HAZZEL FAMILY CEMETERY
(Hassel Family Cemetery)
Virgin Islands National Park
Hassel Island Historic District
Charlotte Amalie vicinity
St. Thomas
Virgin Islands (Us)

HABS VI-170
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HAZZEL FAMILY CEMETERY

HABS VI-170

Location: Hassel Island Historic District, Virgin Islands National Park, Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands.

USGS Central Saint Thomas Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: E 295418 N 2027886.

Hazzel Family Cemetery on Hassel Island is in UTM Zone 20. The coordinates are 64.935966 W and 18.33026 N, and were obtained in March 2014 with NAD 1983. There is no restriction on the release of the locational data to the public.

Significance: The Hazzel (also spelled "Hassel", "Hazzell," or "Hassell") Family Cemetery is the sole family cemetery located on Hassel Island. It was established by the island's namesake family in the nineteenth century, though the details of its history are not well documented. It is one of two known cemeteries on Hassel Island, the other being the military graves by the British Officers' Quarters. The cemetery is significant for its association with the Hassel family for whom the island is named and who operated a ship repair wharf in Careening Cove.

Description: The Hazzell Family Cemetery is located on the hillside that forms the western edge of the British Officers' Quarters Complex. This walled cemetery measures approximately 69′x48′ and is surrounded by a 4′ to 6′ high stuccoed masonry wall. There is a central entry gate on the south wall. The cemetery interior is terraced into upper and lower sections separated by a low masonry wall roughly through the centerline of the cemetery. A row of conch shells lines the wall and outlines the walking path. There is a masonry cistern built against the center of the east wall. The cemetery does not feature any distinctive vegetation.

According to Gjessing (1981) there are 17 total burials in the cemetery. There are four above-ground grave vaults, including one in the upper northeast corner that contains four burials; one in the lower section that contains three burials; and two single grave vaults. Only two headstones bear inscriptions, including those of James Hazzell, Jr., who died August 5, 1851, and Richard Newton, his son-in-law who died December 19, 1881. The remaining nine burials do not feature any inscriptions but are marked with conch shell outlines and stone/concrete markers.

The cemetery was vandalized at an unknown time in the twentieth century when the burial vaults were broken open. The vaults were repaired and the cemetery was stabilized in the last ten years.

History: The earliest known grave in the Hazzel Family Cemetery is that of James Hazzel, Jr. (referred to by the more common spelling of James Hassel for the rest of this document), who died on August 5, 1851, when he was 75 years old.[1] Hassel's father, James Hassel, Sr., purchased the island in 1784 and used its natural harbor in Careening Cove as a location for his

[1] Frederik C. Gjessing, "Historic Resource Study, Hassel Island, U.S. Virgin Islands," 1981, 47.

careening, or ship repair, business. The cove had been used for careening since the 1750s when the local government granted the privilege to Jacob Magens, who owned the island from 1755 to 1774. Magens initiated the first careening interest on the island, but records indicate that the business grew dramatically under Hassel ownership.[2]

According to one source, Hassel, Sr.'s name first appeared in the St. Thomas land registry in 1773 when he owned a small parcel in Charlotte Amalie. Records show that by 1789, he had acquired 15 enslaved laborers and five overseers registered at his Hassel Island property, known at this time as Estate Orkanhullet. By 1790, there were 23 enslaved laborers on the island, a number which declined back into the teens and stabilized there over the next few years.[3]

In 1797, James Hassel, Jr., acquired the island property from his father. That year the land registry described the island's laborers as "house and craftsmen slaves" engaged in careening work.[4] From 1797 to 1801, James Hassel, Jr., owned 14 enslaved laborers and a single overseer. The property's tax rate climbed steadily during this time, suggesting that the careening business prospered.[5]

The Hassel house was located just north of the family cemetery. The house site was settled as early as the 1680s and is shown in the early map of St. Thomas harbor in Figure 1. The map illustrates the house site as a cultivated area marked with the name Christen Lassen (or possibly Larsen), a name that does not appear in early landowner records.

The Hassel's ownership of Estate Orkanhullet and careening operations were interrupted by the British occupations of St. Tomas in 1801-1802 and 1807-1815. Sources reveal that the careening wharf was again open during the period between the two occupations with an agreement between "James Hazzel, Senior, and James Hazzel, Junior, that Careening Wharf with bridge shall belong to both of them with equal shares."[6] This agreement, however, was not officially read into local court records until June of 1812.

Estate Orkanhullet reverted to the Hassels' ownership and control at the end of the second British occupation in 1815. The family continued to own a house complex and operate a careening wharf there until the middle of the nineteenth century. During this time James Hassle, Jr., and other family members were buried in their family cemetery.

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[2] Andreas Latif and Vibe Maria Martens, "Hassel Island 1688-1801: An Unusual Plantation," University of Copenhagen, Draft Report Prepared for the National Park Service, U.S. Virgin Islands, 23.
[3] Ibid., 27.
[4] Ibid., 26-27.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Gjessing, 11.

Sources:

Gjessing, Frederik C.

1981 "Historic Resource Study, Hassel Island, U.S. Virgin Islands." Draft report on file at the Virgin Islands National Park.

Latif, Andreas and Vibe Maria Martens

n.d. "Hassel Island, 1681-1801: An Unusual Plantation." Draft Report Prepared for the National Park Service, U.S. Virgin Islands.

Historian: David L. Price, New South Associates, February 2014.

Project Information: HABS documentation of Napoleonic War resources on Hassel Island was conducted by Lord Aeck Sargent (LAS) under contract to the National Park Service (NPS). Rob Yallop of LAS served as Project Manager, leading a team of architects in preparing the measured drawings. Atkins Global conducted 3D laser scanning of the resources under the direction of Roberto Mantecon. David Diener of New South Associates (NSA) was responsible for the large format photography while David Price of NSA conducted archival research and prepared the narrative reports. Steven Hammack supported the history research with research in the United Kingdom. Dennis McCarthy of the NPS served as the manager for this project while Robert Arzola, HABS Architect, served as technical reviewer.

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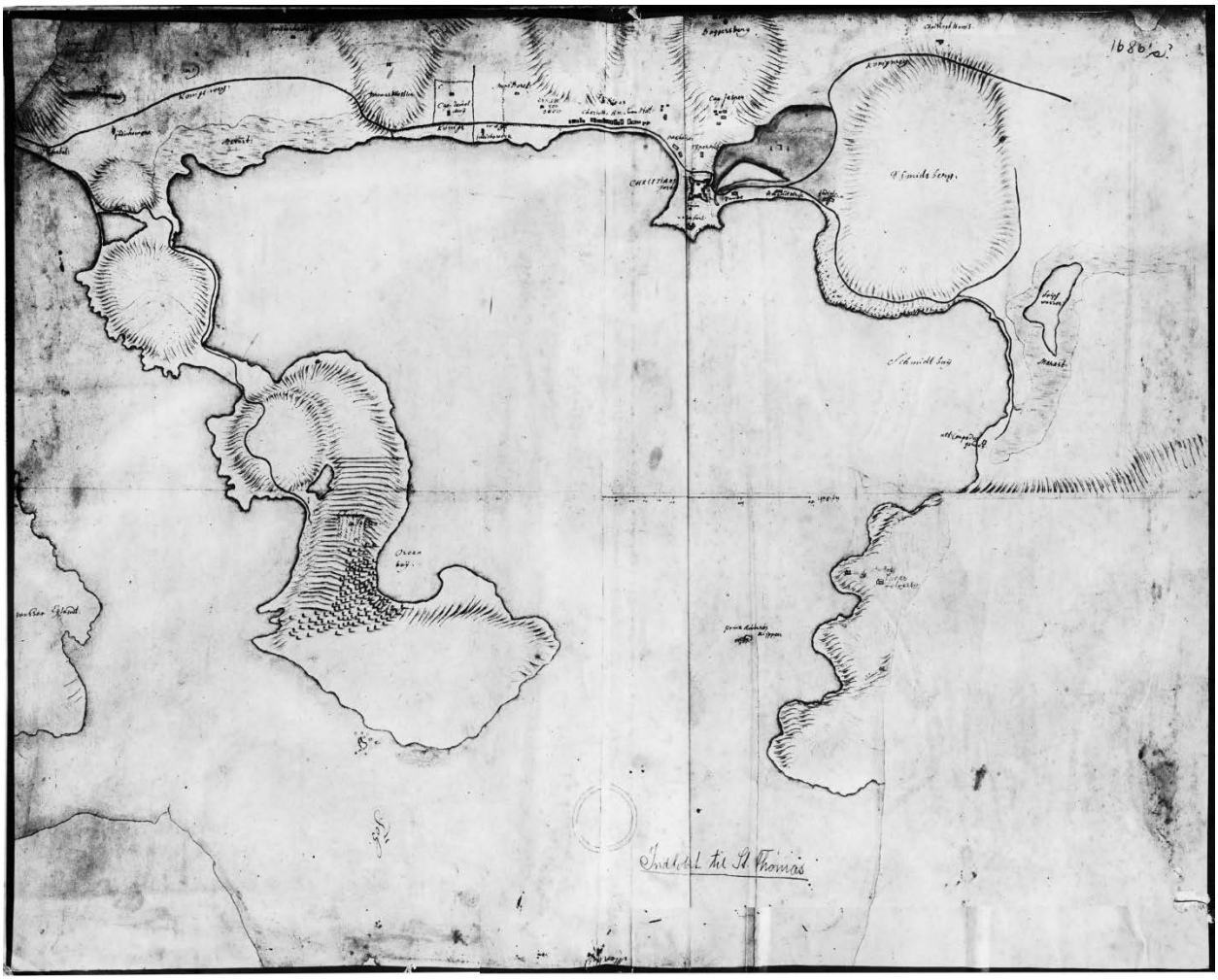
Figure 1. Circa 1680 Map of St. Thomas Harbor Showing Settlement at the Location of the Hassle House