roof and is entered off the southwest side yard.

Prepared by: J. Michael Everett  
May, 1960