



# David Hamilton Jackson

## rebel and hero

The black labor leader David Hamilton Jackson has been described in completely different ways. For officials towards the end of the Danish era he was an unpleasant rebel. But for the black population of the islands he was and is a hero.

Jackson was born in 1884 on St. Croix. That was 36 years after the abolition of slavery, but conditions for the population were still hard. He was educated as a school teacher, but he spoke out critically about the Catholic Church, and as a consequence he was dismissed by the Danish school authorities. Instead, he became a clerk but also lost this position after a run-in with Governor Helweg-Larsen. After this, he received legal training at the University of Chicago.

### Charismatic and tough

Jackson's charisma, talent for oratory, and effective agitation in favor of better living conditions for the population of the islands soon made him the leader of the local unions. In 1915, he arrived in Copenhagen where he spoke on behalf of the impoverished blacks and gained a certain amount of sympathy.

Back home on St. Croix, he founded the newspaper *The Herald* in November 1915. Jackson wrote and edited the four-page paper himself. Here, he vehemently criticized Danish colonial rule and encouraged the people of his class to be proud and demand better social and economic conditions for themselves. The tone was tough, and he called the director of education a shameless liar and the Governor a bloodthirsty tyrant. In return, the Governor called him a dreamer and a hothead.

### Strike led by Jackson

When plantation owners refused to increase wages during the sugar harvest in 1915-16, the farm workers on St. Croix went on strike – led by Jackson and the union. The end result was that the plantation owners had to accept that the work day from sunup to sundown was reduced to 9 hours and that the workers were

given a raise from 10-20 cents to 35 cents per day. After this, the dock workers on St. Thomas also went on strike and also achieved considerable improvements in work conditions and wages.

### The Black Moses

After the Danish sale of the West Indies to the US in 1917, Jackson became a judge in Christiansted and politician in the islands until his death in 1946. Today on the islands, he is considered to be a hero by the black population, the Black Moses, who helped his people escape a life of slavery. In the Virgin Islands, November 1 – the day of the first publication of Jackson’s newspaper – is a public holiday: David Hamilton Jackson Day.

### Biography

1884	David Hamilton Jackson born 28 September in St. Croix
1885	David Hamilton Jackson christened 8 March in the Moravian Church in Friedensthal
1893	The Jackson family moved to Christiansted
1890’erne	The Jackson family bought a house at 8 B Nørregade in Christiansted
1902	On 18 November David Hamilton Jackson was a signatory to the petition from the Native Insular Convention to the Danish parliament for better conditions for the population
1904	David Hamilton Jackson worked as a clerk at Barren Spot Station
C. 1908	David Hamilton Jackson taught at the public school in Frederiksted
1911	David Hamilton Jackson lived at 62 Prinsensgade in Frederiksted
1911-1912	David Hamilton Jackson taught at Peter’s Rest School

- 1914 David Hamilton Jackson worked as a clerk at a business in Christiansted
- 1914 David Hamilton Jackson commenced his activity as a writer
- 1915 On 8 January David Hamilton Jackson published his first criticism of conditions on the three Danish West Indian islands in the West End News
- 1915 David Hamilton Jackson visited Denmark between 13 May and 22 July
- 1915 On 1 November David Hamilton Jackson published the first issue of the newspaper The Herald
- 1915 In November David Hamilton Jackson established the St. Croix Labour Union
- 1916 On 24 January David Hamilton Jackson called a general strike on St. Croix
- 1916 David Hamilton Jackson and the Labour Union entered an agreement with the Planters' Society and the strike ended on 26 February
- 1916 On 12 August David Hamilton Jackson married Theolinda Joseph from St. Croix
- 1916 In The Herald of 12 August, David Hamilton Jackson threatened rebellion if the sale of the colony to the USA was not implemented
- 1916 On 31 December David Hamilton Jackson resigned as president of the Labour Union
- 1917-1921 David Hamilton Jackson studied law at Howard University in Washington DC
- 1922 David Hamilton Jackson reinstated as president of the Labour Union

- 1923-1927 David Hamilton Jackson was a member of the Colonial Council of St. Croix
- 1931-1941 David Hamilton Jackson was a judge of the Municipal Court in Christiansted
- 1941 David Hamilton Jackson became a member of the Municipal Council of St. Croix
- 1941 David Hamilton Jackson resigned from the office of judge
- 1946 David Hamilton Jackson died 30 May

Source: [www.virgin-islands-history.org](http://www.virgin-islands-history.org)