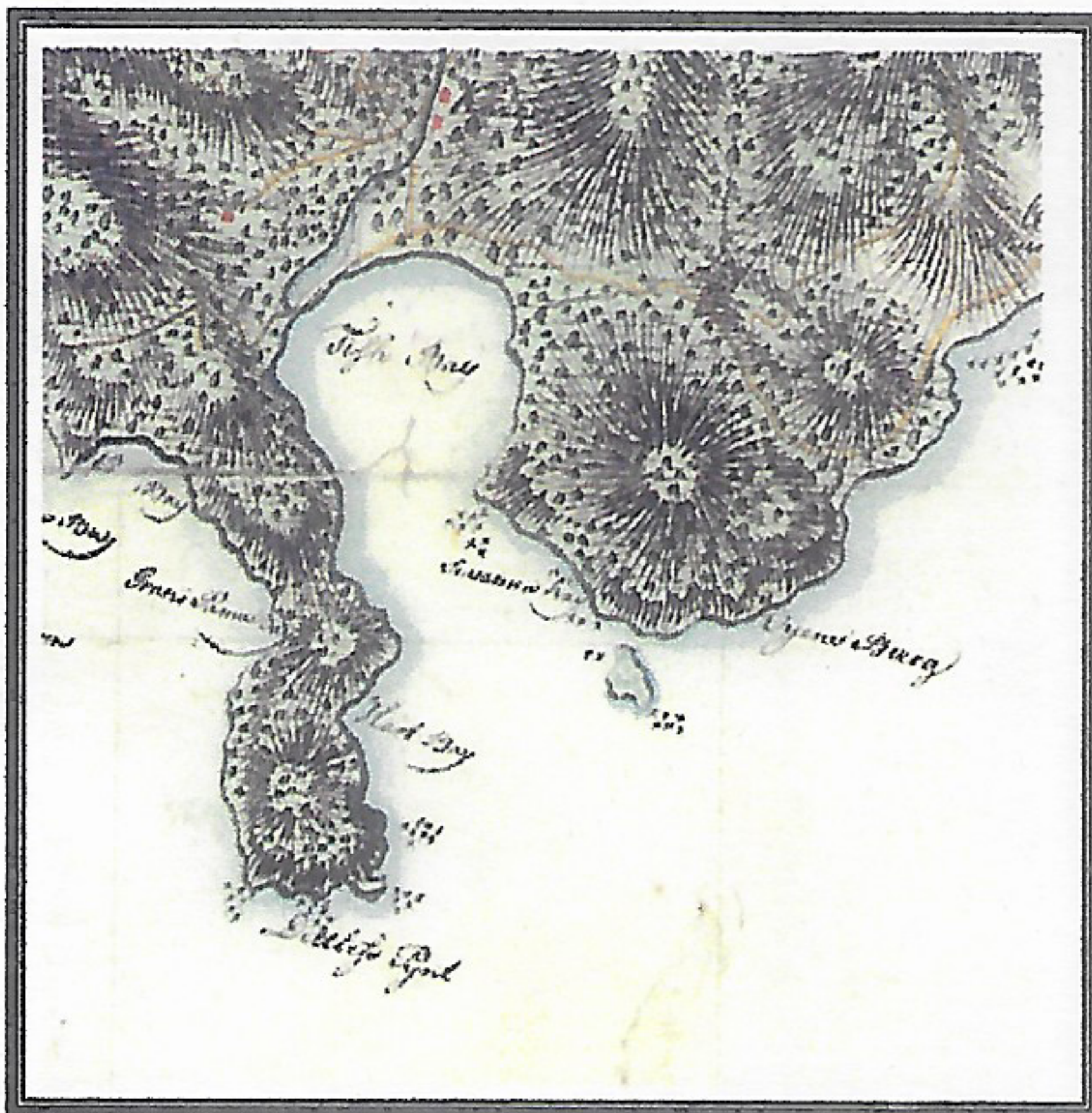


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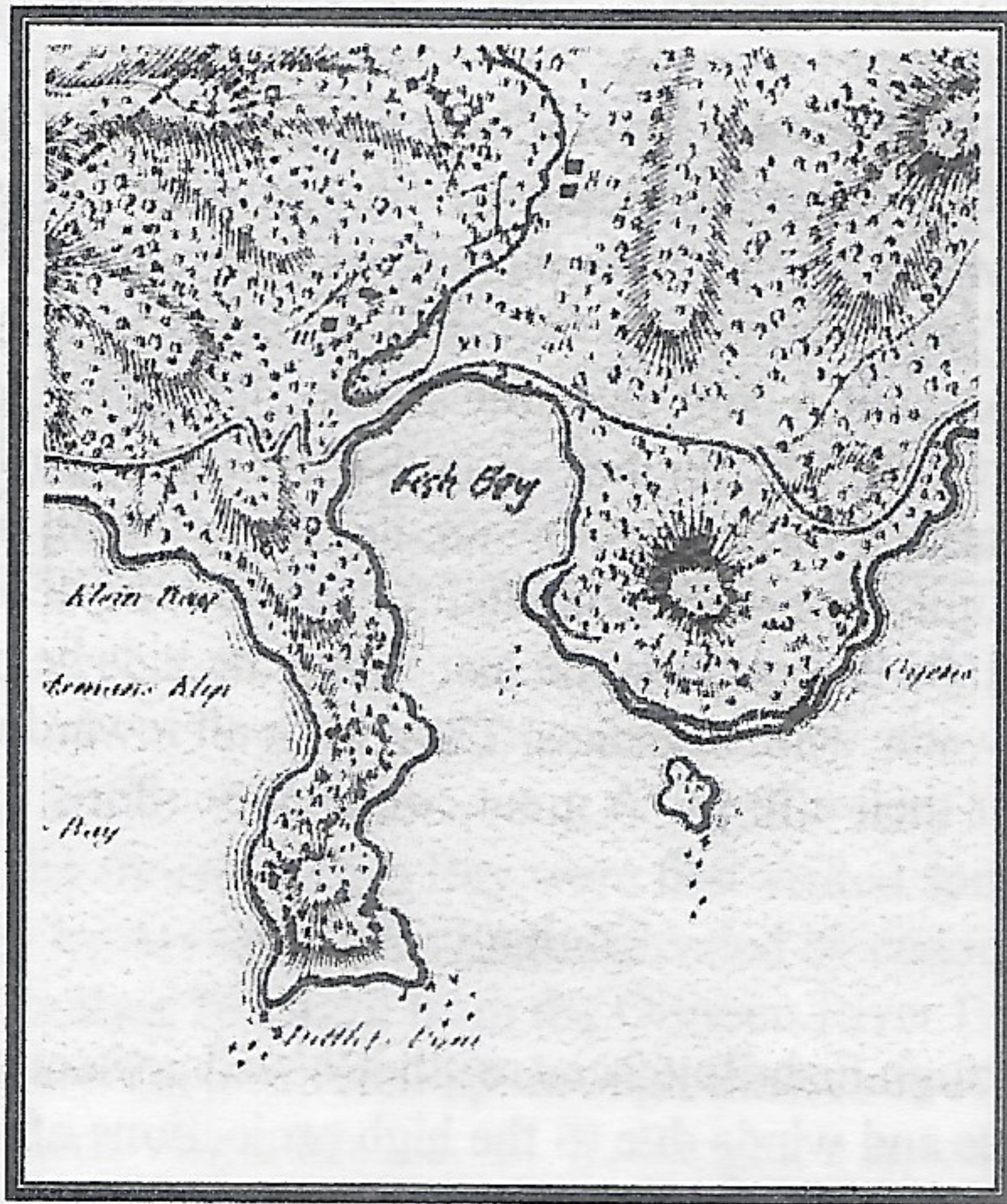
Chuck and Terry Pishko came to St. John, Estate Fish Bay in 1995 after years of vacationing on our island. Terry and Chuck were instrumental in the formation of Estate Fish Bay's growth. Chuck is among the most respected historians on Virgin Island history.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ESTATE FISH BAY



1780 Oxholm Manuscript Map

**Compiled and Written by
Chuck Pishko
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What's in the Name?

How did our bay come to be known as Fish Bay; a rather mundane name when listed alongside the other bays of St. John named for the famous or with exotic-sounding names. In 1765, Christian Marfeldt wrote in The Bays On St. John that the bay got its name because the fish were there and everyone knew where to fish. Below you'll read that the Indians already knew this.

Oldendorp in A Caribbean Mission reports natives fishing for piskett, only 2 inches long and the size of your little finger. They're also called silversides or anchovies and were netted from July to October when they teem along the shore. They're roasted or used in soups (callaloo). The fish were also dried and stored to be eaten in times of need. Even today we

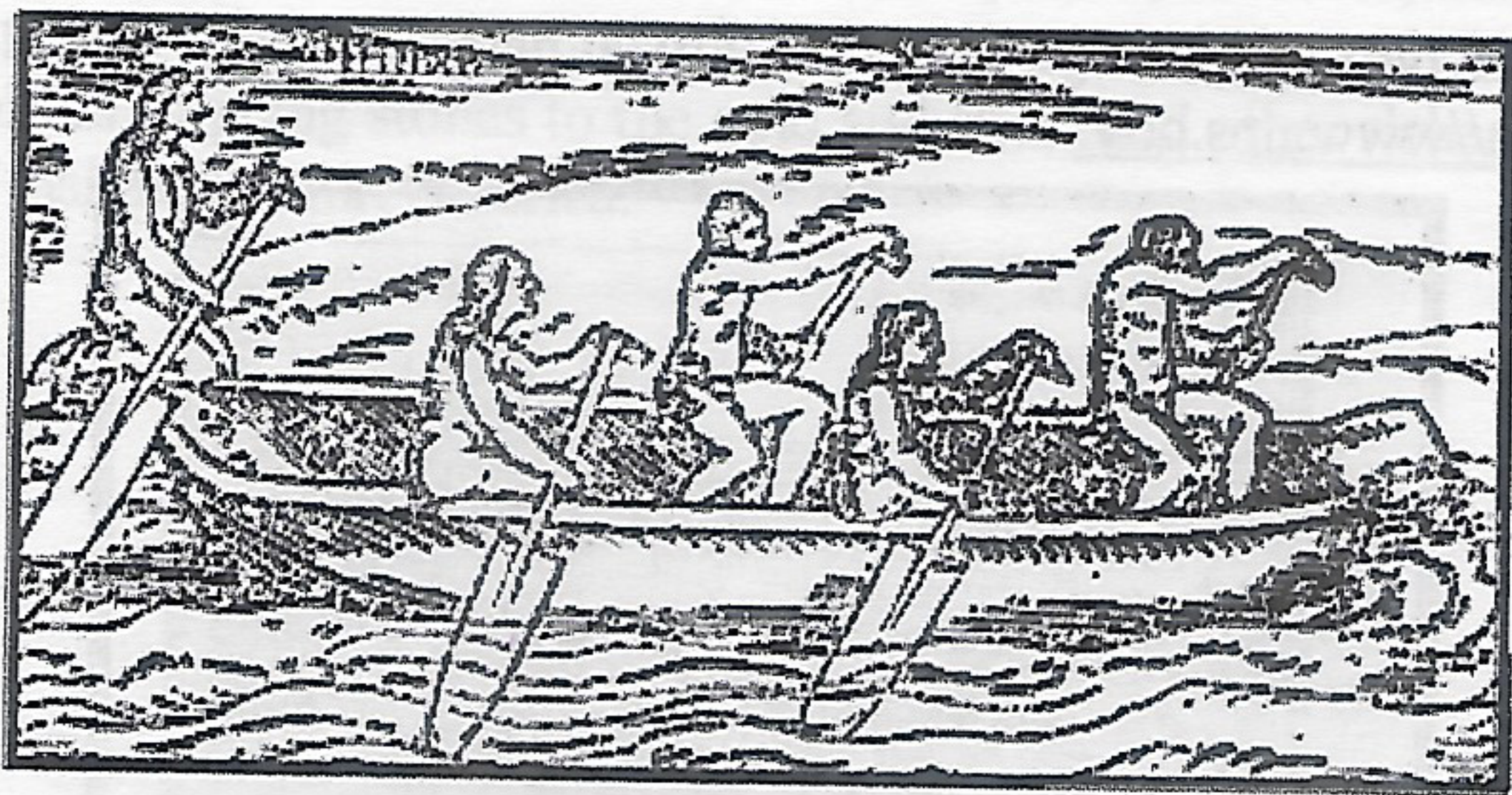
often see fishers casting circular bait nets in the bay. The fish are mixed with sand and tossed off the boat in loose fistfuls or tightly packed around hooks. This is excellent bait for bottom feeding reef fish..

Fish Bay was also a good spot for seine fishing which requires a group effort but yields the biggest catch. You need a calm bay where the fry are boiling or kicking-up, an indication of big fish feeding. One end of the net would be held on shore while a boat pays out the net slowly while making a semi circle in the bay. Another crew member is let out in the water to make sure the net doesn't get hung up. Then the people (everyone is invited to help) on the beach begin to pull the two ends of the net. Even the kids help by beating the water with branches. They were all rewarded with a few fish for their efforts. A great community effort!

Geology

Although Fish Bay faces south it's well protected from swells, waves and winds due to the high projections of Cocoloba Point and Ditlef Point. The innermost beach is nearly a half a mile from the open sea. Extending north and east from the beach is a broad valley containing a mangrove swamp behind the bay backed by a gentle incline and then steep slopes of Giff Hill and Sieben ridge.

Three major water courses: Battery Gut and Fish Bay Gut, converging at the western end of the estate, and Little Fish Bay Gut, originating between the Sieben and Mollendahl ridges and separately entering the bay. The alluvial fans are well defined behind the head of Fish Bay and records of Estate L'Esperance, at the head of the Fish Bay Gut, reported in 1804 that the stream "has not been dry in the 30 years I've been here." Major Vriehuis who wrote the report went on to say that the stream flow according to experts would supply a water mill to run the estate.

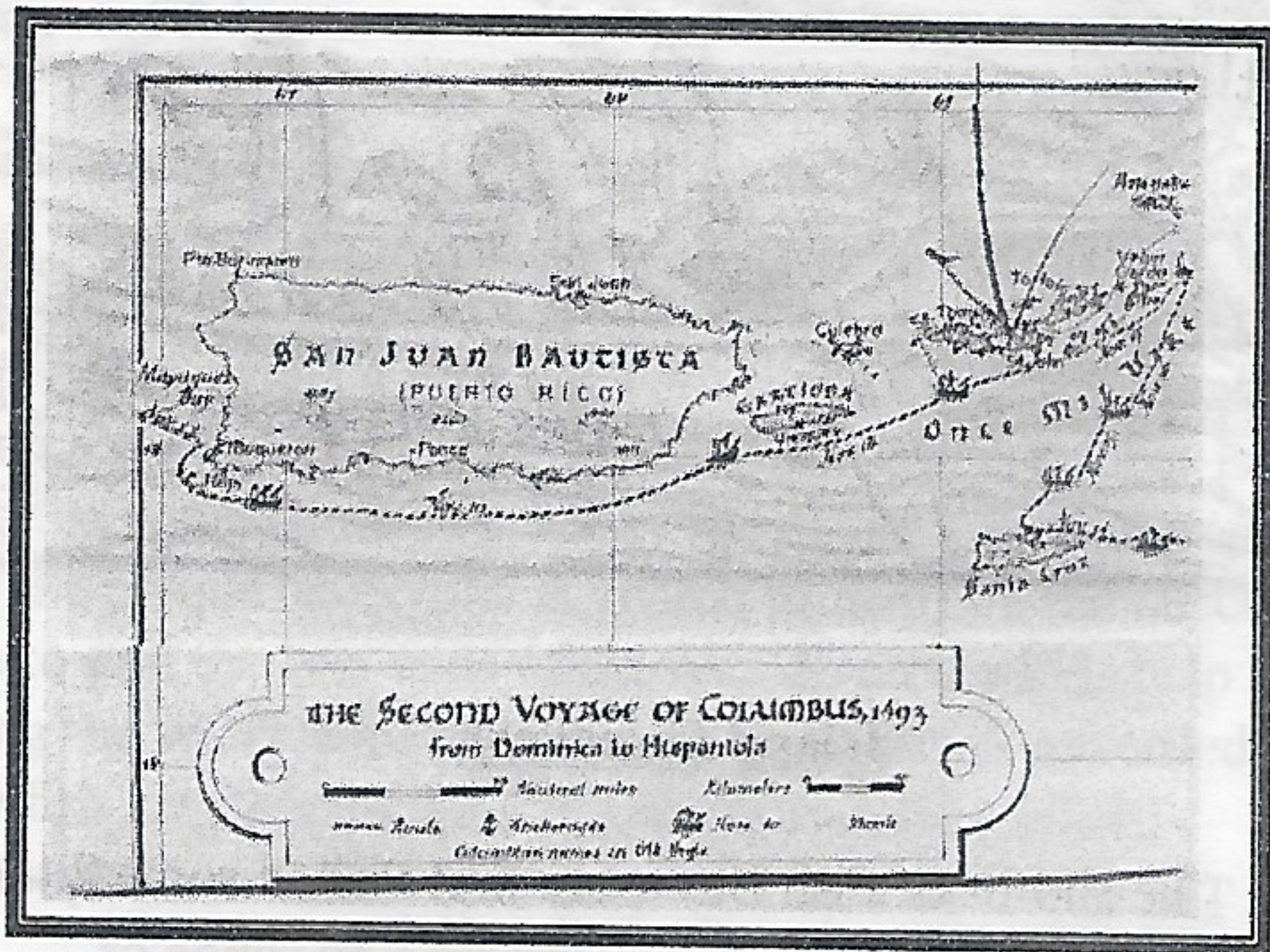


Island Discovery

The shores of Fish Bay were first visited some 2,000 years ago by Arawak Indians who traveled by canoe or "canoa" in their language from the Orinoco River Basin in Venezuela. They traveled up through the Lesser Antilles to our Northern Virgin Islands. F. W. Sleight, a noted archeologist, in his study Archaeological Reconnaissance at the Island of St John has confirmed the Indians' presence here on our shores where they established fishing camps from where these early hunter-gatherers fished for whelk, conch, chitons, and hunted the manatee and the extinct monk seal, hutia, and shrew. Irving Rouse has reported that the most conspicuous early food source was land crabs.

The Arawaks were soon followed by other South Americans, the Tainos, who not only fished and hunted but also engaged in the intensive cultivation of root crops. They were no doubt eventually attracted to the north side of St. John with its heavier rainfall and more fertile valleys. The Classic Taino as they are now called have been studied by National Park Service archeologist Ken Wild who has confirmed the existence of a Taino ceremonial site at Cinnamon Bay used for over 400 years before European contact. Ken's reports are

available on the Virgin Islands National Park website,
<http://www.nps.gov>.



Columbus Era

On November 13, 1493, on his second voyage, Christopher Columbus found Santa Cruz (St. Croix) where he had his first encounter with the fierce Caribs, the group of Indians who had followed (and conquered) the Arawaks from the Orinoco River Basin. Eyewitness accounts of Columbus' adventure especially the vivid account of Dr. Diego Chané continue to amaze readers with the ferocity of the Indians "with great courage they took up their bows, the women as well as the men and I say with great courage because they were no more than four men and two women and ours were more than 25..." Samuel Eliot Morison in his life of Christopher Columbus Admiral of the Seas posits that shortly after leaving St. Croix, Columbus had a chance to use his Cantabrian barques and light-draught vessels to explore the south coast of Virgin Gorda, Salt, Peter and Norman Islands, and St. John and St. Thomas, as they were claimed for Spain.

Fish Bay had to be among those areas explored, however, the explorers were more interested in the Greater Antilles and then only as stepping stones to the gold and silver and other riches of mainland Latin America.



Dutch Capturing Turtles and Manatees

European Colonization - African Slavery

Over the next 200 years, the Dutch, French and English at various times laid claim to, visited and/or exploited St. John. They logged the valuable hardwood timber that lined the ghuts and adjacent areas of Fish Bay. Lignum Vitae, Mahogany, and Fustic were carried back to Europe where it was converted to medicines and fine furniture. St. John and no doubt Fish Bay were visited by “extra-nationals” such as the buccaneers, pirates, privateers as well as settlers building rudimentary

shelters and settlements that would not attract the attention of the formal European navies who would expel them. Enslaved Africans were brought to the Caribbean to clear the islands for sugar and cotton. This was quickly followed by Africans involved in escape and flight for freedom who chose isolated areas such as Fish Bay for their maroonage.

Formal Danish Occupation

On March 23, 1718 Governor Bredal of the Danish West Indies and Guinea Company personally laid claim to St. John for Denmark. The occupation went unchallenged most likely preordained by the agreement of the Royal Courts of England and Denmark. Why should they risk a full scale European war over a 19 square mile craggy island of limited use and value? Also, the enslaved Africans brought to St. John to work quickly sought freedom in the bush (letter from Governor Bredal to Directors of the Danish West India and Guinea Co. dated August 8, 1718).

Leif Calundann Larsen's The Danish Colonization of St. John, 1718 - 1733 provides us with an in-depth analysis of this critical stage of St. John's development. Larsen outlines the reasons why the Danish West Indies and Guinea Company chose to expand their operations to St. John. The plantation sites most suitable for sugar production were settled first. Consult David W. Knight's A Documentary History of the Cinnamon Bay Estate 1718 - 1917 and Understanding Annaberg for exhaustive and compelling accounts of the history of St. John sugar plantations.

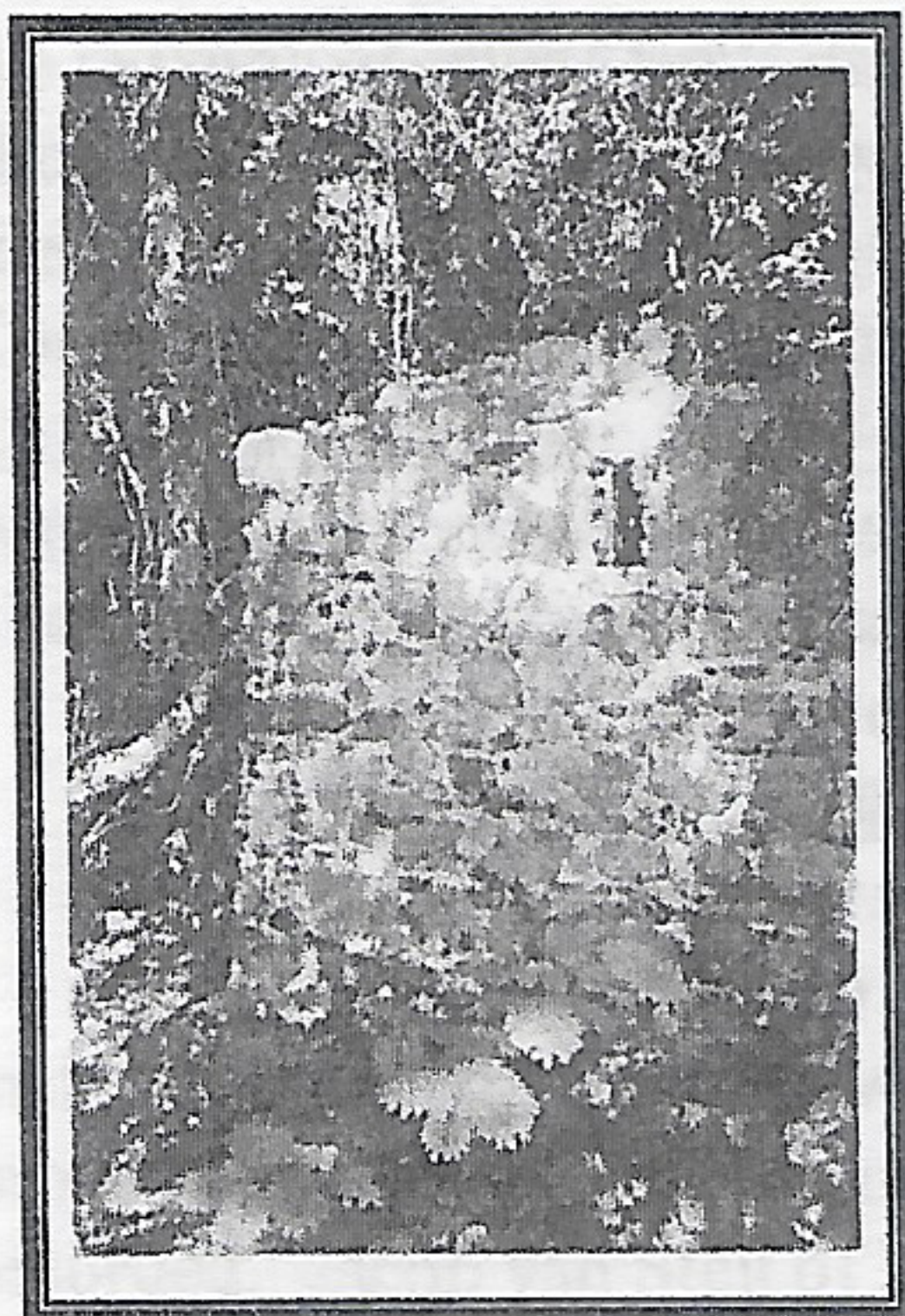
Cotton in the Danish West Indies

After the prime sugar plantations were started, areas including Fish Bay more arid and more suited to cotton production were taken up. In 1721 a St. John cotton crop was recorded. Jacob van Stell of Maho Bay Quarter had been

Cotton plantations required less capital, less workers, immediate (two crops per year) returns, fewer buildings and cheaper land. A typical cotton plantation consisted of a dwelling house, a kitchen, workers' housing, a ginning shed and a cotton bale storage building. A complete account of cotton production in the Danish West Indies is found in George F. Tyson's On the Periphery of the Peripheries: The Cotton Plantations of St. Croix 1735 - 1815 which can be found in Bondmen and Freedmen in the Danish West Indies published by the Virgin Islands Humanities Council.

Cotton Comes To Fish Bay

Company records show that in 1728 Lucas Volkers and Jan van Hermall, two Dutchmen, took up land and built a cotton plantation in Fish Bay. Land surveys issued in 1720's show two cotton plantations in the same area before consolidation. Surprisingly, the footprint of this cotton plantation can still be found 275 years later right on the east side of Marina Drive just beyond the Cocoloba Trail intersection, behind a large Tamarind tree.



The dwelling house foundation measuring 19' x 42' with a marl floor, a well, the wall of the cotton storage building pictured left, and what appears to be the remains of a ginning shed are readily discernible. Ground scatter is virtually nonexistent with the exception of a square cm of fine Chinese porcelain.

Maps, Deeds and Other Records

Estate Fish Bay known now as #8 Reef Bay Quarter was soon enlarged to 350 acres by the merging of bordering properties. The St. Thomas Recorder of Deeds shows that an estate originally taken up by Diedrich van Stell in 1726 and subsequently owned by a Dutch sea captain, Abraham Oyen, was joined upon his death in 1759 with Estate Fish Bay where it has remained to date. "Oyen's bierg" is listed on P. Oxholm's manuscript map of 1780 as well as the 1800 map. They both also show the name "Knevels" on the Estate Fish Bay cotton plantation. The Oxholm maps show two structures and not a complete cotton plantation. It can be concluded that cotton production had been stopped by 1780. In 1790 the tax records confirm the property belonged to Knevels. Before Knevels, A. Beverhoudt had owned the land. In 1798, Little Reef Bay plantation was merged with Estate Fish Bay. In 1804 Estate Little Reef Bay became attached to Estate Par Force. (See A Brief History of Little Reef Bay Estate by David W. Knight Sr. 2000) In 1815 the Fish Bay property was recorded in the name of Isaac A. Knevels and it remained in the Knevels name for the next 100 years.

The Knevels - An Exceptional Family

The Reverend John Wenerus Knevels was appointed as Dominie or Pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church on St. John on October 11, 1752. He also purchased the sugar plantation at Susannaberg which included Denis Bay, where he lived. His son, Isaac Adrian Knevels, in 1798 married Margaret Catherine Vriehuis whose family owned L'Esperance and Sieben Estates. It's interesting to note on the 1780 Oxholm map that there is an old estate road that connects these two estates and the cotton plantation at Fish Bay.

Both the Knevels and Vriehuis families were very supportive to the efforts of the Moravian missionaries in ministering to the enslaved Africans. Oldendorp in A Caribbean Mission first published in 1777 in Germany and translated by Arnold Highfield and Vladimir Barac reports on page 607 that "I (Oldendorp) find frequent mention of the friendly disposition of the Reformed preacher, Mr. Knevels. Many of his Negroes were baptized by the missionary (David Heckewalder) and they attached themselves to the mission church (Moravian) with his complete approval." Oldendorp further reports that the Tonis (Vriehuis) plantation between 1741 and 1746 was the center of Moravian missionary activity including the first Moravian baptisms attended by over 300 people (pp. 429 - 432).

The Knevels had seven children and eventually relocated to East Fishkill, New York. Henry S. Knevels, one of the children, returned to St. John and in the 1840's was a Stadthauptmann, lawyer and a member of the Burgher Council. He lived at Susannaberg.

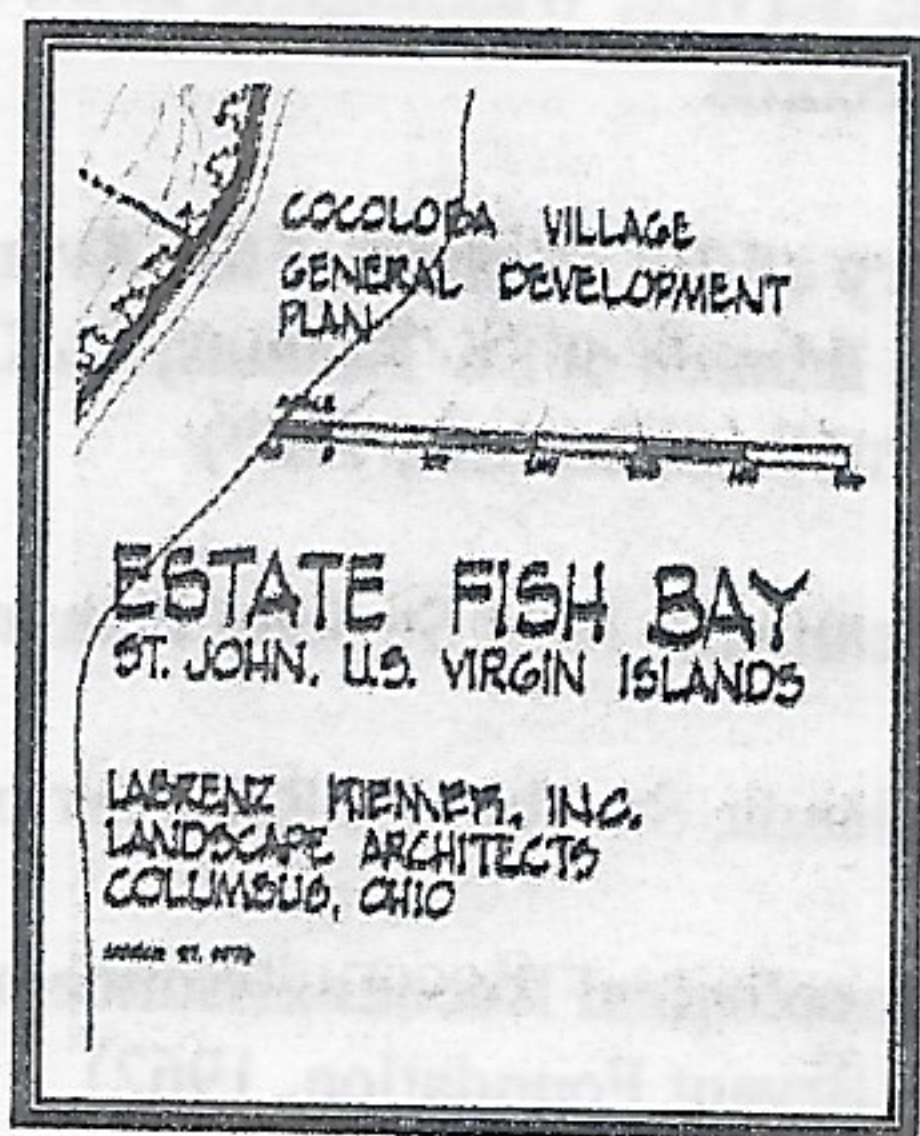
Land Usage in the 19th and 20th Centuries

Even though cotton cultivation stopped before 1780, it does not mean this area laid fallow. Wood harvesting and charcoal burning were widely practiced in the uncultivated areas of St. John between 1850 and 1950 (Tyson, 1984; Olwig, 1985). To the present, people are torching crab (crab hunting by flashlight) on the full moon. After cotton, the existing structures may well have been used as a Fish Bay storage site for products from L'Esperance and Sieben Estates located on the road above the site. Around 1847 the Estate Fish Bay is recorded as uncultivated. In 1916 H. A. Knevels sold the property to James Bank, Esq. The next entry at the Recorder of Deeds is a 1949 Action to Quiet Title bought by Julius Sprauve. Julius Sprauve and his family owned and lived on the Sieben Estate. In personal conversations with

Mr. Elroy Sprauve I learned that his father, Mr. Julius Sprauve pastured cattle here in the 1930's. He also cut and sold firewood and charcoal to the Lockhart Bakery on St. Thomas. Fish Bay was used for family swimming, picnics, and fishing.

Towards the Present

In 1952, Estate Fish Bay was sold to Dr. Peter and Vivian Sabatelle. Four small parcels were sold separately. Two were sold to Jackson Hole Preserve for the National Park including Cocoloba Cay and Point (the southern edge of Fish Bay). Subsequently, the remainder was sold by the Sabatelles to the Cocoloba Village Developers and eventually to you and yours.



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**One Square Centimeter
Porcelain from Site**