

Moravian Mission House (Moravian  
Parsonage) (Friedensthal)  
King Street vicinity  
Christiansted  
St. Croix  
Virgin Islands

HABS No. VI-29

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MORAVIAN MISSION HOUSE  
(Moravian Parsonage) (Friedensthal)

HABS No. VI-29

Location: King Street vicinity, Christiansted, St. Croix, Virgin Islands.

GENERAL STATEMENT

Architectural Interest: This large masonry and wood frame structure housed at one time at least two full families, one to each of the upper floors. On each floor are central living rooms flanked by bedrooms and other secondary rooms. The Mission House in its present shape is an early nineteenth-century structure. It incorporates masonry walls and possibly some structural wood work of an eighteenth-century building. It is a good and typical example of the Moravian architecture of the Danish Virgin Islands and clearly shows its North European derivation. The building has a great deal of early hardware, and wood details.

Condition of Fabric: The masonry, although most of its stucco finish has flaked off, is in good condition. The wood throughout the building is in very poor condition, in some places completely termite-infested and ready to give way.

EXTERIOR

Orientation: The house is approached by an inclined drive from King Street. It faces northeast towards the town, with the main entry centered, joined by a flared stairway to the second level or main floor. At the rear or southwest side two matched stairways flanking a central landing lead to the gallery which extends over the arcade on the first level or basement. The structure is approximately 60' (seven-bay front) x 54' (six bays). The top floor is wood; the lower floors are brick walls 1'6" thick.

Foundations: The building rests on a foundation of the same materials and construction as the walls.

Wall Construction: The walls of the lower floors are constructed of a Danish yellow brick and stuccoed. The masonry walls are pierced by openings with flat arches and keystones, and in the rear are composed of arcades on both masonry levels. The openings on the main level at the front and both masonry levels at the rear are regularly spaced in conformity with the regular rhythm of the arcade of seven bays. The gallery directly above is five centered bays with the two end bays filled in. Openings on the two sides are fairly regularly spaced on the main floor in conformity to the symmetrical floor plan. The basement openings are irregularly spaced. The third level has wood frame end walls and dormers under a pitched roof with jerkinhead ends. The exterior wood is covered with shingles. On the northeast there are three dormers, on the southwest one. The end walls on this level have four openings each. The masonry walls are plain except for the keystones, two bands at the main floor line, the arcade, and gallery.

Openings - Doors: All exterior doors are shuttered. The two main doors are in addition fitted with double-wing glazed and jalousie panel doors. Other exterior doors are equipped with single wood doors.

Windows: All windows have shutters. Coupled with the shutters are combinations of the following: bars (in the basement), eight-over-eight-light double-hung glazed window sash, and jalousies. All masonry openings are flat-arched on the exterior and segmental on the interior.

Roof: The large roof is pitched with jerkinhead ends, and covered with corrugated sheet metal. The braced rafters and trusses are exposed on both the third level and attic level. There is a slight overhang to the roof with gutters on all sides and leaders on the southeast side connecting to the large vaulted cistern adjoining the southeast side of the building. There are remains of a wood gutter leading to the cistern.

Dormers: The central front dormer has three windows facing out and one to each side. Flanking this are two single window dormers. The former has a hipped roof; the latter have pitched roofs. The rear dormer contains one large window. There are two small openings on the southwest in the attic area.

## INTERIOR

Floor Plan: The plan of the main floor is divided into three areas: a narrow strip front and rear on both sides of the entries, and a large central area broken up into three rooms. In addition there is the gallery on the southwest. The top floor has two central rooms and two rooms each end. The basement is in three large areas. The attic is an open space the length of the building.

Stairways: There is an interior stair in two parts from basement to top floor located to the southeast of the rear entry next to the gallery. These sections are of wood and are encased in their own wells. A ladder stairway, also in wood, goes to the attic. The rear exterior double freestanding stairway is parallel to the gallery and directly in front of it.

Under each run of sixteen steps are two arches letting light into the arcade; the center area under the landing contains in its opening a wash sink in brick. The front steps are brick with a gently flared banister of masonry. Both the front and rear stairways have simple bands and panels on their exterior banisters.

Floor: All floors are of wood except the basement which is of brick. The landings and steps of the exterior stairways are of brick. A bathroom at the southeast corner of the gallery is of concrete. Under the arcade there are 1'-6" square grey tiles.

Wall and Ceiling Finish: The interior partition walls are of wood boards with the studs exposed on the top floors. The diagonal bracing of the corners and the use of exterior sheathing structurally are notable features of the wood dormers. The central rooms on the main floor have baseboards and chair rails and a wood arched opening to the front gallery. The middle room is painted with a marblized effect. The basement walls are of brick. The ceilings are exposed rafters over summer beams.

Doorways and Doors: Off of the central room, main floor, the doors are three-panelled double wood doors in casings with shallow moldings. On the top floor there is a miscellaneous assortment of doors.

Trim: All ceiling beams are beaded. The door casings, baseboards, chair rails and arched opening are lightly molded.

Hardware: Door shutters have three strap hinges, window shutters two. There are curved wood lock bars, wood and metal box locks, hasps, rings, hooks, bolts, and modified hexagonal strap hinges.

Lighting: The building has electricity. A kitchen has been installed in the northwest end of the gallery.

#### SITE

General Setting: The building is situated overlooking a small stream with a masonry causeway leading to the cemetery. To the southeast are the outbuildings. The church is down the drive to the northeast.

Enclosures: There is a low wall around the cemetery and two terraces behind the building.

Outbuildings: A cistern to the immediate southeast is cut into the ground with a vaulted top. The top is down a small set of steps behind a set of doors. There is a small masonry shed to the northwest of the terrace directly behind the building. The former brick kitchen building is to the southeast of the rear stairs; it contains a large hearth with two ovens, and has a brick floor. Next to the kitchen is the wood carriage house with an old carriage and remains of stalls. There are a small cookhouse and two other wood structures further out.

Walks: Down 20 steps across the causeway, a path leads to the cemetery. There is a brick paved area in front of the house and a walk to the church and one to the carriage house.

Landscaping: The grounds are informally landscaped with mahogany and other trees and scrubs.