



Cinnamon Bay Museum

Project Proposal

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Submitted

by

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Project Summary

The pristine, natural beauty and recreational offerings of St. John provided the basis for the establishment of Virgin Islands National Park in 1956. Since that time, the National Park Service has discovered the incredible wealth of cultural resources located within the boundaries of VI National Park, and is now working to preserve the stories of the peoples who inhabited these islands throughout time.

Prehistoric sites can be found on most beaches and in many bays within VI National Park, dating back as early as 840 BC through the arrival of Columbus. The discovery of the Virgin Islands by the Europeans opened the door to people from around the world, who came to the islands and brought with them elements of their own culture that helped to create the rich diversity of peoples found in the islands. This is evident in the more than 500 historic structures that include ruins from sugar, cotton, and coffee estates, as well as evidence of forts, maritime facilities, and a simple communal infrastructure.

Indeed, the National Park Service has already discovered thousands of significant artifacts from sites throughout the Park that are now stored in a warehouse with limited public access. Unfortunately, VI National Park does not have a proper facility to display these incredible pieces that illustrate the fascinating stories behind the sites and people who inhabited the Virgin Islands. In fact, a museum dedicated to the chronological history and cultural heritage of the Virgin Islands does not exist anywhere in the Caribbean.

Our goal is to create a museum, utilizing an established structure in the Park, for the purpose of preserving the Caribbean's human heritage and development from prehistory to the present. The museum is designed for teachers to utilize its unique exhibits to help local students learn and explore their heritage, and develop a world view with an understanding of their own past. The exhibits will also educate visitors about the significant role these islands played in maritime history as a focal point for the British Empire during the 18th and 19th centuries, and as an important US Naval base during WWII. This museum will also act as a "working museum". Researchers and interns will utilize this space as a laboratory, continuing to analyze and document artifacts, and help act as docents for students and visitors to the museum.

Organizational Background

Friends of Virgin Islands National Park (Friends) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and protection of the natural and cultural resources of Virgin Islands National Park and promotes the responsible enjoyment of this unique national treasure. As the official private sector partner to the Park, the Friends is a membership organization that raises funds from individuals, corporations and foundations to support projects important to the Park and to further our mission.

The National Park Service and Friends of Virgin Islands National Park will work in partnership to create this museum, with Friends acting as the lead agency.

Money raised by the Friends supports environmental education, natural resource conservation, cultural preservation and scientific research. The Friends also acts as an advocate for our National Park, particularly on issues that threaten its precious natural or cultural resources.

Incorporated in 1988, the Friends is governed by a 13-member volunteer Board of Directors. Our full-time staff consists of an executive director, development director and program manager. On a part time basis, we employ an office assistant and bookkeeper. Our offices are located just outside the Park in Cruz Bay on St. John, US Virgin Islands.

Project Description

Since the establishment of Virgin Islands National Park, the National Park Service has become aware of the rich cultural resources in the Park with landscapes that are the most all-inclusive and culturally diverse within the National Park System. Virgin Islands National Park has since revised management plans to reflect these significant cultural resources that collectively preserve a comprehensive picture of the Caribbean's human heritage and development from prehistory to the present, on land and underwater.

Significant prehistoric sites are present on almost every beach and in every bay within the Park. These archeological sites date from as early as 840 BC to the arrival of Columbus. Across this temporal landscape, there are early nomadic hunter-gather Archaic Period sites, followed by a proliferation of early chiefdom villages, then complex ceremonial sites and each with their own burial grounds.

After Columbus's arrival, the Virgin Island's became one of the first melting pots made up of many cultures from around the world. This is especially evident in the historic record of the lands that make up Virgin Islands National Park. Historic landscapes and architectural remains of hundreds of historic structures from sugar, cotton, indigo, and coffee estates are found throughout the Park.

Preserved within this colonial setting is the infrastructure of government and community buildings consisting of: historic bridges, cemeteries, stock yards, wharfs, roads, schools for enslaved children, aqueducts and catchments, dams, boat building structures, boat houses, dock yards, leprosarium, yellow fever hospitals and a slave revolt battlefield.

As the Virgin Islands shift into the 19th and 20th centuries, the Park's landscape inherits a new set of structures dedicated to bay rum production, charcoal processing, cattle ranching and one of the first US naval stations in the islands. Within each of these settings, from the Archaic Period to the US Navy stations there is also a well preserved buried record that can provide the details to the stories of each of these unique sites.

Our goal is to convert the archeology lab on Cinnamon Bay beach in Virgin Islands National Park into a museum for the purpose of creating an educational facility dedicated to the preservation of Caribbean human heritage and development.

Building

The building located on Cinnamon Bay beach is within Park boundaries and is owned by the NPS. It currently serves as the Park's archeology lab. This 1680's historic structure is suspected of being one of the oldest buildings that remains standing on St. John, and was most likely originally built as great house.

The overall condition of the building is stable, however, the NPS will be receiving \$150,000 in 2009 to replace storm shutters and roof, and provide for other exterior maintenance needs. This proposal focuses on the building's interior space and exhibits.

Architectural plans have been completed and the major components of this renovation include minor reconfiguration of interior walls, and the installation of mahogany displays cases which will house the artifacts. Projection equipment for presentations will be installed, and an electrolysis tank for metal artifact conservation. The display cases are designed to be easily and quickly removed from the building for off-site presentations, or in case of hurricane or other natural disasters. A storage shed will also be constructed next to the museum on an existing slab.

Two bids have been received from VI licensed contractors and are under review. The success of the fund raising campaign will determine the start date of this project.

Exhibits

The proposed exhibits themes will for the first time in the history of the VI define each significant period of human occupation, and will link together in succession the diverse stories of past inhabitants.

Themes:

Prehistory

- The first humans arrive in the Virgin Islands, 1000 BC – 200 BC.
- The first village settlers of the islands, 200 BC – AD 600.
- Population explosion and village expansion across the landscape, AD 600-1200.
- Development of the complex Taino culture, AD 1200 – 1492.
- Contact period first between Taino and Carib followed by Sapiñish and the demise of pre-Columbian culture, AD 1450 – 1550.

Colonial History

- European expansion into the Caribbean and the age of Piracy and Privateers, particularly in Park owned lands, AD 1580-1700.
- Early European settlement of St. Thomas/Hassel Island and St. John, AD 1665-1733.
- Expansion of sugar, cotton, slavery and maritime commerce, AD 1733-1840s.
- The Napoleonic War and British occupation, AD 1801-1815.
- Our Underground Railway marked by guardhouses and escape routes, AD 1832-1848.
- Emancipation, the end of the sugar and cotton industry and the introduction of bay rum, cattle, and charcoal production and a new era of maritime commercial expansion, AD 1840s-1917.
- Epidemic graveyards and hospitals across the landscape.

United States Virgin Islands

- American “Naval Regime”, AD 1917-1931. Navel Base established on Hassel Island.
- World War II military installations on Hassel Island, 1940s.
- AD 1920s – 1950s, visitors from the United States begin to discover and move to the Virgin Islands.
- Tourism becomes the island’s major source of commerce and industry, and Tektite, one of the nation’s first astronaut training facility and underwater habitat is established in the Park, AD 1950s – present.

Shared Community Heritage

- Children who understand their heritage and culture possess the building blocks upon which to develop a broader world view and their place in it.

Demonstrate how the islands natural history intertwines with the cultural heritage.

- Exhibits will highlight how natural resources were used in everyday life of early island inhabitants. For example, plants were used for medicinal purposes and also as material to make rope. Stones were carved into effigies. These inhabitants used the natural resources and adapted them to suite a human need.

Project Personnel

Ken Wild, National Park Service archeologist for the Caribbean will oversee all matters concerning installation of displays and other equipment.

Joe Kessler, President, Friends of Virgin Islands National Park will be the project leader, and will manage all work related to the construction, equipment installation, budget management and grant reporting.

Cinnamon Bay Museum Budget

BUDGET ITEM	AMOUNT
Construction Costs	
Cabinetry and Case Work	123,826
Storage Shed	9,945
Equipment	
Projection Equipment	2,000
Electrolysis Tank	1,000
Electrical Fixtures	2,100
Hunter Fans	1,800
Supplies	
	2,500
Miscellaneous Expenses	
	2,500
Administrative Overhead	
	22,000
TOTAL in US \$	\$167,671
Funds Already Secured	\$45,000
Remaining Balance	\$122,671