

FORT WILLOUGHBY, GARRISON HOUSE
Virgin Islands National Park
Hassel Island Historic District
Charlotte Amalie vicinity
St. Thomas
Virgin Islands (Us)

HABS VI-90-A
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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

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FORT WILLOUGHBY, GARRISON HOUSE

HABS VI-90-A

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 295945 N 2027424.

The Garrison House on Hassel Island is in UTM Zone 20. The coordinates are 64.930754 W and 18.326769 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 Garrison House is a well-preserved arms magazine associated with the British occupation of the island during the Napoleonic Wars. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1976 under Criterion A in the areas of Commerce and Military, and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The building was also recorded in 1979 under HABS No. VI-90. Built in 1807 at the beginning of the second British occupation of St. Thomas, the Garrison House was built to store arms and munitions for the British fortifications on Hassel Island, including Fort Willoughby (originally known as Prince Frederik's Battery), Cowell's Battery, and Shipley's Battery.

Description: The Garrison House is a two-story masonry building with a metal hip roof, stucco exterior, and a rectangular plan that measures approximately 38'x26'. The exterior masonry walls are 27" thick with a molded brick cornice and brick quoining at the corners. The east façade has an arched double pedestrian entrance centered in the wall that is lined with brick. Above the entrance is a rectangular brick tympanum with a brick cornice. Two vertical pairs of brick-lined windows flank the front entrance and are fitted with copper-clad wooden shutters.

The north and south elevations both feature two similar brick-lined windows with shutters while the west elevation wall has three windows.

The Garrison House is surrounded by a 10' wide by 4' deep dry moat created by a 27" thick rubble masonry wall. The front (east) wall is topped by eight 27" by 27" square brick columns with molded brick bases, capital bands, crown molds, and pyramidal tops. The columns are notched to hold a wood palisade fence. The building entrance is reached by a flight of ten masonry and brick steps that lead up and across the moat via a fixed brick bridge.

History: Following the first occupation from 1801-1802, the British again declared war against France in 1803 and Denmark in 1807. In December 1807, St. Thomas surrendered to a combined army and navy force of 2,500 troops commanded by Admiral Alexander Cochran and General Henry Bowyer. Fort Willoughby and the other fortifications on Hassel Island were re-

established and expanded to accommodate a new regiment of troops.¹ It was at this time that the Garrison House was built to house the ordnance used at Fort Willoughby, which was armed with 6, 8, and 18-pound cannons.²

In 1815 British troops withdrew from St. Thomas and turned the Virgin Islands back over to Denmark following the defeat of Napoleon and the signing of the Treaty of Paris. No records found for this report tell how the Garrison House was used by the government of St. Thomas after the second British occupation. The earliest map found for this report that shows the Garrison House is the 1873 French map of the St. Thomas harbor in Figure 1.

By the early twentieth century the Garrison House was in ruins, as were all of the other fortifications on Hassel Island. In 1948, the dire physical state of Fort Willoughby and the Garrison House attracted the attention of Isador Paiewonsky, whose family owned most of Hassel Island at that time. The local government transferred both properties to Paiewonsky in 1948 and 1949 for \$500 each, with the understanding that they would remain open and accessible to the public. Paiewonsky removed destructive vegetation from both sites and restored their broken masonry.³

In 2013, the Garrison House was renovated and stabilized by the St. Thomas Historical Trust with a new metal roof.

Sources:

Feuerzeig, Penny.

1977 "Hassel Restoration: 'Labor of Love.'" *The Daily News*, Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, 30 March, 1, 22.

Nissen, Carl Peter

n.d. "The Diary of Captain Carl Peter Nissen, 1792-1837." Referenced in "Military Significance of Hassel Island." Manuscript on file at the St. Thomas Historical Trust Museum, Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas.

¹ Carl Peter Nissen, "The Diary of Captain Carl Peter Nissen, 1792-1837," referenced in "Military Significance of Hassel Island," manuscript on file at the St. Thomas Historical Trust; Buckley, 262-65.

² Ordnance on St. Thomas, transcripts of correspondence located in The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom, WO 55/237, 256-260, WO 55/239/52, WO 55/240/26, WO 55/212.

³ Penny Feuerzeig, "Hassel Restoration: 'Labor of Love,'" *The Daily News*, Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, 30 March, 1977, 1, 22.

No author

1812-1813 “Ordnance on St. Thomas.” Transcripts of correspondence located in The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom, WO 55/237, 256-260, WO 55/239/52, WO 55/240/26, WO 55/212. Manuscript in possession of Charles W. Consolvo, Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas.

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. 1873 French Map of St. Thomas Harbor Showing Hassel Island and Garrison House.

