

The Danish Slave Cadaster on St Croix, US Virgin Island

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SUMMARY

St. Croix was under danish territory from 1733 to 1917, and in that period the Danes colonized the island to produce sucker. When the Danes bought the island in 1733, the island was impassable due to the overgrown terrain, which made it very hard to survey the island and make plantations, who could be used for sucker production. With hard work, the danish surveyors managed to form properties for plantations. To survey the plantations and to produce sucker, the danish surveyors and plantation owners used slaves. In the 18th century on St. Croix, the slaves were seen as a property. The slaves were therefore registered in the cadastral system on St. Croix, which isn't seen in the danish cadastral in the 18th century. The differences between the cadastral system on St. Croix and the cadastral system in Denmark has created a wonder of, how the systems are different from each other, and what significance the cadastral system on St. Croix has had both on the island, but also in Denmark and maybe the rest of the world. The master-study, therefore, investigate the difference between, what is registered in the cadastral system and how the surveyors surveyed the properties on St. Croix, unlike how it was done and registered in Denmark.

The results of this master-study document that the difference between the danish cadastral and the cadastral on St. Croix was not how they used the cadastral but how they perceived the properties. The surveying was also different from each other. In Denmark, there were already existing boundaries from agriculture when the land was surveyed for the cadastral. There were only a few inhabitants on St. Croix when the danish surveyors surveyed the island and therefore there were no exiting boundaries. The method, that the surveyors used, was first to survey a centerline, which could be used as a baseline to survey the plantations. St. Croix was then surveyed in a rectangular grid and this surveying method is to be identical to the method, that they used to survey the mainland in the USA. Hugh Williamson and Thomas Jefferson claim to be the ones, who came up with the surveying method in 1784, and apparently, the method is not used earlier according to

multiple sources. But St. Croix is surveyed in 1733, which is about 50 years earlier than the USA, so our thesis is that the danish surveyors might be the first with the idea and maybe they are the founders of the surveying method, that is used in the USA.

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