

INTER-ISLAND SHIPPING FROM THE DANISH WEST INDIES: NETWORKS ACROSS NATIONAL BOUNDARIES PROVIDING NEW OCCUPATIONS FOR FREE COLORED MEN 1780-1804

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A cargo boat loaded with produce chugged along the wharf, its bottom slugging salt water, its bow high and proud. The crowd juggled about on brawny feet, surging backward and forward. The fruits and vegetables, from Santo Domingo were grabbed up and sold off in the midst of shouts, cross haggling, laughter, the exchange of news from other islands. Behind, the traffic dragged on like a tired old woman, its prisoners condemned to watch the noisy scene. A seagull scudded the air, then dived to dinner.¹

In one paragraph of her short story, Althea Romeo-Mark has recreated the scene of the St. Thomas waterfront where the ‘Tortola’ boats docked in the 1960s. There are boats from other West Indian islands, but to the St. Thomians, they are all known as ‘Tortola’ boats. In the past they were smaller, wooden vessels, rugged, well-used crafts bearing fruits and vegetables from ‘down island’.² The small wooden crafts with which this paper is primarily concerned, were vessels, usually with one main sail and one fore sail. These vessels constituted the lifeline of an important inter-island network of trade which supported the Danish colonial trans-Atlantic commercial shipping of the three-masted schooners from Copenhagen and later other Scandinavian ports. This paper will focus on a segment of this inter-island network of trade during the years 1780-1804³ and the free-colored men who operated within this network.

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¹ Althea Romeo-Mark (1997: 80).

² “down island” is a term used by US Virgin Islanders, referring to the islands of the Eastern Caribbean formerly colonized by the British, French and Dutch.

³ Erik Gobel (1990) provides a good overview of colonial shipping from Denmark.

1 Background

In order for any metropolitan power to manage colonial entities which lay thousands of miles beyond their shores, a mechanism of cargo shipping had to be put into place. It was a two-ended process in which colonial (luxury) goods were brought to and sold in the metropolitan market, and in turn, the money earned from their sale was used to provide necessary manufactured supplies and foodstuffs for the colonies. Working in tandem with the large trans-Atlantic shipping vessels, was a network of inter-island shipping, comprised of a number of small vessels that distributed goods to the Spanish, Dutch, French, and British colonies and on the return trip collected other goods from these same colonies to fill up the Danish trans-Atlantic ships.

For the Danes, there was an immediacy and an urgency in this inter-island trade. Goods brought to the Danish colonies had to be distributed first to the Danish colonists and then to those of the other islands, and more importantly the homeward-bound ships had to return to Europe full. Thus, to secure full cargoes for the ships, Denmark had to rely on the goods of other foreign colonies transported to the Danish island by small inter-island vessels.

In the Danish West Indies commercial arena of the 1780s, the inter-island network was operated primarily by people of European descent, most notably people originally from Bermuda and residing in St. Croix. There were the Tatem and Watlington families of mariners, who in the 1780s transshipped goods and enslaved Africans from the Danish West Indies to Havana and St. Domingue.⁴ These men employed a European descended crew of first and second mates and a boatswain, but their sailors were either of European descent or free or enslaved men of African descent.⁵ Some merchants who commissioned the inter-island ships, such as merchant-planter Raapsaat Heyliger, had purchased their own enslaved Africans who worked as sailors. In the 1796 Head Tax records Heyliger listed ten men as sailors and in 1800 he listed fourteen.⁶ Captain Bernard Watlington owned nine African descended sailors in 1796.⁷ In addition, there were some commercial concerns that employed sailors of African descent. In the 1800 Head Tax records Maitland and McCormick listed seven

⁴ For example, Bernard Watlington, barque *Elizabeth*; William Watlington, barque *Sally*; Thomas Watlington, schooner *Rattlesnake*; Jeremiah Tatem, schooner *Rattlesnake*, and Samuel Tatem, barque *Peter* all of whom worked in the 1780s and 1790s. Rigsarkiv.(RA), Vestindien Lokal Arkiv.(VL), Christiansteds Byfoged (CB), Notarialprotokol. June 16, 1808. Bernard Watlington had ¼ interest in the cargo of the *Sally* consisting of 252 slaves under the management of Simon Pory & Co. The slaves were sent to be sold in Havana 38.34.4.

⁵ RA, VL, CB, Notarial protocols list the complaints sailors and captains had while at sea in order to get compensation from the owners or the captains, etc. The names of the crew members and their occupations are listed in the entries.

⁶ St. Croix Landmarks Society (SCLS) microfilm. Head Tax records, 1796, 1800.

⁷ Head Tax records, 1796.

men, whom they either employed themselves or hired out to ship captains.⁸

A well-documented case of a free sailor of African descent is that of Barino Ellegon⁹, who sailed from St. Croix to the French Antilles.¹⁰ He is listed in the free colored censuses with Jacob Barino, his father, brother, or uncle, who was also a sailor. Jacob sailed with a predominately European descended crew on the *Venus* to Santo Domingo on July 17, 1800.¹¹ Barino Ellegon sailed as part of the crew in the boats of European descended owners and skippers, such as the *Dolphin*, the *Hawk*, and the *Hans*. On Jan. 18, 1780 he sailed to Guadeloupe with a free African descended captain Anthony La Mare¹², skipper of the barque *Delight* which belonged to M. Skerret.¹³ At this time Ellegon was listed as a common sailor, along with two others of the same rank.¹⁴

In 1790, Ellegon sailed as captain in a boat owned by Thomas Woodrup destined to St. Eustatius with 100 bars of iron, 36 boxes of candles, and a chest of tea. The vessel was seized by the British (who had occupied St. Eustatius) and was diverted to Guadeloupe.¹⁵ On Jan 13, 1785 he sailed with an empty vessel, the barque *Nancy*, to St. Thomas to pick up and distribute goods brought in by larger European vessels.¹⁶ Among these goods were building supplies and 100 pieces of German manufactured osnabrug fabric and bodkin tools used for slaves' clothing.¹⁷ Germany's exports of goods to the West Indies at this time were channeled primarily through Danish ports and ships. On Jan. 24, 1785, Ellegon Barino's cargo on the *Dolphin* to Santo Domingo consisted of 65 pieces of bontin a supply of bodkin tools, 6 pieces of plaid,

⁸ Head Tax records, 1800.

⁹ The name is variously spelled in the records: *Marino*, *Varino*, *Uligon*, *Elligo*, Barino d'Elligo, etc.

¹⁰ Barino Ellegon was born on St. Croix in 1763 and lived at 27 Strand Street according to the Free Colored census of 1816 *Mandtal over De Friefarvede som opholdt sig udi Christiansteds Jurisdiction paa St. Croix, Aaret 1816*, popularly called "The Free Colored Census of 1816". He is also included in the *Liste Bog over Christiansteds Jurisdictiones Frie Negere, Shambotje, Mulatter, Musticer or Casticier. Paa arret 1796*. He is listed as living at 21 Hospital Street with a woman named Antoinette Elego, who could be his wife, sister, or mother. Most of his routes were to St. Domingue, Sto. Domingo, Guadeloupe, etc. Information for the census enumerators regarding a seaman was given by relatives or neighbors if the seaman were off-island. This explains why sometimes wrong information was given to the enumerator.

¹¹ RA, VL, CB, Notarialprotokol, 1800-1802, 38.34.5 Ellegon Barino served as a Lieutenant in the Free Colored Corps, the night watch for the town.

¹² St. Croix Landmarks Society (SCLS). Anthony La Mere's free status is documented in Freedom Certificates Dec. 9, 1783-Jan 6, 1784.

¹³ RA, VL, CB, Notarialprotokol, 1779-1784, 38.34.3.

¹⁴ Notarial protocols list complaints sailors had while at sea. They give stories of the British ships seizing vessels of other nations and impressing their sailors to working for the Royal Navy.

¹⁵ RA, VL, CB, Notarialprotokol, 1784-1801, 38.34.4.

¹⁶ NA, RG 55, Customs Journals, 1798-1799. This microfilm can be found at the SCLS library and archives.

¹⁷ Osnabrug is coarse flax cloth used for slaves' clothing which was manufactured in the German city of Osnabrueck (Tyson & Highfield, 1994: 98). Bodkins were long needle-like tools designed for threading "drawing-tape" (draw-strings) through the casing around the waist of pants.

and 6 cases of soap.¹⁸ In 1799 he sailed with the barque *Maria* to Jacmel, St. Domingue.¹⁹ On a Jan. 27, 1801 trip, we note that Ellegon owned the ship *Lark*, and that he employed the European descended captain Johannes Kirkerup to sail the vessel to Guadeloupe.²⁰

Danish lumber and iron were imported to build the infrastructure of the colony. Other Danish goods were imported for personal consumption, such as butter and clothing for the colonists and salted fish for the slaves. When comparing this commerce to that of the British and the French, one must remember that the Danish Empire had probably the shortest window of opportunity in which to send out goods to the Danish West Indies. If one looks at the map of Denmark, one realizes the difficulties that the Danes encountered in "getting out" to the Atlantic Ocean. Copenhagen is situated deep into The Sound, and the need to come north around the top of Jutland added time and mileage to the journey to the colonies. The winter months were of course off limits for travel, and the hurricane season in the Caribbean from June to November was to be avoided.

Approximately 30 ships per year were sent out from Copenhagen to re-supply the colony, mainly with building supplies, hoes and bills for field workers, and foodstuffs.²¹ Other imports came from ports of the former Danish empire in Schleswig Holstein and Norway. Four ships per year with Danish dry goods, beer, spices and provisions came from the Holstein port of Altona; two to three ships per year from Bergen, Norway carrying ballast bricks, iron, lumber, herring and anchovies. Additionally, four ships per year were sent bearing salted provisions and either yellow sand or bricks made from that sand from Flensburg.²² Additional agricultural and manufactured goods came from other European ports: Ireland sent butter, meat and linen flax, and English ships brought wheat, rye flour, butter, corn beef, hams, cheese, cloth, finished clothing, twill, canvas, barrel hoops and staves for making casks.²³

Each of the voyages from Denmark took 8-10 weeks to sail first to the Madeira Islands (where some took on casks of Madeira wine) and then with the tradewinds

¹⁸ NA, RG 55 Customs Journals, 1785-1787. The names of fabric in the Customs Journals are spelled in a variety of ways. For example, 'bontin' may actually be bunting, a thin cloth used for making streamers and flags. I am indebted to Birgit Christensen for translating this item for me and explaining the types of textiles involved.

¹⁹ NA, RG 55, Customs Journals, 1798-1799.

²⁰ RA, VL, CB, Notarialprotokol, 1784-1801, 38.34.4.

²¹ Hans West (1758-1811) came to St. Croix in 1790 as a school teacher to set up learning institutions for European descended children. During his years on the island, he also served as a notary public and he made these entries in the Notarialprotokols for 1790-1793. He wrote of his everyday life in a volume edited by Arnold R. Highfield and translated by Nina York.

²² West: 7.

²³ West: 130.

over to the West Indies. West complains about the damaged or spoiled condition of the goods when they arrived. He admits that Denmark sent inferior goods to the colonies. The additional time at sea that it took to ship them caused them to rot, moreover they were poorly packed. The goods that survived the climate of the voyage best were the textiles: canvas, finished shirts of coarse linen, vests of homespun cloth, clothing for slaves, and hats. Iron goods such as bills, knives for cutting cane stalks, and hoes were necessary for the field laborers. For all Scandinavian shipping, time was of the essence. "The hasty departures and brief calls at the island made it impossible for them to bring large quantities of products."²⁴ The time frame which they had for these voyages called for a quick turnaround of the ships once they arrived in the Danish West Indies.

In contrast, the sailing time for cargo ships from the east coast ports of the newly-established American nation was merely 14-20 days. Products from trees such as tar and resins needed by shipbuilders and repairers, came from Wilmington, North Carolina.²⁵ Flour, meat and lumber of all kinds and sizes were shipped from Philadelphia and New York. These goods were readily available from these sources. Any restrictions on securing these products imposed on the colonists by Denmark were met with stiff opposition in the colonies and as a last resort these goods were obtained through a lively trade in contraband. Danish problems with shipping time and conditions in addition to the high duties, made the cost of Danish goods (especially shoes) prohibitive. There was a 25 per cent duty on Danish goods, while there was only a 7 per cent duty on American goods."²⁶

Scandinavian homeward-bound ships carried barrels of sugar, rum, and molasses from the Danish islands when the harvest there was abundant enough to provide a full stock. When only a partial crop²⁷ was harvested, rum, molasses and sugar had to be obtained from the other West Indian islands, and this is where the inter-island network of trade played its most significant role. Other commodities were shipped to the Danish West Indies and to Denmark itself from other West Indian islands. Coffee, bananas, avocados, oranges, limes, turtles and meat were imported from Puerto Rico and Crab Island. Cut firewood was procured from Norman Island in the British Virgin Islands.²⁸ From St. Croix to St. Domingue was four days' sail. From St. Domingue's numerous port cities such as Cape François and Aux Cayes, ships picked up sugar. From the port of Jacmel in the south of St. Domingue, coffee was taken on board.

²⁴ West: 129.

²⁵ Brewster: 30.

²⁶ West: 133.

²⁷ West states that the three years 1788-1790 were years of drought.

²⁸ RA, VL, CB, Notarialprotokol, 1784-1800, 38.34.4.

From St. Domingue to Curaçao was six days' sail.²⁹ For Danish West Indian local use, donkeys were taken on from Curaçao in exchange for slaves.

To these other Caribbean colonies went the textiles of the Danish and German factories, especially osnabrug. In the Danish colonies, these rough grades of cloth had more than a material significance as the fabric from which slaves' clothes were made. They took on a symbolic importance as well, as indicated by the ordinance of 1786 against the finery that some free colored individuals had begun to wear. Under this law, they were required to wear "wool, cotton, coarser varieties of lace and silk ribbon of Danish manufacturing. ... pinafores of simple cambric and head and neck scarves of the same material."³⁰ (Hall: 149)

When a large European or American ship came into a Danish West Indian port, one can imagine the number of smaller craft on call, waiting to distribute the goods. Small ships could deliver their goods directly to the docks; whereas larger ships needed the assistance of lighter boats to transfer the goods. Once loaded up, it was the inter-island sloops and schooners that brought these goods into the commercial network of the inter-island trade. While the transportation of fruits and provisions from other islands may have been primarily for local consumption in the Danish West Indies, the casks of sugar, rum or molasses from other islands were destined to fill the holds of the Danish trans-Atlantic vessels if the harvest of Danish West Indian sugar was not sufficient to send a full ship back to the ports of Scandinavia. Besides products from sugar cane for the metropolitan refineries and distilleries, mahogany logs were shipped to Flensburg to be crafted into fine furniture. Because of lack of rain, 1790 was considered to be a "half crop" year for the Danish West Indies and only 11,000 barrels of sugar, 3,000 barrels of rum and an unnamed quantity of cotton were produced for the trans-Atlantic trade.³¹

Consequently, supplements of sugar, rum and "products of other islands, like coffee, tobacco, and fustic wood for its dye" had to be procured through the inter-island trade.³²

Distribution of goods among the towns and estates of St. Croix was another function of these small vessels. Because the island roads were barely passable, there were a number of small vessels whose primary purpose was to ship European goods from Christiansted to Frederiksted, Salt River, or "Southside", (the southern part of the island). Additionally, there were many estates which utilized small boats sometimes called "droghers", manned by slaves to bring casks of sugar, molasses and rum to Christiansted or Frederiksted where the trans-Atlantic ships

²⁹ RA, VL, CB. Notarialprotokols, 1800-1802, 38.34.5.

³⁰ Cambric is a fine, closely woven plain white linen fabric.

³¹ West: 136.

³² West: 131.

awaited. The enslaved Africans who manned these small, flat-bottom boats were mariners in their own right, risking the vagaries of the sea to get the product to its destination.

2 Sailors of the 1790s

In the 1790s, a significant number of free and enslaved people of African descent became an intricate part of the shipping networks throughout the Americas and beyond.³³ During times of commercial prosperity, there was a shortage of European descended crewmen.³⁴ Free-colored men, who had become experienced seamen under European captains on European-owned ships now became captains and even owners in their own right. Many free and enslaved seamen of African descent had obtained their skills in Africa itself, in the small boating business of the estates, or as slaves for commercial enterprises. For many, the role of a seaman was inordinately better than that of a field worker, even though one's master was now the ship's captain, and the discipline of sea life was as rigorous and binding as that of the plantation.

Certain skills were required. For the regular seaman, the duties were to know how to fix machinery, to knot and splice lines, to man the rigging and to read the wind and weather. The labor required strength, dexterity and agility.³⁵ The work was dangerous and unpredictable. Small boats could travel long distances and some routes did not necessarily hug the coasts. The crew could be robbed or threatened by smugglers, or impressed into service for the British Navy during the Napoleonic Wars. Of particular significance for free and enslaved people of African descent, the work involved seeing new ports, meeting new people, and gaining access to news regarding abolition and freedom.

Knowledge of the sea and the sky were important. West speaks of the 1791 hurricane in which "the copper-colored electrical clouds which announce the arrival of a hurricane were seen on the horizon by sailors the evening before."³⁶ Waterspouts, which may not be of concern to landlubbers, were a serious matter to sailors. Tangentially, work at sea opened up other employment opportunities for African descended people, both skilled occupations such as boat and sail repair as well as unskilled jobs such as those of warehouse workers and porters.

³³ Hall (p. 54) notes that 1790 a William Cruise was the only free colored ship master; however, Customs Journals and Notarialprotokols list the names of several.

³⁴ Cohn & Platzer: 70.

³⁵ See Rediker.

³⁶ West: 147.

On a mid-size schooner the crew consisted of: the captain, first and second mates, a carpenter and a carpenter's apprentice, a boatswain, cook, and able seamen,³⁷ called *matrose* in Danish. In the Notarialprotokols there is a listing of the European and African descended *matrose* which shows that sailors of both origins worked together in the close quarters of a ship. A 50 ton vessel, operated by nine men could carry fifteen hogsheads of sugar from the West Indies to a port city in the new American nation. These vessels were rugged and could endure long distances in rough weather.

Domingo Stevens or Steba, a free mulatto about whom we have little information³⁸, sailed to St. Thomas on his Barque *Nancy* on January 6, 1798 with ballast in order to pick up goods from the Danish ships there for further local distribution. Steba completed this voyage and set out once again on a similar one five days later.³⁹

Thomas Renades was a free colored man who sailed during the 1790s.⁴⁰ In 1781, he was one of the few free colored men to receive a loan of 210 Rdl from the Guinea Company for which he used his slave Susana as collateral.⁴¹ On Nov. 30, 1793, he captained the brig *Lucretia* for John Cellier & Co. This was a large ship with a crew of fifteen.⁴² Renades had gained his experience in the inter-island network under European captains and owners before becoming a captain himself.

168 In 1793, Thomas Renades owned the Schooner *William* jointly with free colored captain John Markoe.⁴³ The same year, he shipped 250 pieces of britannia (a silver white alloy of tin used for domestic utensils), 60 pieces of osnabrug fabric, and 40 pieces of rouan cloth to Martinique.⁴⁴ In 1798 he captained the barque *Bother* of 28 tons on a voyage to Puerto Rico, Crab Island, and Curacao.⁴⁵ The Customs Journals show that in January of 1799 Thomas Renades sailed the same ship to St. Thomas with dry goods, brought 20 barrels of sugar and 6 barrels of rum to Crab Island, made a trip to St. Barts to deliver 20 barrels of herring and then made his way to Cumina, Venezuela.⁴⁶ In March of the same year, Renades sailed to Santo Domingo carrying

³⁷ Rediker: 122.

³⁸ SCLS. Free Colored Census 1816. Stevens, a mulatto, was born in 1767 and lived on East Street.

³⁹ SCLS. Customs Journals, 1798-1799.

⁴⁰ Renades was born in 1763 in St. Croix. He claimed his free colored status from his mother Anna Johanne Renades, who had received her freedom certificate in St. Thomas. He is listed as a "sambo" which means that he was born of a mulatto mother and a Negro father. Free Colored Census 1816. She owned 9 Queen Cross Street in Christiansted. Free Colored Census, 1794.

⁴¹ *Den Danske Vestindiske Regerings Avis*, No 90, Nov.9, 1807. Loan information is listed in the newspaper as the borrowers had not repaid the loan in 26 years. The information is from RA, VL. CB Pantebog Litr.P.

⁴² RA, VL, CB. Notarial Protokol, 1784-1801, 38.34.4.

⁴³ RA, VL, CB. Notarialprotokol, 1784-1801, 38.34.4.

⁴⁴ RA, VL, CB. Notarialprotokol, 1784-1801, 38.34.4. Rouan, rouen, or *toile de rouen* was a cotton or canvas material printed with floral designs used for both clothing and interior design, manufactured in Rouen, France.

⁴⁵ SCLS. Customs Journals, 1798.

⁴⁶ SCLS. Customs Journals, 1799.

44 pieces of bonton,⁴⁷ 6 pieces of platilles fabric⁴⁸, 11 scarves, 10 pieces of osnabrug and 1 barrel of tobacco.⁴⁹

In 1801 Renades shipped 36 hogsheads of rum from the Schimmelmans' Estate Carolina in St. John. The vessel was detained in Puerto Rico but not under the aegis of war, as both the vessel and the cargo were Danish; and Denmark attempted to remain a neutral country during the Napoleonic Wars. Detaining ships and impressing the crew to serve in the Royal Navy was a routine occurrence while the British and the French were at war. Renades was authorized by the court to claim compensation for the cargo and damages to the vessel.⁵⁰ In 1813, the 'Auktionsprotokol' records show that Thomas Renades had lost his property at 9 B Queen Street in Christiansted.⁵¹ He must have been down on his luck.

William Cruise⁵² was probably the most versatile African descended captain on record, as his itinerary between 1798 to 1804 from St. Croix in the 52 ton barque *Eagle* included shipping goods to the French islands of St. Domingue, St. Martin, St. Barts, the Dutch territories of Suriname and Curaçao and the Spanish Venezuelan port town of Cumina to which he brought pieces of osnabrug on Jan 29, 1798.⁵³ He frequently visited St. Thomas with either an empty vessel or with ballast in order to load cargoes to be shipped from there to other islands. Besides cargo, records show him bringing passengers to Curaçao, Suriname, and St. Domingue.⁵⁴ In 1818, Cruise owned three enslaved boys under the age of 16 whom he most likely put to work as deckhands.⁵⁵

On Jan 12, 1799, William Cruise transshipped to St. Thomas slaves brought in by Captain Briscoe.⁵⁶ The Customs Journals of this time clearly indicate that captains of European descent were normally entrusted with this type of cargo. As in both North and South America, there was always the fear that Free Coloreds would allow slaves the opportunity to run away. An entry for Feb. 23, 1801 shows that Cruise owned the vessel *Martha*, and had contracted the European descended captain Johannes Laerke to sail her to Santo Domingo.⁵⁷ In 1809, Cruise captained the schooner *Cyanne* for European descended owner G. A. Brewer. In the same year, Brewer took Cruise to

⁴⁷ Bunting? Thin cloth for making streamers, flags, etc.

⁴⁸ Platilles was a white linen fabric made in Prussia.

⁴⁹ SCLS. Customs Journals, 1799.

⁵⁰ RA, VL, CB. Notarialprotokol, May 24, 1801. 38.34.4

⁵¹ RA, VL, CB. Auktionsprotokol, July 28, 1813. 38.37.35.

⁵² SCLS. Free Colored Census 1816. William Cruise is listed as a Negro born in Tortola.

⁵³ SCLS. Customs Journals, 1798.

⁵⁴ RA, VL, CB. Politikammerets journaler over Ankommende og Bortrejsende personer, 1844-1848, 38,32.6.

⁵⁵ SCLS. Head Tax Records, 1818.

⁵⁶ SCLS. Customs Journals, 1799.

⁵⁷ RA, VL, CB. Notarialprotokol, 1784-1801, 38.34.4.

court, charging him with misconduct for running the *Cyanne* on the reef outside Christiansted harbor. The upper court cleared Cruise of all charges.⁵⁸

Johan Peter Nissen, a writer of the time, notes the following:

I have already observed that small vessels, such as schooners and sloops were often commanded by colored persons as masters. Capt. Jeserum⁵⁹, a mulatto who had never regularly studied the science of navigation, knew, notwithstanding, to find his way again to any port which he had been once before, and was especially fortunate on his voyages to Santo Domingo, Port au Prince, and other places, when he was contrived [forced] to escape privateers. At night he would conceal his schooner between the cliffs so that he was never captured by any of them (the privateers.)⁶⁰

3 Conclusion

In the Caribbean Sea, the Danish West Indies were wedged between the Spanish, English, French and Dutch islands. Thus, small inter-island boats were moving goods across political boundaries, linking planters, merchants, captains, and free and enslaved people of African descent of one colonial entity to that of another and then to the metropolitan ports. Because the demand for sailors, captains, merchants, and ship owners often outstripped supply, and because this trade was subject to hazards such as raids by privateers, a significant number of men of African descent were able to work their way from sailor, to captain, to owner of their own vessels. As captains, they had the responsibility of managing a vessel and its crew on the high seas. Not only were they able to secure the confidence of Danish and American captains to bring manufactured goods to other ports, but they were also entrusted to negotiate with buyers in those same ports. These inter-island mariners made merchants' goods more valuable in their transporting them to other islands. This study reveals some aspects of the important role played by sailors, captains, merchants, and ship owners of African descent in assuring that items from the metropolises, such as German and Danish

⁵⁸ RA,VL,CB. Notarialprotokol 1805-1810, 38.34.7.

⁵⁹ In looking at the exhibits of the Maritime Museum in Willemstad, Curaçao, I found a ship builder by the name of Jacob Jeserum. In correspondence with Per Nielsen, Nov. 13, 2008, he had found a David de Jacob Jesserun, a ship captain and an Abraham de Jacob Jesserun/Iseroen, ship owner and ship captain, mentioned in 1795. In a translation of the 1803 free colored census, *St. Thomas 1803: Crossroads of the Diaspora* ed. David Knight, St. Thomas: Little Nordside Press, 1999, at No. 61 in King's Quarter is an Anthony Iserum, born free in St. Thomas and who serves as a master mason (p. 26).

⁶⁰ Johan Peter Nissen. *Reminiscences of a 46 years' Residence in the Island of St. Thomas, in the West Indies*. English translated typed manuscript, 43.

textiles, were distributed throughout the region, and that adequate quantities of goods from all over the Caribbean were readily available to fill the hulls of the trans-Atlantic ships for their return journey.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Rigsarkiv. Copenhagen, Denmark

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1779-1784	38.34.3
1784-1801	38.34.4
1800-1802	38.34.5
1805-1807	38.34.7
1810-1811	38.34.8

Politikammerets journaler over ankommende og Bortrejsende personer

1794-1816	38.32.1
1824-1831	38.32.3
1844-1848.	38.32.6

Auktionosprotokoller 1812-1815 38.37.35.

St. Croix Landmarks Society

Microfilm of Customs Journals of Arrivals and Clearance of Vessels 1785-1787, 1798-1799 (The originals are in the National Archives, Washington, DC.

Microfilm of Head Tax Records 1790-1819. (Originals are in the Rigsarkiv, Copenhagen)

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