



# HEJ HEJ

APRIL 2018



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Photo Credit: Susan Wall

## TRANSFER DAY REPLACEMENT: A JOYFUL 101<sup>ST</sup> BIRTHDAY PARTY FOR U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS!

A truly happy occasion was the outcome of our Society's plan to look to the future of our U.S. Virgin Islands – without ignoring the legacy from Danish times that ended 101 years ago. Who doesn't enjoy a birthday party? – and a party we had, from 3 to 5 pm on March 31. Due to Holy Week, our plans of celebrating at Government House had to be changed, but we happily found a welcome partner in our lovely Botanical Garden of the Virgin Islands, whose members shared the event with us and allowed the use of the majestic Great Hall , a perfect site for the about 160 attendees – including Governor Kenneth Mapp, Delegate to U.S. Congress Stacey Plaskett, Danish

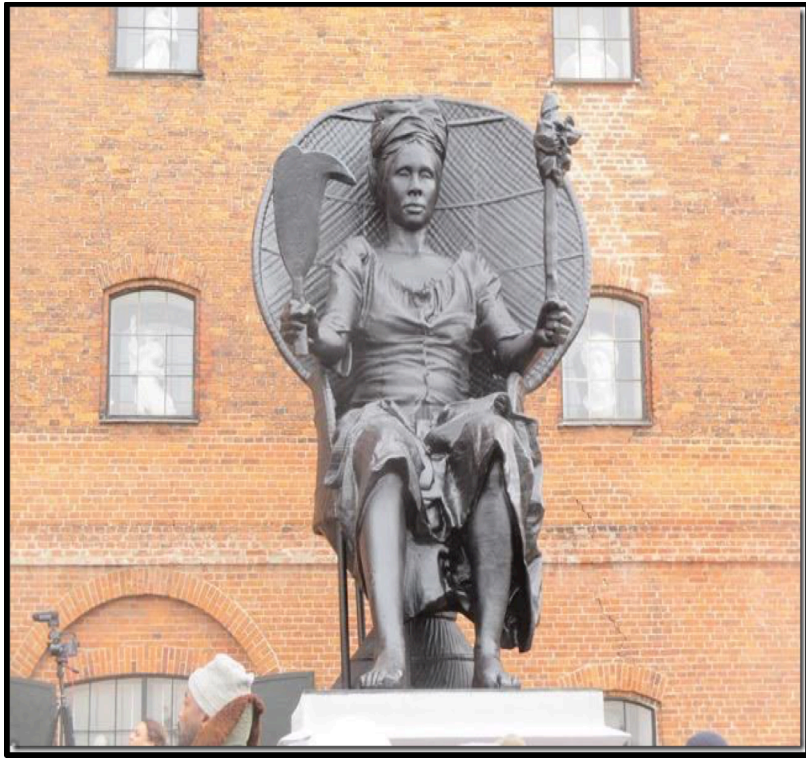
Consul Helle Dyreborg-Gunslev from the New York Consulate, Guy Hughes of the U.S. Dept. of Interior, Senator Sammuell Sanes, Agri-Tourism promoter Ms. Kristina Olsen, Garden Executive Director Dewey Hollister, and our President Hans Lawaetz. The event was ably chaired by Susan Wall, with much help by Board members Robert Boyton, Patricia Canegata, Robert Evans (and Maresa) Julie Frederiksen and Nina York, with big help from President Hans Lawaetz, and we owe them all great thanks. Many thanks also to the Garden's Amy Parker deSorbo and Dewey Hollister. The floral decor by Wild Orchid was lovely. Top Class Catering brought us tasty patés,

tarts, cheese and grapes and a punch plus not one but two grand birthday cakes, carved by the guests of honor and shared by all present. The music by the Renaissance Band entertained before the numerous speeches. After the birthday song and the Virgin Islands March, it was time for entertainment by our WDY Cultural Dancers in their colorful attire accompanied by the Renaissance Band's happy Quelbe music. An interesting exhibit by The Native Son Julio Encarnacion III documenting U.S. Virgin Islands history over 101 years added an educational touch to the event. All who were there had a great time!

HEJ HEJ is the quarterly newsletter of St. Croix Friends of Denmark Society, a non-profit Virgin Islands corporation promoting friendship and exchange between the U.S. Virgin Islands and Denmark. We welcome your relevant contributions.

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# Queen Mary of Fireburn Fame Statue Erected in Copenhagen



Prison in Copenhagen for a number of years, and eventually returned to St. Croix. The statue depicts a stern seated woman holding a torch in one hand and a cane bill in the other, her hair in a madras turban and wearing a dress with a buttoned bodice and flaring skirt. Her body shape was made by molding a combined body scan of the two artists.

The ceremony revealing the statue was preceded by a march starting at the old Christianshavn Women's Prison where Queen Mary was jailed through the streets of Copenhagen by hardy participants braving the cold weather, several carrying placards with the statement "Black Lives Matter". Dignitaries from Denmark as well as the islands delivered speeches, and the artists stated that they call the statue "I am Queen Mary". Numerous grants and sponsorships supported this effort. It is hoped that the bronze version thereof will become a reality before long.

On March 31, 2018, a milestone in Denmark's recognition of the issues that on October 1, 1878 led Mary Thomas, a St. Croix agricultural worker, to instigate the Fireburn, the largest revolt in our island's history, took place in Copenhagen. Two women artists of color, our own LaVaughn Belle, and Danish artist Jeanette Ehlers, teamed up to create an impressive sculpture of how they envisioned "Queen Mary" as she has been known ever since. This statue is now installed in a public place of significance in our Island's history, in front of the large brick built warehouse for storing the thousands of barrels of sugar and rum that were brought to Denmark from St. Croix in the Danish West Indies. This is the first time Denmark has seen a public sculpture relating to its colonial link to our islands and marks a desire on both sides of the Atlantic to acknowledge the hardships that continued to be imposed on the descendants of the enslaved but also to create a conversation about that era. Queen Mary was arrested along with two other women participating in the Fireburn revolt and remanded to the Women

*Above left: "I am Queen Mary" Statue placed in front of DWI Co. former warehouse in central Copenhagen. Below right: The old Women Prison in Christianshavn section of Copenhagen where the march started. Photo credit: Jens Villumsen*



## ANOTHER SCULPTURE FROM OUR ISLAND FINDS PROMINENT PLACEMENT IN COPENHAGEN

On the central Copenhagen waterfront yet another island work of art has found a prominent new home. We are all familiar with the Freedom sculpture that was installed at the Frederiksted plaza fronting the old Custom House and cruise pier for July 3 1998, the occasion of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Emancipation. A copy was donated 2016 in commemoration of the Transfer Centennial by our government to a museum in Holbæk, Denmark where it has been on display until now.

In a public area visited by multitudes of Danes and others the “Freedom” statue will convey the important role of the enslaved in the Danish West Indies and create a greater awareness of the important part our little islands played in Denmark’s history, an awareness that was largely missing for many years. The Transfer Centennial served to promote a great deal of knowledge about that period and the shameful manner in which so many individuals were treated under slavery.



“Freedom”  
statue in St.  
John. Sculptor  
Bright  
Bimpong

## DANISH VISITORS ARE RETURNING TO OUR SHORES

The awful September hurricanes that inflicted so much harm in so many places are for some of us a distant memory but not all are so fortunate. We observe with sadness that some of our friends have moved away, but we have seen many linemen and aid worker visitors helping our economy and recovery who occupied hotel rooms and even a stationary cruise ship, they were to most of us even more welcome than the typical tourist coming here.

One group of visitors, however, that had to wait a few months to resume coming here were the Danes, many of whom had booked trips here that had to be cancelled. But we are happy to discover that there are now again a healthy number of them showing up and finding that this island is resilient and friendly even after a traumatic catastrophic experience. The serious damage suffered by so many St. Thomas (and St. John) resorts has effected the number of groups coming to St. Croix as most groups of 20 or more stay in larger hotels, and most big St. Thomas properties are closed. Danes normally visit all U.S. Virgin Islands for a two-week stay.

While we no longer have the non-stop flights offered by Norwegian Airlines, and the Bravo Tours charter flights are a thing of the past, Danes are known to be determined travelers and are willing to endure a long flight, for some even an overnight stay in Miami, to reach the balmy shores here. It has been a long wait for some, but they are glad that we are recovering. Next year in March, our Society will be hosting the 2019 Danish West Indies Festival for members of the Danish West Indian Society. They staged in June the fantastic 2017 Centennial Jubilee Festival. We will have a lot to live up to! Let us get a committee started to make it happen!

## PLANS FOR ST. HANS AFTEN CELEBRATION

A traditional Friends of Denmark midsummer activity was skipped last year because so many of us were enjoying that event in Denmark as part of the Danish West Indies Festival. But this year, weather permitting, we will once again stage that happy fellowship at a beach where we set up a bonfire in a metal barrel, into the flames of which we toss cards on which we have written all the stuff we would like to eliminate from our lives. It is a St. Croix version of an old purification rite that took place in former days on the eve of the holy day of St. John- in Puerto Rico people take a swim at the beach, in Denmark they used to meet at holy springs. This year we will be meeting Saturday, June 23 at Gentle Winds on the North Shore west of Salt River; it has a lovely beach and we can be accommodated comfortably under cover in case of less than perfect weather. We will be starting around 5 :00 p.m. , and the bonfire begins just before sundown. We can enjoy a casual cookout dinner and have a cash bar. Since Nina's birthday is on the 26<sup>th</sup>, she promises to bring a cake. There will be a modest charge for the meal and the cash bar. You may bring guests, All have to pay. We may play the Danish Midsummer Song and other music.

We will need numbers of attendees, so we will call you ahead of time to hear if you are coming, how many you are, and we will give you details including cost. Looking forward to seeing you!

## IN FOND REMEMBRANCE

Long-time member Conrad Gaskin recently passed away, and we send his widow Dr. Frances Gaskin and other family members our condolences. May he rest in peace.

### Welcome to New Members

Since our last issue, we have grown - we thank for joining:

**Brad & Gail Ebersole,  
Kathleen Larsen,  
Eleanor Johannes-Gomez**

To current members we say thank you for keeping our Society alive. Next year is our turn to host the Danes in March 2019. It will be fun!

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